LETTER THE SIXTEENTH


SANTIAGO, May 6th.

Before the setting in of the rainy season, we accepted of the invitation of our friends the ———s, to visit the different haciendas, as in a short time the roads will become nearly impassable. The country in May is perhaps at its highest beauty, or even a little earlier, as already the great blow of roses is nearly over; au reste there are roses all the year round, though more in December than in July. And this, by the way, is rather a source of disappointment to the unwary traveller. He arrives in December, and finds the gardens full of flowers. “If this be the case in December,” says he to himself, “what will it be in May?” May comes—the roses are over, and the chief flowers in the gardens are dahlias and marigolds, our autumnal flowers—September, and these autumnal flowers still bloom, and with them you have mignonette and roses, and then pinks and jasmine, and other flowers. In fact there seems to be no particular season for anything.

The weather at present is neither warm nor cold, but colder here than in Mexico, and when it does not rain it is lovely. Already there has been much rain, and the torrents are so swelled, that there was some doubt as to whether our carriages could pass them.

Yesterday, at five in the morning we left Mexico, in a coach once the property of Charles X. “Sic transit,” etc.; and a most luxurious travelling-carriage is that of his ex-majesty, entirely covered with gilding, save where the lilies of France surmount the crown, (sad emblems of the fallen dynasty!) lined with white satin with violet-coloured binding, the satin cushions most excellently
stuffed: large, commodious, and with a movement as soft as that of a gondola.

A Frenchman bought it on a speculation, and brought it here for sale. In former days, from its gilded and showy appearance, it would have brought any price; but the taste for gaudy equipages has gone by since the introduction of foreign, and especially of English carriages; and the present proprietor, who bought it for its intrinsic good qualities, paid but a moderate sum for it. In this carriage, drawn by six strong horses, with two first-rate coachmen and several outriders well-armed, we went along at great speed. The drivers, dressed Mexican fashion, with all their accoutrements smart and new, looked very picturesque. Jackets and trousers of deerskin, and jackets embroidered in green, with hanging silver buttons, the trousers also embroidered and slit up the side of the leg, trimmed with silver buttons, and showing an under pair of unbleached linen; these, with the postilions’ boots, and great hats with gold rolls, form a dress which would faire fureur, if some adventurous Mexican would venture to display it on the streets of London.

We left the city by the gate of Guadalupe, and passed by the great cathedral, our road lying over the marshy plains once covered by the waters of Lake Tezcuco.

To the east lay the great lake, its broad waters shining like a sheet of molten silver, and the two great volcanoes: the rising sun forming a crown of rays on the white brow of Popocatepetl.

To describe once for all the general aspect of the country on this side of the valley of Mexico, suffice it to say, that there is a universal air of dreariness, vastness, and desolation. The country is flat, but always enlivened by the surrounding mountains, like an uninteresting painting in a diamond frame; and yet it is not wholly uninteresting. It has a character peculiar to itself, great plains of maguey, with its huts with uncultivated patches, that have once been gardens, still filled with flowers and choked with weeds; the huts themselves, generally of mud, yet not unfrequently of solid stone, roofless and windowless, with traces of having been fine buildings in former days; the complete solitude, unbroken except by the passing Indian, certainly as much in a state of savage nature as the lower class of Mexicans were when Cortes first traversed these plains—with the same character, gentle and cowardly,
false and cunning, as weak animals are apt to be by nature, and indolent and improvident as men are in a fine climate; ruins everywhere—here a viceroy’s country palace serving as a tavern, where the mules stop to rest, and the drivers to drink pulque—there, a whole village crumbling to pieces; roofless houses, broken down walls and arches, an old church—the remains of a convent. . . . For leagues scarcely a tree to be seen; then a clump of the graceful Arbol de Peru, or one great cypress—long strings of mules and asses, with their drivers—pasture-fields with cattle—then again whole tracts of maguey, as far as the eye can reach; no roads worthy of the name, but a passage made between fields of maguey, bordered by crumbling-down low stone walls, causing a jolting from which not even the easy movement of Charles X’s coach can save us. But the horses go at full gallop, accustomed to go through and over everything.

