till we were safe on the other side. We were then told that we had crossed within a few feet of a precipice over which a coach had been dashed into fifty pieces during one of these swells, and of course every one killed; and that if instead of horses we had travelled with mules, we must have been lost. You may imagine that we were not sorry to reach Sopayuca; where the people ran out to the door at the sound of carriage-wheels, and could not believe that we had passed the barranca that night; as two or three horsemen who had rode in that direction had turned back, and pronounced it impassable.

Lights and supper were soon procured, and by way of interlude a monstrous bull, of great fame in these parts, was led up to the supper-table for our inspection with a rope through his nose, a fierce brute, but familiarly called “el chato” (the flatnose), from the shortness of his horns. The lightning continued very vivid, and they told us that a woman had been struck there some time before, while in the chapel by night.

We rose at four o’clock the next morning and set off for Mexico. The morning, as usual after these storms, was peculiarly fresh and beautiful; but the sun soon grew oppressive on the great plains. About two o’clock we entered Mexico by the Guadalupe gate. We found our house in statu quo,—agreeable letters from Europe,—great preparations making for the English ball, to assist at which we have returned sooner than we otherwise should, and for which my femme-de-chambre has just completed a dress for me, very much to her own satisfaction.

LETTER THE EIGHTEENTH


25th.

The English ball at the Mineria has passed off with great éclat. Nothing could be more splendid than the general effect of this noble building, brilliantly illuminated and filled with a well-dressed crowd. The president and corps diplomatique were in full uniform, and the display of
diamonds was extraordinary. We ladies of the corps diplomatique tried to flatter ourselves that we made up in elegance what we wanted in magnificence! for in jewels no foreign ladies could attempt to compete with those of the country. The daughter of Countess —-, just arrived from Paris, and whose acquaintance I made for the first time, wore pale blue, with garlands of pale pink roses, and a parure of most superb brilliants. The Señora de A—-'s head reminded me of that of the Marchioness of Londonderry, in her opera-box. The Marquesa de Vivanco had a rivière of brilliants of extraordinary size and beauty, and perfectly well set. Madame S—-r wore a very rich blonde dress, garnie with plumes of ostrich feathers, a large diamond fastening each plume. One lady wore a diadem which — said could not be worth less than a hundred thousand dollars. Diamonds are always worn plain or with pearls; coloured stones are considered trash, which is a pity, as I think rubies and emeralds set in diamonds would give more variety and splendour to their jewels. There were a profusion of large pearls, generally of a pear shape. The finest and roundest were those worn by the Señora B—-a. There were many blonde dresses, a great fashion here. I know no lady without one. Amongst the prettiest and most tastefully-dressed girls were the E—-s, as usual. Many dresses were overloaded, a common fault in Mexico; and many of the dresses, though rich, were old-fashioned; but the coup d'œil was not the less brilliant, and it was somewhat astonishing, in such a multitude, not to see a single objectionable person. To be sure the company were all invited.

On entering the noble court, which was brilliantly illuminated with coloured lamps, hung from pillar to pillar, and passing up the great staircase, we were met at the first landing by Mr. P—-, in full uniform, and other English gentlemen, the directors of the ball, who stood there to receive the ladies. His excellency led me upstairs to the top of the ball-room, where chairs were placed for the president, ladies of the diplomatie, cabinet ministers, etc. The music was excellent, and dancing was already in full force. And though there were assembled what is called all Mexico, the rooms are so large, that the crowd was not disagreeable, nor the heat oppressive. Pictures of Queen Victoria were hung in the
different large halls. The supper-tables were very handsome; and in fact the ball altogether was worthy of its object; for Messieurs les Anglais always do these things well when they attempt them.

The president took me to supper. The company walked in to the music of “God save the Queen.” After we had sat a little while the president demanded silence, and, in a short speech, proposed the health of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, which was drank by all the company standing. After supper we continued dancing till nearly six in the morning; and when we got into the carriage it was broad daylight, and all the bells were ringing for mass.

This is the best ball we have seen here, without any exception; and it is said to have cost eleven thousand dollars. There were certainly a great number of pretty faces at this fête, many pretty girls whom we had not seen before, and whom the English secretaries have contrived to unearth. Fine eyes are a mere drug—every one has them; large, dark, full orbs, with long silken lashes. As for diamonds, no man above the rank of a lépero marries in this country without presenting his bride with at least a pair of diamond earrings, or a pearl necklace with a diamond clasp. They are not always a proof of wealth, though they constitute it in themselves. Their owners may be very poor in other respects. They are considered a necessary of life; quite as much so as shoes and stockings.

