in 1819; the revolution of Yturibide in 1821; the cry of Liberty (grito de Libertad) given by those generals "bene-
meritos de la patria," Santa Anna and Victoria, in 1822; 
the establishment of the federal system in 1824; the horrible 
revolution of the Acorada, in which Mexico was pillaged, 
in 1838; the adoption of the central system in 1836; and 
the last revolution of the federalists in 1840. Another is 
predicted for next month, as if it were an eclipse of the 
sun. In nineteen years three forms of government have 
been tried, and two constitutions, the reform of one of 
which is still pending in the Chambers. "Dere is no link 
like trying!" (as the old perruquier observed, when he 
set out in a little boat to catch the royal yacht, still in 
sight of Scottish shores, with a new wig of his own 
invention, which he had trusted to have been permitted 
to present to his most gracious majesty George the 
Fourth!).

LETTER THE THIRTY-EIGHTH

New Minister—San Angel—Profitable Pulque Estate—The Village— 
Surrounding Scenery—The Indians—The Padre—The Climate— 
Holy Week in the Country Dramatic Representations—Coyo-
huacan—The Pharisiers—Image of the Saviour—Music and 
Dresses—Procession—Catholicism amongst the Indians—Strange 
Tradition—Paul the Fifth—Contrast between a Mexican and a 
New England Village—Love of Fireworks—Ferdinand the Seventh 
—Military Ball Drapeaux.

SAN ANGEL, March 30th.

It is a long while since I last wrote, but this week has 
been employed in moving into the country, and making 
arrangements for the sale of our furniture, in consequence 
of our having received official news from Spain of the 
nomination of a new envoy extraordinary and minister 
plenipotentiary to the republic of Mexico. As, on account 
of the yellow fever at Vera Cruz, we shall not wish to pass 
through that city later than May, it is necessary to be in 
readiness to start when the new minister arrives. On 
Thursday last we came out to this place, within three 
leagues of Mexico, where Don Francisco Tagle has kindly 
rent us his unoccupied country house. As we had an 
infinity of arrangements to make, much to bring out, and 
much to leave, and all Mexico to see, you will excuse this
long silence. Our house in town we leave to the guardian-
ship of the housekeeper; the other servants follow us here.

This house is very large, and has a fine garden and
orchard full of fruit, with pretty walks all through it, and
a sort of underwood of roses and sweet peas. It is a
great pulque hacienda, and, besides what is sent into
Mexico for sale, the court is constantly filled with the
half-naked Indians from the village, who come to have
their jarros filled with that inspiring beverage. Then
there is Doña Barbara (the guardian of the pulque), a
Spanish administrator, a number of good-looking Indian
women, and babies à discrétion. There is a small chapel,
a piazza, with handsome pillars going all round the
interior courtyard of the house, a billiard-table, and plenty
of good rooms. In front of the house are the maguey-
fields, and the azotea commands a beautiful view of the
neighbouring villages, San Angel, Coyohuacan, Mis-
cuaque, etc., with their woods and gardens, as well as of
the city itself, with its lakes and volcanoes.

As C—n's affairs take him to Mexico nearly every
day, we feel a little lonely in this large house, even though
perfectly comfortable; and besides the extreme stillness
and solitude, it is not considered safe for us to walk out
alone; consequently the orchard must bound our wishes.
And, of course, being prohibited from going farther, we
have the greatest desire to do so! In the evening, how-
ever, when our caballeros return, we frequently walk
down to the village, where the English minister has also
a house.

San Angel is pretty in its own way, with its fields of
maguey, its scattered houses, that look like the beaux
restes of better days, its market-place, parish church,
church of El Carmen, with the monastery and high-walled
gardens adjoining; with its narrow lanes, Indian huts,
profusion of pink roses, little bridge and avenue, and
scattered clusters of trees; its houses for temperamento
(constitution, as they call those where Mexican families
come to reside in summer), with their grated windows,
and gardens and orchards; and then the distant view of
Mexico, with the cathedral towers, volcanoes, and lofty
mountains, scattered churches and long lines of trees; and
nearer, the pretty villages of Coyohuacan and Miscuaque;
and everywhere the old church, the broken arch, the
ancient cross, with its faded flower-garlands, to com-
memorize a murder, or erected as an act of piety—all is so characteristic of Mexico, that the landscape could belong to no other part of the known world.

There is the Indian with his blanket, extracting the pulque from the maguery; the ranchero, with her reboso and broad-brimmed hat passing by upon her ass; the old lépero, in rags, sitting basking in the sun upon the stone seat in front of the door; the poor Indian woman, with matted hair and brown baby hanging behind her, refreshing herself by drinking three elucos (halfpence) worth of pulque from a jarrito (little earthen jar); the portly and well-looking padre prior del Carden (the Carmelite friar), sauntering up the lane at a leisurely pace, all the little ragged boys, down to the merest urchin that can hardly lisp, dragging off their large, well-holed hats, with a "Buenos dias, padre!" (Good-morning, little father!)—the father replying with a benevolent smile, and a slight sound in his throat intended for a Benedicite; and all that might be dull in any other climate brightened and made light and gay by the purest atmosphere, and bluest sky, and softest air, that ever blew or shone upon a naughty world.