The first village we saw was Santa Clara, to our left, lying at the foot of some dark hills, with its white church and flat-roofed or no-roofed houses. There being no shade, frequently not a tree for leagues, the sun and dust very disagreeable, and became more so as the day advanced. Here it came to pass, that, travelling rapidly over the hot and dusty plains, the wheels of our carriage began to smoke. No house was in sight—no water within ken. It was a case of difficulty; when suddenly—I recollected that not far from thence was an old rancho, a deserted farmhouse at present occupied by robbers; and having ordered the coachman to drive to within a few hundred yards of this house, he sent a servant on horseback with a medio (fourpence) to bring some water, which was treating the robbers like honourable men. The man galloped off, and shortly returned with a can full of water, which he carried back when the fire was extinguished.

Meanwhile we examined, as well as we could, the external appearance of the robbers’ domicile, which was an old half-ruined house, standing alone on the plain, with no tree near it. Several men, with guns, were walking up and down before the house—sporting-looking characters, but rather dirty—apparently either waiting for some expected game, or going in search of it. Women with rebosos, were carrying water, and walking amongst them. There were also a number of dogs. The well-armed men who accompanied us, and the name of ——, so well known
in these parts, that once when his carriage was surrounded by robbers, he merely mentioned who he was, and they retreated with many apologies for their mistake, precluded all danger of an attack; but woe to the solitary horseman or the escorted carriage that should pass thereby! Nor, indeed, are they always in the same mood, for Senor ——’s houses have been frequently attacked in his absence, and his hacienda at Santiago once stood a regular siege, the robbers being at length repulsed by the bravery of his servants.

We set off again au grand galop, drivers and outriders giving, from time to time, the most extraordinary shrieks to encourage the horses and to amuse themselves, wild and shrill enough to frighten any civilized quadruped. The road grew more picturesque as we advanced, and at length our attention was arrested by the sight of the two great pyramids, which rise to the east of the town of San Juan Teotihuacan, which are mentioned by Humboldt, and have excited the curiosity and attention of every succeeding traveller. The huge masses were consecrated to the sun and moon, which, in the time of Cortes, were there represented by two vast stone idols, covered with gold. The conquerors made use of the gold, and broke the idols in pieces, by order of the first bishop of Mexico. Unfortunately, our time was too limited to give them more than a passing observation. Fragments of obsidian, in the form of knives and of arrows, with which the priests opened the breasts of their human victims, are still to be found there; and numerous small idols, made of baked clay, are to be seen both there and in the plains adjoining. The Indians rather dislike to guide travellers to these pyramids, and their reluctance to do so has increased the popular belief of the existence of great concealed treasures near or in them.

The whole plain on which these great pyramids stand was formerly called Micotl, or the Pathway of the Dead; and the hundreds of smaller pyramids which surround the larger ones (the Temples of the Sun and Moon) are symmetrically disposed in wide streets, forming a great burial-plain, composed perhaps of the dust of their ancient warriors, an Aztec or Toltec Père-la-Chaise, or rather a roofless Westminster Abbey. So few of the ancient teocallis now remain, and these being nearly the only traces now existing of that extraordinary race, we regretted the more
not being able to devote some time to their examination. Fanaticism and policy induced the Spanish conquerors to destroy these heathen temples; and when we recollect that at the time of the Reformation in civilized England, the most splendid Catholic edifices were made level with the ground, in compliance with the ferocious edict of John Knox, "Ding down the nests, and the rooks will fly off," we can have little wonder or blame to bestow upon Cortes, who, in the excitement of the siege, gave orders for the destruction of these blood-stained sanctuaries. In the afternoon we arrived at San Juan, a pretty village, boasting of an inn, a school-house, an avenue of fine trees, and a stream of clear water. It is true that the inn is a Mexican posada, bearing as much resemblance to what is generally called an inn, as an hacienda does to an English country-house; the school-house, a room with a mud floor and a few dirty benches, occupied by little ragged boys and girls; but the avenue is pretty, the grass as green as emeralds, and the water crystal. We walked out while they changed horses, of which Señor —— had fresh relays of his own prepared all along the road; and entered the school-house, attracted by the noise and the invitingly open door. The master was a poor, ragged, pale, careworn looking young man, seemingly half-dinned with the noise, but very earnest in his work. The children, all speaking at once, were learning to spell out of some old bills of Congress. Several moral sentences were written on the wall in very independent orthography. C——n having remarked to the master that they were ill-spelt, he seemed very much astonished, and even inclined to doubt the fact. I thought it was one of those cases where ignorance is bliss, and fear the observation may have cost the young man a night’s rest.