June 2nd.—On the 15th of April, the pontifical bulls arrived from Rome, confirming the election of the Señor Posada to the Archiepiscopal dignity; and on Saturday last, the 31st of May, the consecration took place in the cathedral with the greatest pomp. The presiding bishop was the Señor Belaunzaran, the old Bishop of Linares; the two assistant bishops were the Señor Madrid, a young, good-looking man, who having been banished from Mexico during the revolution, took refuge in Rome, where he obtained the favour of the Pope, who afterwards recommended him to an episcopal see in Mexico; and the Doctor Morales, formerly Bishop of Sonora. His padrino was the President, General Bustamante, who in his capacity presented his godson with the splendid pastoral ring, a solitary diamond of immense size. All the diplomatic body and the cabinet went in full uniform; chairs being placed for them on each side of the crugia (the
passage leading to the altar). A dispute upon the subject of precedence arose between an excellency of the diplomatic corps, and the secretary of state, which seems likely to have disagreeable consequences. I had the pleasure of kneeling beside these illustrious persons for the space of three or four hours, for no seats were placed for the wives either of the diplomats or of the cabinet.

But the ceremony, though long, was very superb, the music fine, the quantity of jewels on the dresses of the bishops and priests, and on the holy vessels, etc., enormous. The bishops were arrayed in white velvet and gold, and their mitres were literally covered with diamonds. The gold candlesticks and golden basins for holy water, and golden incensories, reminded me of the description of the ornaments of the Jewish tabernacle in the days of Moses; of the "candlesticks of pure gold, with golden branches;" and "the tongs and snuff-dishes of pure gold;" or of the temple of Solomon, where the altar was of gold, and the table of gold, and the candlesticks and the snuffers, and the basins, and the spoons, and the censors were of pure gold. The pontifical vestments destined for the elected primate, were all prepared;—sandals, amice, surplice, girdle, pectoral cross, stole, gown, vestment, with open sleeves (the dalmatica), crosier, mitre, pontifical ring, etc. Magnificent chairs were prepared for the bishops near the altar, and the president in uniform took his place amongst them. The presiding bishop took his seat alone, with his back to the altar, and the Señor Posada was led in by the assisting bishops, they with their mitres, he with his priest’s cap on. Arrived before the presiding bishop, he uncovered his head, and made a profound obeisance. These three then took their places on chairs placed in front; and the ceremony having begun, in case you should wish to have some idea of it, I shall endeavour to give it you, for I was so situated, that although the cathedral was crowded to excess, I could see and hear all that passed. Let me premise, however, that there was not one lépero, as they are always excluded on such occasions.

Posada and his assisting bishops rose, and uncovered their heads; and the Bishop Morales turning to the presiding bishop, said, "Most reverend father, the holy Catholic Mother Church requests you to raise this Presbyter to the charge of the archbishopric."
"Have you an apostolical mandate?"

"We have."

"Read it."

An assistant priest then read the mandate in a loud voice; upon which they all sat down, and the consecrator saying, "Thanks be to God!" Then the Posada kneeling before him, took an oath, upon the Bible, which the bishop held, concluding with these words—"So may God help me, and these his holy gospels." Then sitting down, and resuming their mitres, the examination of the future archbishop took place. It was very long, and at its conclusion, Posada knelt before the presiding bishop and kissed his hand. To this succeeded the confession, every one standing uncovered before the altar, which was then sprinkled with incense. Then followed the mass, chanted.

The assisting bishops then led out the Señor Posada to the chapel, where they put on his sandals, and where he assumed the pectoral cross, amice, surplice, etc.; and arriving at the altar read the office of the mass. He was then conducted again before the consecrating bishop, who was seated with his mitre, and after saluting him reverently, he sat down. Then the bishop, addressing him said: "It is the duty of the bishop to judge, interpret, consecrate, ordain, offer, baptize, and confirm."

