August 1st.—We had a visit last evening from one of the directors of the mint, a curious and most original genius, a Mexican, who has served nearly thirty years in that and other capacities, and who, after speaking of the different viceroys he had seen, proceeded to give us various anecdotes of the Viceroy Revillagigedo, the most honoured for his justice, renowned for his energy, and feared for his severity, of the whole dynasty. Our friend was moved to enthusiasm by the sight of an old-fashioned but very handsome musical clock, which stands on a table in the drawing-room, and which he says was brought over by this viceroy, and was no doubt considered a miracle of art in those days.

Some of the anecdotes he told us are already generally known here, but his manner of telling them was very interesting, and he added various particulars which we had not heard before. Besides, the stories themselves seem to me so curious and characteristic, that however much they lose by being tamely written instead of dramatized as they are by him, I am tempted to give you one or two specimens. But my letter is getting beyond all ordinary limits, and your curiosity will no doubt keep cool till the arrival of another packet.

LETTER THE FORTY-THIRD

Revillagigedo—The False Merchant and the Lady—The Viceroy, the Unjust Spaniard, the Indian, and the Golden Ounces—Horrible Murder—Details—Oath—Country Family—The Spot of Blood—The Mother unknowingly denounces her Son—Arrest of the Three—Confession—Execution—The Viceroy fulfils his Pledge—Paving of the Streets—Severity to the Monks—Solitary Damse—Box on the Ear—Pension—Morning Concert—New Minister—"Street of the Sad Indian"—Traditions—A Farewell Audience—Inscription on a Tomb.

August 3rd.

A LADY of fortune, owing to some combination of circumstances, found herself in difficulties, and in immediate want of a small sum of money. Don — being her compadre, and a respectable merchant, she went to him to state her necessities, and offered him a case of valuable jewels as security for repayment, provided he would advance her eight hundred dollars. He agreed, and the bargain was concluded without any written document, the
lady depositing her jewels and receiving the sum. At the end of a few months, her temporary difficulties being ended, she went to her comadre’s house to repay the money, and receive back her jewels. The man readily received the money, but declared to his astonished comadre, that as to the jewels, he had never heard of them, and that no such transaction had taken place. The Señora, indignant at the merchant’s treachery, instantly repaired to the palace of the vice-king hoping for justice from this Western Solomon, though unable to conceive how it could be obtained. She was instantly received by Revillagigedo, who listened attentively to her account of the circumstances. “Had you no witnesses?” said the count. “None,” replied she. “Did no servant pass in or out during the transaction?” “No one.” The viceroy reflected a moment. “Does your comadre smoke?” “No, sir,” said the lady, astonished at this irrelevant question, and perhaps the more so, as the count’s aversion to smoking was so well known, that none of his smoking subjects ventured to approach him without having taken every precaution to deaden any odour of the fragrant weed which might lurk about their clothes or person. “Does he take snuff?” said the viceroy. “Yes, your Excellency,” said his visitor, who probably feared that for once his Excellency’s wits were wool-gathering. “That is sufficient,” said the viceroy; “retire into the adjoining chamber and keep quiet—your jewels shall be restored.” His Excellency then despatched a messenger for the merchant, who immediately presented himself.

“I have sent for you,” said the viceroy, “that we may talk over some matters in which your mercantile knowledge may be of use to the state.” The merchant was overwhelmed with gratitude and joy; while the viceroy entered into conversation with him upon various affairs connected with his profession. Suddenly the viceroy put his hand first in one pocket, then in the other, with the air of a man who has mislaid something. “Ah!” said he, “my snuff-box. Excuse me for a moment while I go to fetch it from the next room.” “Sir!” said the merchant, “permit me to have the honour of offering my box to your Excellency.” His Excellency received it as if mechanically, holding it in his hand and talking, till pretexting some business, he went out, and calling an officer, desired him to take that snuff-box to the
merchant's house, asking his wife as from him, by that
token, to deliver to the bearer a case of jewels which he
had there. The viceroy returned to the apartment where
he had left his flattered guest, and remained in conversa-
tion with him until the officer returned, and requesting
private speech of the viceroy, delivered to him a jewel-
case which he had received from the merchant's wife.