A row of grinning skulls was ranged round the wall of the churchyard, and the sexton, who gave us admittance to the church, taking up one to show it off, it all crumbled into dust, which filled the air like a cloud.

At the posada they gave us rancid sheep’s milk, cheese, and biscuits so hard, that C——n asked the host if they were made in the same year with the church; at which he seemed mightily pleased, and could not stop laughing till we got into the carriage.

Soon after leaving San Juan we were met by the Señora de ——, in an open carriage, coming with her children to
meet us; and though she had travelled since sunrise from her hacienda, she appeared as if freshly dressed for an evening party; her dress, amber-coloured crape, trimmed with white blonde, short sleeves and décolletée; a set of beautiful Neapolitan strawberry-coral, set in gold, straw-coloured satin shoes, and a little China crape shawl, embroidered in bright flowers; her hair dressed and uncovered.

We stopped at their hacienda of Sopayuca, an old house, standing solitary in the midst of great fields of maguey. It has a small deserted garden adjoining, amongst whose tangled bushes a pretty little tame deer was playing, with its half-startled look and full wild eye. We found an excellent breakfast prepared, and here, for the first time, I conceived the possibility of not disliking pulque. We visited the large buildings where it is kept, and found it rather refreshing, with a sweet taste and a creamy froth upon it, and with a much less decided odour than that which is sold in Mexico.

This hacienda is under the charge of an administrador, to whom — pays a large annual sum, and whose place is by no means a sinecure, as he lives in perpetual danger from robbers. He is captain of a troop of soldiers, and as his life has been spent in "persecuting robbers," he is an object of intense hatred to that free and independent body, and has some thoughts of removing to another part of the country, where he may be more tranquil. He gave us a terrible account of these night attacks, of the ineffectual protection afforded him by the government, and of the nearly insuperable difficulties thrown in the way of any attempt to bring these men to justice. He lately told the president that he had some thoughts of joining the robbers himself, as they were the only persons in the republic protected by the government. The president, however, is not to blame in this matter. He has used every endeavour to check these abuses; and difficulties have been thrown in his way from very unexpected sources. . . .

A propos to which, the — consul told us the other day, that some time ago, having occasion to consult Judge — upon an affair of importance, he was shown into an apartment where that functionary was engaged with some suspicious-looking individuals, or rather who were above suspicion, their appearance plainly indicating their calling.
On the table before him lay a number of guns, swords, pistols, and all sorts of arms. The Judge requested Monsieur de — to be seated, observing that he was investigating a case of robbery committed by these persons. The robbers were seated, smoking very much at their ease, and the Judge was enjoying the same innocent recreation; when his cigar becoming extinguished, one of these gentlemen taking his from his mouth, handed it to the magistrate, who relighted his puro (cigar) at it, and returned it with a polite bow. In short, they were completely hand in glove.

In the evening we reached Santiago, where we now are, about eighteen leagues from Mexico, a large house in a wild-looking country, standing in solitary state, with hills behind, and rocks before it, and surrounded by great uncultivated plains and pasture-fields. Everything is en grande in this domain. There is a handsome chapel and sacristy; a plaza de toros; hundreds of horses and mules; and between dependientes and hangers-on, we sat down, thirty or forty people, to dinner.

7th.—The very day of our arrival, Bernardo the Mata dor, with his men, arrived from Mexico, bringing their superb dresses with them, for the purpose of giving us a country bull-fight. As an hacienda of this kind is an immense empty house, without furniture or books, all the amusement is to be found either out of doors, or in large parties in the house; and the unostentatious hospitality which exists in this and some other of the old families, is a pleasing remnant of Spanish manners and habits, now falling into disuse, and succeeded by more pretension to refinement, and less of either real wealth or sociability.