We are now approaching the holy week once more—in Mexico a scene of variety in the streets and of splendour in the churches; but in the country a play, a sort of melodrama, in which the sufferings, death, and burial of our Saviour are represented by living figures in pantomime. We have heard a great deal of these representations, and are glad to have the opportunity of seeing them, which we intend to do in the village of Coyohuacan, where they are particularly curious. Besides this, our friends the A—s have a house there for the season, and, as the city of Cortes's predilection, it is classic ground. Meanwhile, for the last few days, the country has been overrun with Pharisees, Nazarenes, Jews, and figures of the Saviour, carried about in procession; all this in preparation for the holy week, a sort of overture to the drama.

The first evening we arrived there was a representation of the Pharisees searching for Christ. The Pharisees were very finely dressed, either in scarlet stuff and gold or in green and silver, with helmets and feathers, mounted upon horses which are taught to dance and rear to the sound of music, so that upon the whole they looked like performers at Astley's. They came on with music,
riding up the lanes until they arrived in front of this house, which being the principal place hereabouts, they came to first, and where the Indian workmen and servants were all collected to see them. They rode about for some time, as if in search of Christ, until a full-length figure of the Saviour appeared, dressed in purple robes, carried on a platform by four men, and guarded on all sides by soldiers. It is singular, that after all there is nothing ridiculous in these exhibitions; on the contrary, something rather terrible. In the first place, the music is good, which would hardly be the case in any but a Mexican village; the dresses are really rich, the gold all real, and the whole has the effect of confusing the imagination into the belief of its being a true scene.

The next evening the same procession passed, with some additions, always accompanied by a crowd of Indians from the villages, men, women, and children. Bonfires were made before the door of the hacienda, which were lighted whenever the distant music was heard approaching, and all the figures in the procession carried lighted lamps. The Saviour was then led up to the door, and all the crowd went up to kiss his feet. The figure which is carried about this evening is called "Our Saviour of the Column," and represents the Saviour tied to a pillar, bleeding, and crowned with thorns. All this must sound very profane, but the people are so quiet, seem so devout, and so much in earnest, that it appears much less so than you would believe.

The cross was planted here in a congenial soil, and as in the Pagan East the statues of the divinities frequently did no more than change their names from those of heathen gods to those of Christian saints, and image-worship apparently continued, though the mind of the Christian was directed from the being represented to the true and only God who inhabits eternity, so here the poor Indian still bows before visible representations of saints and virgins, as he did in former days before the monstrous shapes representing the unseen powers of the air, the earth, and the water; but he, it is to be feared, lifts his thoughts no higher than the rude image which a rude hand has carved. The mysteries of Christianity, to affect his untutored mind, must be visibly represented to his eyes. He kneels before the bleeding image of the Saviour who died for him, before the gracious form of the Virgin
who intercedes for him; but he believes that there are many Virgins, of various gifts, and possessing various degrees of miraculous power and different degrees of wealth, according to the quality and number of the diamonds and pearls with which they are endowed—one even who is the rival of the other—one who will bring rain when there is drought, and one to whom it is well to pray in seasons of inundation. Mexico owes much of its peculiar beauty to the religious or superstitious feelings of its inhabitants. At every step we see a white cross gleaming amongst the trees, in a solitary path, or on the top of some rugged and barren rock—a symbol of faith in the desert place; and wherever the footsteps of man have rested, and some three or four have gathered together, there, while the ruined huts proclaim the poverty of the inmates, the temple of God rises in comparative splendour.

It is strange, yet well authenticated, and has given rise to many theories, that the symbol of the cross was already known to the Indians before the arrival of Cortes. In the island of Cozumel, near Yucatan, there were several; and in Yucatan itself, there was a stone cross; and there, an Indian, considered a prophet among his countrymen, had declared that a nation bearing the same as a symbol, should arrive from a distant country! More extraordinary still was a temple dedicated to the Holy Cross by the Toltec nation in the city of Cholula. Near Tulaansingo also, there is a cross engraved on a rock, with various characters, which the Indians by tradition attribute to the apostle Saint Thomas. In Oajaca also there existed a cross which the Indians from time immemorial had been accustomed to consider as a divine symbol. By order of the Bishop Cervantes, it was placed in a sumptuous chapel in the cathedral. Information concerning its discovery, together with a small cross cut out of its wood, was sent to Rome to Paul the Fifth, who received it on his knees, singing the hymn, “I' exilla Regis prodeunt,” etc.

If any one wishes to try the effect of strong contrast, let him come direct from the United States to this country; but it is in the villages especially that the contrast is most striking. Travelling in New England, for example, we arrive at a small and flourishing village. We see four new churches, proclaiming four different sects; religion suited to all customers. These wooden churches or meeting-houses are all new, all painted white, or perhaps a
Life in Mexico

bright red. Hard by is a tavern with a green paling, as clean and as new as the churches, and there are also various smart stores and neat dwelling-houses; all new, all wooden, all clean, and all ornamented with slight Grecian pillars. The whole has a cheerful, trim, and flourishing aspect. Houses, churches, stores, and taverns, all are of a piece. They are suited to the present emergency, whatever that may be, though they will never make fine ruins. Everything proclaims prosperity, equality, consistency; the past forgotten, the present all in all, and the future taking care of itself. No delicate attentions to posterity, who can never pay its debts. No beggars. If a man has even a hole in his coat, he must be lately from the Emerald Isle.