Revolagigedo then returned to his fair complainant,
and under pretence of showing her some rooms in the
palace, led her into one, where amongst many objects of
value, the jewel-case stood open. No sooner had she cast
her eyes upon it than she started forward in joy and
amazement. The viceroy requested her to wait there a
little longer, and returned to his other guest. "Now,"
said he, "before going further, I wish to hear the truth
concerning another affair in which you are interested.
Are you acquainted with the Señora de ——?" "Inti-
mately, sir—she is my comadre." "Did you lend her
eight hundred dollars, at such a date?" "I did." "Did
she give you a case of jewels in pledge?" "Never," said
the merchant, vehemently. "The money was lent without
any security; merely as an act of friendship, and she has
invented a story concerning some jewels, which has not
the slightest foundation." In vain the viceroy begged him
to reflect, and not, by adding falsehood to treachery, force
him to take measures of severity. The merchant with
oaths persisted in his denial. The viceroy left the room
suddenly, and returned with the jewel-case in his hand; at
which unexpected apparition, the astonished merchant
changed colour, and entirely lost his presence of mind.
The viceroy ordered him from his presence, with a severe
rebuke for his falsehood and treachery, and an order never
again to enter the palace. At the same time he com-
manded him to send him, the next morning, eight hundred
dollars with five hundred more; which he did, and which
were, by the viceroy's order, distributed amongst the
hospitals. His Excellency is said to have added a
severe reprimand to the lady, for having made a bargain
without writing.

Another story which I recollect, is as follows: A poor
Indian appeared before the viceroy, and stated that he
had found in the street a bag full of golden ounces, which
had been advertised with the promise of a handsome
reward to the person who should restore them to the
owner; that upon carrying them to this Don — — —, he had received the bag, counted the ounces, extracted two, which he had seen him slip into his pocket; and had then reproached the poor man with having stolen part of the money, had called him a thief and a rascal, and, instead of rewarding, had driven him from the house. With the viceroy there was no delay. Immediate action was his plan. Detaining the Indian, he despatched an officer to desire the attendance of Don — — — with his bag of ounces. He came, and the viceroy desired him to relate the circumstances, his practised eye reading his falsehood at a glance. “May it please your Excellency, I lost a bag containing gold. The Indian, now in your Excellency’s presence, brought it to me in hopes of a reward, having first stolen part of its contents. I drove him from the house as a thief, who, instead of recompense, deserves punishment.”

“Stay,” said the viceroy, “there is some mistake here. How many ounces were there in the bag you lost?” “Twenty-eight.” “And how many are here?” “But twenty-six.” “Count them down. I see it is as you say. The case is clear, and we have all been mistaken. Had this Indian been a thief, he would never have brought back the bag, and stolen merely two ounces. He would have kept the whole. It is evident that this is not your bag but another which this poor man has found. Sir, our interview is at an end. Continue to search for your bag of gold; and as for you, friend, since we cannot find the true owner, sweep up these twenty-six pieces and carry them away. They are yours.” So saying, his Excellency bowed out the discomfited cheat and the overjoyed rustic. Mr. — - says that this story, he thinks, is taken from something similar in an oriental tale. However, it may have occurred twice.

A horrible murder took place in 1789, during the vice-royaltyship of Revillagigedo, which is remarkable in two particulars; the trifling circumstances which led to its discovery, and the energy displayed by the viceroy, contrasting strongly with the tardy execution of justice in our days. There lived in Mexico at that period, in the street of Cordovanes, No. 15, a rich merchant of the name of Don Joaquin Dongo. A clerk named José Joaquín Blanco, who had formerly been in his office, having fallen into vicious courses, and joined in companionship with two
other young men, Filipe Aldama and Baltazar Quintero, gamblers and cock-fighters (with reverence be it spoken!) like himself, formed, in concert with them, a plan for robbing his former master.