In the evening here, all assemble in a large hall; the Señora de —— playing the piano; while the whole party, agents, dependientes, major-domo, coachmen, matadors, picadors, and women-servants, assemble, and perform the dances of the country; jarabes, aforrados, enanos, palomos, zapateros, etc., etc. It must not be supposed that in this apparent mingling of ranks between masters and servants, there is the slightest want of respect on the part of the latter; on the contrary, they seem to exert themselves, as in duty bound, for the amusement of their master and his guests. There is nothing republican in it; no feeling of equality; as far as I have seen, that feel-
ing does not exist here, except between people of the same rank. It is more like some remains of the feudal system, where the retainers sat at the same table with their chief, but below the salt. The dances are monotonous, with small steps and a great deal of shuffling, but the music is rather pretty, and some of the dancers were very graceful and agile; and if it were not invidious to make distinctions, we might particularize Bernardo the Matador, the head coachman, and a handsome peasant-girl, with a short scarlet and yellow petticoat, and a foot and ankle à la Vestris. They were all very quiet, but seemed in a state of intense enjoyment; and some of the men accompanied the dancers on the guitar.

First the player strikes up in quick time, and the dancer performs a quick movement; then the musician accompanies the music with his voice, and the dancer goes through some slow steps. Such is the case in the Aforrado or Lining, a curious nom de tendresse, expressive, I suppose, of something soft and well wadded. The words are as follow:

1.

Aforrado de mi vid.
Come estás, como te va?
Como has pasado la noche,
No has tenido novedad?

2.

Aforrado de mi vida!
Yo te quisiera cantar,
Pero mis ojos son tiernos,
Y empazaran á llorar.

3.

De Guadalajara vengo,
Lideando con un soldado,
Solo por venir a ver
A mi jarabe aforrado.

4.

Y vente con migo,
Y yo te daré
Zapatos de raso
Color de café.

Of these poetical sublimities, a translation at once literal and metrical, would, we think, damp the spirit of a Coleridge.
Life in Mexico

1.
Lining of my life!
How are you? how do you do?
How have you passed the night?
Have you met with nothing new?

2.
Lining of my life!
To you I should like to sing;
But that my eyes are weak,
And tears might begin to spring.

3.
From Guadalajara fighting,
With a soldier I came on,
My well-lined sweet syrup!
I came to see you alone.

4.
And come then with me,
And I will give thee
Such fine shoes of satin,
The colour of tea.

It is coffee, but you will excuse the poetical licence. The music married to this "immortal verse," I have learned by ear, and shall send you. In the "enanos" (the dwarfs) the dancer makes himself little, every time the chorus is sung.

1.
Ah! qué bonitos
Son los enanos,
Los chiquititos
Y Mejicanos.

2.
Sale la linda,
Sale la fea,
Sale el enano,
Con su zafiro.

3.
Los enanitos
Se enojaron,
Porque á las enanas
Les pellizcaron.

There are many more verses, but I think you will find these quite satisfactory, "Ah! how pretty are the dwarfs, the little ones, the Mexicans! Out comes the pretty one, out comes the ugly one, out comes the dwarf with his
jacket of skin. The little he-dwarfs were angry, because some one pinched the she-dwarfs." There is another called the Toro, of which the words are not very interesting; and the Zapatero, or shoemaker, was very well danced by a gentleman who accompanied himself, at the same time, on the guitar.

Yesterday morning we set off in a burning sun, over a perfect Egyptian desert, to visit the famous arches of Cempoala, a magnificent work, which we are told had greatly excited the admiration of Mr. Poinsett when in this country. This aqueduct, the object of whose construction was to supply these arid plains with water, was the work of a Spanish Franciscan friar, and has never been entirely concluded. We travelled about six leagues, and sat there for hours, looking up at the great stone arches, which seem like a work of giants.