All then rose, and the bishop prayed that the newly-elected primate might receive the grace of heaven. All the bishops and priests then prostrated themselves while the Litanies were sung. The presiding bishop, rising took the crosier, and prayed three times for a blessing on the Chosen One; thrice making on him the sign of the cross; and they continued to sing the Litanies; at the conclusion of which they all arose, took their seats and resumed their mitres, Posada alone kneeling before the bishop.

The Bible was then placed upon his shoulders, while he remained prostrated, and the bishop rising up, pronounced a solemn benediction upon him, while the hymn of "Veni Creator Spiritus," was sung in full chorus. Then the bishop, dipping his hand in the holy chrism, anointed the primate's head, making on it the sign of the cross, saying, "Let thy head be anointed and consecrated with the celestial benediction, according to the pontifical mandate." The bishop then anointed his hands, making in the same manner the sign of the cross, and saying, "May these
hands be anointed with holy oil; and as Samuel anointed David a king and a prophet, so be thou anointed and consecrated." This was followed by a solemn prayer.

Then the crosier was blessed, and presented to the elected archbishop with these words: "Receive the pastoral crosier, that thou mayest be humanely severe in correcting vices, exercising judgment without wrath," etc. The blessing of the ring followed with solemn prayer, and being sprinkled with holy water, it was placed on the third finger of the right hand, the bishop saying, "Receive the ring, which is a sign of faith; that, adorned with incorruptible faith, thou mayest guard inviolably the spouse of God, his Holy Church."

The Bible being then taken off the shoulders of the prostrate prelate, was presented to him with an injunction to receive and to preach the gospel. Finally, the bishop bestowed on him the kiss of peace; and all the other bishops did so in their turn. Posada then retired, and his head and hands being washed, he soon after returned with the assistant bishops, carrying two lighted wax tapers, which he presented to the presiding bishop, together with two loaves and two small barrels of wine, reverently kissing his hand. After this, the presiding bishop washed his hands and mounted the steps of the altar, and the new primate received the sacrament.

The mitre was then blessed and placed upon his head, with a prayer by the bishop, that thus, with his head armed and with the staff of the gospels, he might appear terrible to the adversaries of the True Faith. The gloves were next consecrated and drawn on his hands, the bishop praying that his hands might be surrounded by the purity of the new man; and that as Jacob, when he covered his hands with goat-skins, offered agreeable meats to his father, and received his paternal benediction, so he, in offering the Holy Sacrament, might obtain the benediction of his Heavenly Father. The archbishop was then seated by the consecrating bishop on his pontifical throne, and at the same moment, the hymn "Te Deum laudamus" was chanted. During the hymn, the bishops, with their jewelled mitres, rose, and passing through the church, blessed the whole congregation, the new archbishop still remaining near the altar, and without his mitre. When he returned to his seat, the assistant bishops, including the consecrator, remained standing till the hymn was concluded.
Mexican Servants

The presiding bishop then advancing, without his mitre, to the right hand of the archbishop, said, "May thy hand be strengthened! May thy right hand be exalted! May justice and judgment be the preparation of thy see!" Then the organ pealed forth, and they chanted the hymn of "Gloria Patri." Long and solemn prayer followed; and then, all uncovered, stood beside the gospels, at the altar.

The archbishop rose, and with mitre and crosier, pronounced a solemn blessing on all the people assembled. Then, while all knelt beside the altar, he said—"For many years." This he repeated thrice; the second time, in the middle of the altar, the third at the feet of the presiding bishop. Then all rising, the archbishop bestowed on each the kiss of peace, and the ceremony concluded.

When everything was over, our carriage not being visible amongst the crowd of vehicles, I returned home in that of the —— Minister, with him and his attachés; after which, they and C—n returned to dine with the new archbishop in his palace. A dish of sweetmeats was sent me from his table, which are so pretty, (probably the chef-d'œuvre of the nuns,) that I send them to you, to preserve as a memorial of the consecration of the first Mexican archbishop—perhaps of the last!

LETTER THE NINETEENTH

June 3rd.

You ask me to tell you how I find the Mexican servants. Hitherto I had avoided the ungrateful theme, from very weariness of it. The badness of the servants, is an unfailing source of complaint even amongst Mexicans; much more so amongst foreigners, especially on their first arrival. We hear of their addiction to stealing, their laziness, drunkenness, dirtiness, with a host of other vices. That these complaints are frequently just, there can be no doubt, but the evil might be remedied to a great extent. In the first place servants are constantly taken without being required to bring a recommendation from their last