Transport yourself in imagination from this New England village to that of ——, it matters not which, not far from Mexico. "Look on this picture, and on that." The Indian huts, with their half-naked inmates, and little gardens full of flowers; the huts themselves either built of clay, or the half-ruined beaux restes of some stone building. At a little distance an hacienda, like a deserted palace, built of solid masonry, with its inner patio surrounded by thick stone pillars, with great walls and iron-barred windows that might stand a siege. Here a ruined arch and cross, so solidly built, that one cannot but wonder how the stones ever crumbled away. There, rising in the midst of old faithful-looking trees, the church, gray and ancient, but strong as if designed for eternity; with its saints and virgins, and martyrs and relics, its gold and silver and precious stones, whose value would buy up all the spare lots in the New England village; the lepero with scarce a rag to cover him, kneeling on that marble pavement. Leave the enclosure of the church, observe the stone wall that bounds the road for more than a mile; the fruit trees overtopping it, high though it be, with their loaded branches. This is the convent orchard. And that great Gothic pile of building, that stands in hoary majesty, surmounted by the lofty mountains, whose cloud-enveloped summits, tinged by the evening sun, rise behind it; what could so noble a building be but the monastery, perhaps of the Carmelites, because of its exceeding rich garden, and well-chosen site, for they, of all monks, are richest in this world's goods. Also we may see the reverend old prior riding slowly from under the arched gate up the
village lanes, the Indians coming from their huts to do him lowly reverence as he passes. Here, everything reminds us of the past; of the conquering Spaniards, who seemed to build for eternity; impressing each work with their own solid, grave, and religious character; of the triumphs of catholicism; and of the Indians when Cortes first startled them from their repose, and stood before them like the fulfilment of a half-forgotten prophecy. It is the present that seems like a dream, a pale reflection of the past. All is decaying and growing fainter, and men seem trusting to some unknown future which they may never see. One government has been abandoned, and there is none in its place. One revolution follows another, yet the remedy is not found. Let them beware lest half a century later, they be awakened from their delusion, and find the cathedral turned into a meeting-house, and all painted white; the railing melted down; the silver transformed into dollars; the Virgin’s jewels sold to the highest bidder; the floor washed (which would do it no harm), and round the whole, a nice new wooden paling, freshly done in green—and all this performed by some of the artists from the wide-awake republic farther north.

Just as I wrote these words, a shower of crackers startled me from the profane ideas in which I was indulging, and the prancing of the horses of Jews and Pharisees, and the crackling of bonfires, warn me that it is time to take an evening stroll, that the sun is down, and the air refreshing. However, as to crackers and rockets, the common people enjoy them by day as much as by night. It is their favourite method of commemorating any event, evil or religious. “What do you suppose the Mexicans will be doing now?” said King Ferdinand to a Mexican who was at the Spanish court, shortly after the final success of the Revolutionists. “Letting off rockets, your Majesty,” answered the Mexican. “Well—I wonder what they are doing now in Mexico!” said the King in the afternoon. “Tirando cohetes—letting off rockets, your Majesty.” His Majesty chose to repeat the question in the evening. “What will your countrymen be doing now?” “The same thing, your Majesty. Still letting off rockets.”

Yesterday we drove into Mexico, to see how matters stood in our house, and received a number of visitors in our deserted apartments. Just before we left Mexico for
this place, three very magnificent aides-de-camp brought us an invitation from General Valencia, to attend a ball to be given by him and other officers, in the theatre, to the president, on the occasion of his excellency's being declared "benemerito de la patria." We did not go, as we were setting off for the country; but C---n being requested, as were the other ministers, to send the colours of his nation, did so, and to-day there is much talk in Mexico, besides a paragraph in the newspapers, connected with these matters. It appears that the drapeaux whether by accident or design, were improperly placed, and these faults in etiquette are not uncommon here. The English minister having observed that his drapeau was placed in a subordinate rank, and finding that his warnings beforehand on the subject, and his representations on seeing it were neglected, cut it down and left the ballroom, followed by all the English who were there.

LETTER THE THIRTY-NINTH


On Holy Thursday we went early in the morning to Coyohuacan (now pronounced Cuyacan), which is almost a continuation of the village of San Angel; but there are more trees in it, and every house has its garden, or at least its inner court, filled with orange-trees. Here, after the total destruction of the ancient Tenochtitlan, Cortes took up his residence for several months. Here he founded a convent of nuns, and in his testament he desired to be buried in this convent, "in whatever part of the world I may finish my days." The conqueror's last wishes in this respect were not held sacred. At the time of the conquest, Coyohuacan, together with Tacubaya, etc., stood upon the margin of the Lake of Tezcuco; most of the houses built within the water upon stakes, so that the canoes entered by a low door. This was un-