In the afternoon we all rode to the Plaza de Toros. The evening was cool, and our horses good, the road pretty and shady, and the plaza itself a most picturesque enclosure, surrounded by lofty trees. Chairs were placed for us on a raised platform; and the bright green of the trees, the flashing dresses of the toreadors, the roaring of the fierce bulls, the spirited horses, the music and the cries; the Indians shouting from the trees up which they had climbed; all formed a scene of savage grandeur, which for a short time at least is interesting. Bernardo was dressed in blue satin and gold; the picadores in black and silver; the others in maroon-coloured satin and gold; all those on foot wear knee-breeches and white silk stockings, a little black cap with ribbons, and a plait of hair streaming down behind. The horses were generally good, and as each new adversary appeared, seemed to participate in the enthusiasm of their riders. One bull after another was driven in roaring, and as here they are generally fierce, and their horns not blunted as in Mexico, it is a much more dangerous affair. The bulls were not killed, but were sufficiently tormented. One stuck full of arrows and fireworks, all adorned with ribbons and coloured paper, made a sudden spring over an immensely high wall, and dashed into the woods. I thought afterwards of this unfortunate animal, how it must have been wandering about all night, bellowing with pain, the concealed arrows piercing its flesh, and looking like gay ornaments;
"So, when the watchful shepherd, from the blind,  
Wounds with a random shaft the careless hind,  
Distracted with her pain, she flies the woods,  
 Bounds o'er the lawn, and seeks the silent floods—  
With fruitless care; for still the fatal dart  
Sticks in her side, and rankles in her heart."

If the arrows had stuck too deep, and that the bull could not rub them off against the trees, he must have bled to death. Had he remained, his fate would have been better, for when the animal is entirely exhausted they throw him down with a laso, and pulling out the arrows put ointment on the wounds.

The skill of the men is surprising; but the most curious part of the exhibition was when a coachman of ——'s, a strong, handsome Mexican, mounted on the back of a fierce bull, which plunged and flung himself about as if possessed by a legion of demons, and forced the animal to gallop round and round the arena. The bull is first caught by the laso, and thrown on his side, struggling furiously. The man mounts while he is still on the ground. At the same moment the laso is withdrawn, and the bull starts up, maddened by feeling the weight of his unusual burden. The rider must dismount in the same way, the bull being first thrown down, otherwise he would be gored in a moment. It is terribly dangerous, for if the man were to lose his seat, his death is nearly certain; but these Mexicans are superb riders. A monk, who is attached to the establishment, seems an ardent admirer of these sports, and his presence is useful, in case of a dangerous accident occurring, which is not unfrequent.

The amusement was suddenly interrupted by sudden darkness, and a tremendous storm of rain and thunder, in the midst of which we mounted our horses, and galloped home.

**TULANSINGO ——, 8th.**

Another bull-fight last evening! It is like pulque; one makes wry faces at it at first, and then begins to like it. One thing we soon discovered; which was, that the bulls, if so inclined, could leap upon our platform, as they occasionally sprang over a wall twice as high. There was a part of the spectacle rather too horrible. The horse of one of the picadors was gored, his side torn up by the bull's horns, and in this state, streaming with blood, he was forced to gallop round the circle.

We spent one day in visiting Omatusco, an hacienda
belonging to the Señora T—a, situated in the plains of Apan, and famous for the superior excellence of its pulque. The organas, the nopal, and great fields of maguey, constitute the chief vegetation for many miles round. The hacienda itself, a fine large building, stands lonely and bleak in the midst of magueys. A fine chapel, left unfinished since her husband’s death, attracted our attention by its simple architecture and unpretending elegance. It is nearly impossible to conceive anything more lonely than a residence here must be; or in fact in any of the haciendas situated on these great plains of Otumba and Apan.

This morning we set off for Tulansingo, in four carriages-and-six, containing the whole family, ourselves, maids, and children, padre and nursery governess; relays being placed all along the road, which we traversed at full gallop. But in crossing some great pasture-fields, the drivers of two of the carriages began to race; one of the horses fell and threw the postilion; the carriage itself was overturned, and though none of the inmates were injured, the poor mozo was terribly wounded in his head and legs. No assistance being near, he changed places with one of the men on horseback, and was brought on slowly.