They accordingly repaired to the house one evening when they knew that Dongo was from home, and imitating the signal which Blanco knew the coachman was in the habit of making to the porter when the carriage returned at night, the doors were immediately thrown open, and the robbers entered. The porter was their first victim. He was thrown down and stabbed. A postman, who was waiting with letters for the return of the master of the house, was the next, and then the cook, and so on, until eleven lay weltering in their blood. The wretches then proceeded to pick the locks of the different bureaux, guided by Blanco, who, in his former capacity, had made himself au fait of all the secrets of the house. They obtained twenty-two thousand dollars in specie, and about seven thousand dollars' worth of plate.

Meanwhile the unfortunate master of the house returned home, and at the accustomed signal the doors were opened by the robbers, and on the entrance of the carriage, instantly relcocked. Seeing the porter bathed in blood, and dead bodies lying at the foot of the staircase, he comprehended at once his desperate situation, and advancing to Aldama, who stood near the door, he said, "My life is in your hands; but for God's sake, show some mercy, and do not murder me in cold blood. Say what sums of money you want. Take all that is in the house, and leave me, and I swear to keep your secret." Aldama consented, and Dongo passed on. As he ascended the stairs, stepping over the body of the postman, he encountered Quintero, and to him he made the same appeal, with the same success; when Blanco, springing forward, held his sword to Quintero's breast, and swearing a great oath, exclaimed, "If you do not stab him, I will kill you on the spot!" Conceive, for one moment, the situation of the unfortunate Dongo, surrounded by the murdered and the murderers in his own house, at the dead of the night, and without a hope of assistance! The suspense was momentary. Thus adjured, Quintero stabbed him to the heart.

The murderers then collected their spoil, and it being still dark, two of them got into Dongo's carriage, the
third acting as coachman, and so drove swiftly out of
the gates of the city, till, arriving at a deserted spot, not
far from a village, they turned the carriage and mules
adrift, and buried their treasure, which they transported
afterwards to a house in the Calle de la Aguila (the street
of the eagle), No. 23; and went about their avocations
in the morning, as if nothing had occurred. Meanwhile,
the public consternation may be conceived, when the
morning dawned upon this bloody tragedy. As for the
vicerey, he swore that the murderers should be discovered,
and hanged before his eyes, that day next.

Immediately the most energetic measures were taken,
and the gates of the city shut, to prevent all egress.
Orders were given through all the different districts of the
capital, that every guest, or visitor, or boarder, whether
in inn or lodging, or private house, should have their
names given up to the police, with an account of their
condition, occupation, motives for living in Mexico, etc.
Strict cognizance was taken in all the villages near the
capital, of every person who had passed through, or
entered, or left the village within a certain space of time.
All the roads near the capital were scouried by parties of
soldiers. Every hidden place was searched by the police;
every suspected house entered. The funeral of the ill-
fated Dongo and of the other victims, took place the
following day; and it was afterwards remembered that
Aldama was there amongst the foremost, remarking and
commenting upon this horrible wholesale butchery, and
upon the probabilities of discovering the murderers.

A country family from a neighbouring village, hearing
of all these doings in Mexico, and with that love of the
marvellous which characterizes persons uneducated, or
unaccustomed to the world, determined to pay a visit to
the capital, and to hear at the fountain head, all these
wonderful stories, which had probably reached them under
a hundred exaggerated forms. No sooner had they
entered their lodgings, than they were visited and
examined by the police, and their deposition taken down
as to their motives for visiting the capital, their place of
birth, etc. As a gratuitous piece of information, one of
them mentioned, that, passing by a barber’s shop (prob-
ably with his eyes opened wide in the expectation of seeing
horrible sights), he had observed a man talking to the
barber, who had a stain of blood upon his queue (hair
being then worn powdered and tied behind). Trilling as this circumstance appears to us, the viceroy ordered that the person who mentioned it should instantly conduct the police officers to the shop where he had observed it. The shop being found, the barber was questioned as to what persons he had been conversing with that morning, and mentioned about half-a-dozen; amongst others Aldama, who did not bear a very good reputation. Aldama was sent for, confronted with the man who gave the information, identified as the same, and the stain of blood being observed, he was immediately committed to prison upon suspicion. Being questioned as to the cause of the stain, he replied, that being at a cock-fight, on such a day, at such an hour, the blood from one of the dying cocks, which he held, had spirted up, and stained the collar of his shirt and his hair. Inquiries being made at the cock-pit, this was corroborated by several witnesses, and extraordinary as it is, it is most probable that the assertion was true.