About three in the afternoon we arrived at Tulansingo, rather an important city in its way, and which has been the theatre of many revolutionary events; with various streets and shops, a handsome church; alcaldes, a prefect, etc. There appear to be some few good houses and decent families, and clean, small shops, and there are pretty, shady walks in the environs; and though there are also plenty of miserable dwellings and dirty people, it is altogether rather a civilized place. The house of ——, which stands within a courtyard, and is the house par excellence, is very handsome, with little furniture, but with some remnants of luxury. The dining-hall is a noble room, with beautiful Chinese paper, opening into a garden, which is the boast of the republic, and is indeed singularly pretty, and kept in beautiful order, with gravel walks and fine trees, clear tanks and sparkling fountains, and an extraordinary profusion of the most beautiful flowers, roses especially. There is something extremely oriental in its appearance, and the fountains are ornamented with China vases and Chinese figures of great value. Walking along under arches formed by rose-bushes, a small column of
water spouted forth from each bush, sprinkling us all over with its showers. But the prettiest thing in the garden is a great tank of clear water, enclosed on three sides by a Chinese building, round which runs a piazza with stone pillars, shaded by a drapery of white curtains. Comfortable well-cushioned sofas are arranged along the piazza, which opens into a large room, where one may dress after bathing. It is the prettiest and coolest retreat possible, and entirely surrounded by trees and roses. Here one may lie at noonday, with the sun and the world completely shut out. They call this an English garden, than which it rather resembles the summer retreat of a sultan.

When we arrived, we found dinner laid for forty persons, and the table ornamented by the taste of the gardener, with pyramids of beautiful flowers.

I have now formed acquaintance with many Mexican dishes; molé (meat stewed in red chile), boiled nopal, fried bananas, green chile, etc. Then we invariably have frijoles (brown beans stewed), hot tortillas—and this being in the country, pulque is the universal beverage. In Mexico, tortillas and pulque are considered unfashionable, though both are to be met with occasionally, in some of the best old houses. They have here a most delicious species of cream cheese made by the Indians, and ate with virgin honey. I believe there is an intermixture of goats’ milk in it; but the Indian families who make it, and who have been offered large sums for the receipt, find it more profitable to keep their secret.

Every dinner has puchero immediately following the soup; consisting of boiled mutton, beef, bacon, fowls, garbanzos (a white bean), small gourds, potatoes, boiled pears, greens, and any other vegetables; a piece of each put on your plate at the same time, and accompanied by a sauce of herbs or tomatoes.

As for fruits, we have mameys, chirimoyas, granaditas, white and black zapotes; the black, sweet, with a green skin and black pulp, and with black stones in it; the white resembling it in outward appearance and form, but with a white pulp, and the kernel, which is said to be poisonous, is very large, round, and white. It belongs to a larger and more leafy tree than the black zapote, and grows in cold or temperate climates; whereas the other is a native of tierra caliente. Then there is the chicozapote, of the same family, with a whitish skin, and a white or rose-
tinged pulp; this also belongs to the warm regions. The capulin, or Mexican cherry; the mango, of which the best come from Orizaba and Cordova; the cayote, etc. Of these I prefer the chirimoya, zapote blanco, granadita, and mango; but this is a matter of taste.

12th.—We have spent some days here very pleasantly; riding amongst the hills in the neighbourhood, exploring caves, viewing waterfalls, and climbing on foot or on horseback, wherever foot or horse could penetrate. No habits to be worn in these parts, as I found from experience, after being caught upon a gigantic maguey, and my gown torn in two. It is certainly always the wisest plan to adopt the customs of the country one lives in. A dress either of stuff, such as merino, or of muslin, as short as it is usually worn, a reboso tied over one shoulder, and a large straw hat, is about the most convenient costume that can be adopted. The horses are small, but strong, spirited, and well-made; generally unshod, which they say makes the motion more agreeable; and almost all, at least all ladies’ horses, are taught the paso, which I find tiresome for a continuance, though a good paso-horse will keep up with others that gallop, and for a longer time.