But meanwhile, the mother of Blanco, deeply distressed at the dissolute courses of her son, took the resolution (which proves more than anything else Revillagigedo's goodness, and the confidence which all classes had in him) to consult the viceroy as to the means of converting the young man to better habits. It seems as if the hand of an avenging Providence had conducted this unfortunate mother to take a step so fatal to her son. She told the viceroy that she had in vain attempted to check him, that his days and nights were spent with profligate companions in gambling-houses and in cock-pits, and that she feared some mischief would come some day from his fighting and swearing and drinking; that but a few days since he had come home late, and that she had observed that his stockings were dabbled in blood; that she had questioned him upon it; and that he had answered surlily he had got it in the cock-pit. Her narration was hardly concluded, before Blanco was arrested and placed in a separate cell of the same prison with Aldama. Shortly after, Quintero, only as being the intimate friend and companion of both parties, was taken up on suspicion and lodged in the same prison; all being separately confined, and no communication permitted between them.

It seems as if Quintero, perhaps the least hardened of the three, was struck with the conviction that, in the extraordinary combination of circumstances which had led
to the arrest of himself and his companions in villany, the
finger of God was too distinctly visible to permit a doubt
of ultimate discovery to rest upon his mind, for he con-
fessed at once, and declaring that he saw all denial was
useless, gave a circumstantial account of the whole. He
begged for nine days' grace to prepare himself for death,
but the viceroy would grant but three. When Aldama
confessed, he made the avowal that he was guilty of a
previous murder, when he was alcalde of a village near
Mexico, which was before the time of Revillagigedo, and
for which he had been tried and acquitted. He being
alcalde, the postman of the village was in the habit of
passing by his house, giving him an account of whatever
money he had collected, etc. One evening this man
stopped at Aldama's, and told him he was intrusted with
a sum of fifteen hundred dollars to carry to a neighbouring
village. At twelve o'clock he left Aldama's house, who,
taking a short cut across the fields, reached the postman
by this other direction, stabbed him, and carried back the
money. Next day, when the murder was made known,
the alcalde, in his robes of justice, visited the body, and
affected to institute a strict search for the murderer.
Nevertheless he was suspected and arrested, but escaped
by bribery, and shortly after, leaving the village, came
to the wider theatre of Mexico.

The murderers having thus made their confession, were
ordered to prepare for death. A scaffold erected between
the central gate of the palace, and that which is now the
principal gate of the city guards, was hung with black
to denote that the criminals were of noble blood. An
immense crowd were assembled; and the viceroy, standing
on the balcony of his palace, witnessed the execution in
the great square, the very day week that the murders were
committed.

The streets were then kept in perfect order, both as to
paving and lighting; and on one occasion, having rode
all through the city, as was his custom, to observe whether
everything was in order for the holy week, he observed
that several parts of the different streets were unpaved,
and out of repair; whereupon, sending for the head of the
police, he desired that these streets should be paved and
in order before the holy week, of which it wanted but a few
days. The officer declared the thing to be impossible.
The viceroy ordered it to be done, on the penalty of losing
his place. Early on the morning of Palm Sunday, he sent to know if all was in readiness; and as the bells tolled for early mass, the last stone was laid on the Calle San Francisco, which completed the work. . . .

It is said he frequently went about incog., attended by one or two aides-de-camp, by which means, like another Haroun Al Raschid, he was enabled to discover and correct hidden abuses. By his orders, no monk could be out of his convent after vespers. Walking one evening along the streets, he encountered a monk in the Calle San Francisco, taking his pleasure long after the appointed hour. The viceroy walked directly to the convent; and on making himself known, was received by the abbot with all due respect. “How many monks have you in your convent, father?” asked the viceroy. “Fifty, your Excellence.” “There are now only forty-nine. Call them over, see which is the missing brother, and let his name be struck out.” The list was produced—the names called over, and only forty-five monks presented themselves. By order of the viceroy, the five who had broken through the rules, were never again admitted into the convent. Alas! could his Excellency have lived in these our degenerate days, and beheld certain monks of a certain order drinking pulque and otherwise disporting themselves! nay, seen one, as we but just now did from the window, strolling along the street by lamplight, with an Yntida (Indian girl) tucked under his arm! . . .

One more anecdote of the “immortal Revillagigedo,” and I have done. It was very late at night, when not far from the gate of the city called “The lost child,” (in commemoration of that period when “the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem,” and that his parents sought for him sorrowing,) his Excellency encountered a good-looking damsel, walking briskly and alone, at these untimely hours; yet withal quiet and modest in her demeanour. Wishing to try the temper of her steel (or brass) he left his officers a little way behind; and perhaps they were not astonished. . . . “Oh! by no means, certainly not!”—when they saw the grave and severe Revillagigedo approach the fair maiden somewhat familiarly, and request permission to accompany her in her rambles, a proposal which was indignantly rejected. “Anda!” (Come!) said his Excellency, “give over these airs—you, a mugercilla, strolling about in search of
adventures.” Imagine the feelings of his Excellency, on receiving in reply a tremendous and well-applied box on the ear! The staff rushed forward, and were astonished to find the viceroy with a smiling countenance, watching the retreating steps of the adventurous damsel. “What! your Excellency—such insolence! such audacity! such——” “Come, come,” said the viceroy, “she has proved herself worthy of our favour. Let instant inquiry be made as to her birth and parentage, and as to her reasons for being on the streets at this hour. They must be honest ones.” The result proved the viceroy correct in his opinion. She was a poor girl, supporting a dying mother by giving music lessons, and obliged to trudge on foot from house to house at all hours; and amongst her scholars was the daughter of an old lady who lived out of the gates of the city, and from whose house, being that of her last visited pupil, she had frequently to return late at night. On being informed of these particulars, his Excellency ordered her a pension of three hundred dollars per annum, to be continued to the day of her death, and it is said she is still alive, though very old. This is making one’s fortune by a coup de main, or by a lucky hit!

August 6th.—This morning we had some very good music; Madame Castellan and the tenor, and Madame Cesari having passed some hours here, together with Madame la Baronne de —— and a few other gentlemen and ladies. La Castellan was very amiable, and sang beautifully, but looked pale and fatigued. She has been very effective lately in the Somnambula. Madame Cesari was in great beauty.

About an hour after they had gone, the new minister and his family made their entrée into Mexico. It is now, however, too late for us to return till the autumn, as there is a great deal of fever at Vera Cruz; nor do we entirely give up hopes, as soon as C—n shall be at leisure, of making another journey on horseback into the interior. There are, however, rumours of another pronunciamiento, and should this be the case, our present quarters next to the palace will be more distinguished than agreeable.

I have always had a curiosity to know why the Calle del Indio Triste (Street of the Sad Indian) was so called. We are on visiting terms with two or three houses in that street, and never pass those large black letters, which
tell the passenger that this is the street of "The Sad Indian," without my imagination figuring to itself that here some tragedy connected with the conquest must have taken place. It was therefore with great joy that I fell upon an article in the "Mosaico Mejicano," purporting to give an explanation of this melancholy title-page to an otherwise very tolerable (in the way of houses) but very ill-paved street, where, amongst other handsome edifices, is the house of a rich Spaniard (Señor R—o), remarkable for its beautiful entrance and elegant salons. It appears that there are different traditions respecting it. One, that shortly after the conquest, a rich cacique lived there, who acted as a spy on his Indian brethren, and informed the viceroy of all their plans and combinations against the government; but that on one occasion, having failed to inform his patrons of an intended mutiny, they seized this pretext for sequestrating his property:—that afterwards, poor, abandoned and despised, he sat down in the corner of the street, weeping his misfortune and meeting with no pity; until at length he abstained from all food for some days, and was found dead in the corner of the street, sitting in the same melancholy posture; that the viceroy declared his wealth crown property, and with the intention of striking terror into the hearts of the malcontents, caused a stone statue to be made representing the weeping Indian; that this statue was placed at the corner of the street, with its back to the wall, and so remained until, the house being pulled down, the statue was sent to the Museum, where it now is; the street retaining the name of the Sad Indian.