The great amusement here in the evening is playing at juegos de prendas, games with forfeits, which I recommend to all who wish to make a rapid improvement in the Spanish tongue. Last night, being desired to name a forfeit for the padre, I condemned him to dance the jarabe, of which he performed a few steps in his long gown and girdle, with equal awkwardness and goodnature. We met to-day the prettiest little ranchera, a farmer’s wife or daughter, riding in front of a mozo on the same horse, their usual mode, dressed in a short embroidered muslin petticoat, white satin shoes, a pearl necklace, and earrings, a reboso, and a large round straw hat. The ladies sit their horse on a contrary side to our fashion. They have generally adopted English saddles, but the farmers’ wives frequently sit in a sort of chair, which they find much more commodious.

Some country ladies, who attended mass in the chapel this morning, were dressed in very short clear white muslin gowns, very much starched, and so disposed as to show two under-petticoats, also stiffly starched, and trimmed with lace, their shoes coloured satin. Considered as a costume of their own, I begin to think it rather pretty.
The oldest women here or in Mexico never wear caps; nothing but their own gray hair, sometimes cut short, sometimes turned up with a comb, and not unusually tied behind in a pigtaii. There is no attempt to conceal the ravages of time.

It appears to me, that amongst the young girls here there is not that desire to enter upon the cares of matrimony, which is to be observed in many other countries. The opprobrious epithet of “old maid” is unknown. A girl is not the less admired because she has been ten or a dozen years in society; the most severe remark made on her is that she is “hard to please.” No one calls her passée, or looks out for a new face to admire. I have seen no courting of the young men either in mothers or daughters; no match-making mammis, or daughters looking out for their own interests. In fact, young people have so few opportunities of being together, that Mexican marriages must be made in heaven; for I see no opportunity of bringing them about upon earth! The young men when they do meet with young ladies in society, appear devoted to and very much afraid of them. I know but one lady in Mexico who has the reputation of having manœuvred all her daughters into great marriages; but she is so clever, and her daughters were such beauties, that it can have cost her no trouble; as for flirtation, the name is unknown, and the thing.

I have been taking lessons in the Indian dances from Doña R——a; they are not ungraceful, but lazy and monotonous.

On every door in this house there is a printed paper to the following effect:

“Quien a esta casa da luz? Jesus.
Quien la llena de alegria? Maria.
Y quien la abraza en la fe? Jose.
Luego bien claro se ve
Que siempre habra contricion,
Teniendo en la corazon,
A Jesus, Maria, y Jose.”

“Who gives light to this house? Jesus.
Who fills it with joy? Mary.
Then we see very clearly
That there will always be contrition,
Keeping in our hearts,
Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.”
These are written in verse, and below: "The most illustrious Bishop of Monte-Rey, Don Fray José de Jesus Maria Balanzaran, hereby ordains and grants, along with the Bishops of Puebla, Durango, Valladolid and Guadalajara, two hundred days of indulgence to all those who devoutly repeat the above ejaculation, and invoke the sweet names of Mary, Jesus, and Joseph." . . . The people here have certainly a poetical vein in their composition. Everything is put into verse—sometimes doggerel, like the above (in which luz rhyming with Jesus, shows that the z is pronounced here like an s), occasionally a little better, but always in rhyme.

We went this evening to visit the Countess del ——, who has a house in the village. Found her in bed, feverish, and making use of simple remedies, such as herbs, the knowledge and use of which have descended from the ancient Indians to the present lords of the soil. The Spanish historians who have written upon the conquest of Mexico, all mention the knowledge which the Mexican physicians had of herbs. It was supposed by these last, that for every infirmity there was a remedy in the herbs of the field; and to apply them according to the nature of the malady, was the chief science of these primitive professors of medicine. Much which is now used in European pharmacy is due to the research of Mexican doctors; such as sarsaparilla, jalap, friars' rhubarb, mechoacan, etc.; also various emetics, antidotes to poison, remedies against fever, and an infinite number of plants, minerals, gums, and simple medicines. As for their infusions, decoctions, ointments, plasters, oils, etc., Cortes himself mentions the wonderful number of these which he saw in the Mexican market for sale. From certain trees they distilled balsams; and drew a balsamic liquid both from a decoction of the branches, and from the bark steeped in water. Bleeding and bathing were their other favourite remedies. The country-people breathed a vein with a maguey-point, and when they could not find leeches, substituted the prickles of the American-hedgehog.