But there is another tradition mentioned concerning the origin of the name, more interesting and even more probable. It appears that the ground now occupied by this street is the site of the Palace of Axayacatl, the father of Montezuma, last Emperor of Mexico. In this spacious and magnificent palace the Spaniards were received and lodged, and, according to Torquemada, each in a separate apartment. There were a multitude of idols in this dwelling, and though they had no separate temple, various feasts were dedicated to them. After the conquest they were for the most part broken and destroyed, and it was only lately that, by accident, the head of the god of the waters, beautifully worked in serpentine marble, was discovered there; still, one statue had been preserved, that
of an Indian, said to have been placed there by the Aztecs, as a memorial of their sorrow at the death of Montezuma, to whom, on account of his misfortunes, they gave the name of "el Indio triste." This was afterwards placed at the corner of the new building erected there by the Spaniards, and gave its name to the street. It is a melancholy-looking statue, whomsoever it may represent, of an Indian in a sitting posture, with a most dejected and forlorn air and countenance. The material is basaltic stone.

11th.—C——n has just returned from seeing the general archives, which are all in confusion and going to ruin. Don Ygnacio Cuevas, who has the charge of them, has written various works—the History of the Vicerroys—the Californias, etc.—which were robbed or destroyed in the last pronunciamiento. He related the story of Revillagigedo and the jewels, only differing from my friend’s narrative in that he says it was not a jewel-case, but a diamond bracelet. He assured C——n that Mexico in Indian means "below this," alluding to the population who, according to tradition, are buried beneath the Pedregal.

18th.—News has arrived that General Paredes pronounced in Guadalajara on the eighth of the month! Strange rumours are afloat, and it is generally supposed that Santa Anna is or will be the prime mover of the great changes that are predicted. By many, however, it is talked of as very trifling, as a mere movement that will soon be put down. The plan which Paredes has published is essentially military, but announces a congress, which renders it very popular in the departments. It has been adopted by the departments of Zacatecas, Durango, and Guanajvato. Meanwhile, everything continues here as usual. We have been several times at the opera; the paseos are very crowded, and we had a musical soirée the other evening, which was very gay, but from the signs of the times, will probably be our last in Mexico.

28th.—This morning C——n took his farewell audience of the president, and the new minister was received.

30th.—These few last days have chiefly been spent in paying visits of ceremony with the Señora——. Nevertheless we spent an hour last evening in the beautiful cemetery a little way out of the city, which is rather a favourite haunt of ours, and is known as the "Panteon
de Santa Maria." It has a beautiful chapel attached to it, where the daily mass is said for the dead, and a large garden filled with flowers. Young trees of different kinds have been planted there, and the sight of the tombs themselves, in their long and melancholy array of black collins, with gold-lettered inscriptions, even while it inspires the saddest ideas, has something soothing in its effect. They are kept in perfect order, and the inscriptions, though not always eloquent, are almost always full of feeling, and sometimes extremely touching. There is one near the entrance, which is pathetic in its native language, and though it loses much in the translation, I shall transcribe it:

"Here lie the beloved remains of Carmen and José Pimentel y Heras. The first died the 11th of June, 1838, aged one year and eleven months; the second on the 5th of September of 1839, in the sixteenth month of his existence; and to their dear memory maternal love dedicates the following:

"EPITAPH.

"Babes of my love! my Carmen and José! 
Sons of your cherished father, Pimentel.
Why have you left your mother's side? for whom?
What motives have ye had to leave me thus?
But hark! I hear your voice—and breathlessly
I listen. I hear ye say—'To go to heaven!
Mother! we have left thee to see our God!'
Beloved shades! if this indeed be so,
Then let these bitter tears be turned to joy.
It is not meet that I should mourn for ye,
Since ye have exchanged for my God,
To Him give thanks! and in your holy songs,
Pray that your parents' fate may be like yours."

LETTER THE FORTY-FOURTH


This afternoon the clouds, gathered together in gloomy masses, announced a thunderstorm, and at the same time