Besides bathing in the rivers, lakes, tanks, and fountains, they used a bath which is still to be seen in many Indian villages, and which they call the temezcalli. It is made of unbaked bricks; its form is that of a baker's oven, about eight feet wide and six high; the pavement rather convex, and lower than the surface of the soil. A
person can enter this bath only on his knees. Opposite the entry is a stone or brick stove, its opening towards the exterior of the bath, with a hole to let out the smoke. Before the bath is prepared, the floor inside is covered with a mat, on which is placed a jar of water, some herbs and leaves of corn. The stove is then heated until the stones which unite it with the bath become red-hot. When the bather enters the entry is closed, and the only opening left is a hole at the top of the vault, which, when the smoke of the oven has passed through, is also shut. They then pour water upon the red-hot stones, from which a thick vapour arises, which fills the temezcalli. The bather then throws himself on the mat, and drawing down the steam with the herbs and maize, wets them in the tepid water of the jar, and if he has any pain, applies them to the part affected. This having produced perspiration, the door is opened and the well-baked patient comes out and dresses. For fevers, for bad colds, for the bite of a poisonous animal, this is said to be a certain cure; also for acute rheumatism.

For the cure of wounds, the Spaniards found the Mexican remedies most efficacious. Cortes himself was cured by one of their doctors of a severe wound in the head, received at Otumba, through which we lately passed. For fractures, for humours, for everything they had their remedy; sometimes pulverizing the seeds of plants, and attributing much of their efficacy to the superstitious ceremonies and prayers which they used while applying them, especially those which they offered up to Tzapotlaltenan, the goddess of medicine.

A great deal of this knowledge is still preserved amongst their descendants, and considered efficacious. For every illness there is an herb, for every accident a remedy. Baths are in constant use, although these temezcallis are confined to the Indians. In every family there is some knowledge of simple medicine, very necessary, in haciendas especially, where no physician can possibly be procured.

There is a hill upon ——'s property, said to contain much buried treasure. There are many traditions here of this concealed Indian wealth, but very little gold has been actually recovered from these mountain-tombs. Buried gold has occasionally come to light; not by researches in the mountains, for few are rash enough to throw away
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their money in search of what would probably prove an imaginary treasure; but by accident—in the ruins of old houses, where the proprietors had deposited it for safety in some period of revolution; perhaps no later than at the time of the Spanish expulsion.

Some years ago, an old and very poor woman rented a house in the environs of Mexico, as old and wretched as herself, for four reals a week. It had an old broken-up stone patio (inner courtyard), which she used occasionally to sweep with a little old broom. One day she observed two or three stones in this patio larger and more carefully put together than the others, and the little old woman, being a daughter of Eve by some collateral branch, poked down and worked at the stones until she was able to raise them up—when lo and behold, she discovered a can full of treasure; no less than five thousand dollars in gold! Her delight and her fright were unbounded; and, being a prudent old lady, she determined, in the first place, to leave the house, and next to bring in her treasure, poquito a poquito (little by little), to a room in Mexico, keeping the old house as a sort of bank. She did so; took a nice room, and instead of sleeping on a petate (mat), as she had hitherto done, bought herself a little bedstead, and even a mattress; treated herself not only to chocolate, but a few bottles of good wine! Such extraordinary luxury could not fail to create suspicion. She was questioned by her neighbours, and at length intrusted her secret to their keeping. History says, that notwithstanding this, she was not robbed, and was allowed to enjoy her good fortune in peace. It is difficult to credit such a miracle in this land of picking and stealing, but my authority is beyond impeachment.

... Whilst I write on these irrelevant matters, I am warned that the coaches are at the door, and that we are about setting off for Tepenacasco, another hacienda of Señor —'s, a few leagues from this.