Santa Anna and his Suite 443

— every hospital, jail, college, and madhouse in Mexico!

26th.—To-day they are celebrating their independence. All the bells in all the churches, beginning with the cathedral, are pealing—cannon firing—rockets rushing up into the air—Santa Anna in the Alameda, speechifying—troops galloping—little boys running—Te Deum chanting—crowds of men and women jostling each other—the streets covered with carriages, the balconies covered with people—the Paséo expected to be crowded. I have escaped to a quiet room, where I am trying to find time to make up my letters before the packet goes. I conclude this just as the dictator, with his brilliant staff, has driven off to Tacubaya.

LETTER THE FORTY-SEVENTH


4th November.

A great function was given in the opera in honour of his excellency. The theatre was most brilliantly illuminated with wax lights. Two principal boxes were thrown into one for the president and his suite, and lined with crimson and gold, with draperies of the same. The staircase leading to the second tier where this box was, was lighted by and lined all the way up with rows of footmen in crimson and gold livery. A crowd of gentlemen stood waiting in the lobby for the arrival of the hero of the fête. He came at last in regal state, carriages and outriders at full gallop; himself, staff and suite, in splendid uniform. As he entered, Señor Roca presented him with a libretto of the opera, bound in red and gold. We met the great man en face, and he stopped, and gave us a cordial recognition. Two years have made little change in him in appearance. He retains the same interesting, resigned,
and rather melancholy expression; the same quiet voice, and grave but agreeable manner; and surrounded by pompous officers, he alone looked quiet, gentlemanly, and high bred. The theatre was crowded to suffocation; boxes, pit, and galleries. There was no applause as he entered. One solitary voice in the pit said "Viva Santa Anna!" but it seemed checked by a slight movement of disapprobation, scarcely amounting to a murmur. The opera was Belisarius; considered à propos to the occasion, and was really beautifully montée; the dresses new and superb—the decorations handsome. They brought in real horses, and Belisarius entered in a triumphal chariot, drawn by white steeds; but for this the stage is infinitely too small, and the horses plunged and pranced so desperately, that Belisarius wisely jumped out and finished his aria on foot. The two prima donnas acted together—the wife and daughter of the hero—both about the same age, and dressed very well. But the Castellan's voice is not suited to the opera, and the music, beautiful as it is, was the least effective part of the affair. The generals, in their scarlet and gold uniforms, sat like peacocks surrounding Santa Anna, who looked modest and retiring, and as if quite unaccustomed to the public gaze! The boxes were very brilliant—all the diamonds taken out for the occasion. His Excellency is by no means indifferent to beauty—tout au contraire; yet I dare say his thoughts were this night of things more warlike and less fair.

Let all this end as it may, let them give everything whatever name is most popular, the government is now a military dictatorship. Señor—calls this revolution "the apotheosis of egotism transformed into virtue;" and it must be confessed, that in most of the actors, it has been a mere calculation of personal interests.

10th.—We went, some days ago, with our friends from San Xavier, to visit the hospital of San Juan de Dios, at San Cosmè. We found that, being at present under repair, it has but two occupants, old women—who keep each other melancholy company. The building is very spacious and handsome; erected, of course, during Spanish dominion, and extremely clean—an observation worthy of note, when it occurs in Mexican public buildings. There is a large hall, divided by square pillars, with a light and cheerful aspect, where the patients sleep; and a separate apartment for women. The rooms are all so clean, airy,
and cheerful, that one forgets it is an hospital. In this respect, the style of building here is superior to all others, with large airy courtyards and fountains, long galleries and immense apartments, with every window open. There is no part of Europe where, all the year round, invalids can enjoy such advantages; but, also, there are few parts of Europe where the climate would permit them to do so.

The following day we visited another hospital; that known as the Hospital de Jesus—hallowed ground; for here the mortal remains of Cortes were deposited. And, though rescued from desecration by a distinguished individual, during a popular tumult, so that they no longer repose in the sanctuary of the chapel, there still exists, enshrined here, that over which time and revolutions have no power—his memory.

The establishment, as an hospital, is much finer, and the building infinitely handsomer than the other. The director, a physician, led us first into his own apartments, as the patients were dining, and afterwards showed us through the whole establishment. The first large hall, into which we were shown, is almost entirely occupied by soldiers, who had been wounded during the pronunciamiento. One had lost an arm, another a leg, and they looked sad and haggard enough, though they seemed perfectly well attended to, and, I dare say, did anything but bless the revolutions that brought them to that state, and with which they had nothing to do; for your Mexican soldier will lie down on his mat at night, a loyal man, and will waken in the morning and find himself a pronunciado. Each one had a separate room, or at least a compartment divided by curtains from the next; and in each was a bed, a chair, and a small table; this on one side of the long hall. The other was occupied by excellent hot and cold baths. We then visited the women’s apartment, which is on a similar plan. Amongst the patients is an unfortunate child of eight years old, who in the pronunciamiento had been accidentally struck by a bullet, which entered her left temple and came out below the right eye, leaving her alive. The ball was extracted, and a portion of the brain came out at the wound. She is left blind, or nearly so, having but a faint glimmering of light. They say she will probably live, which seems impossible. She looks like a galvanized corpse—yet must have been a good-looking child. Notwithstanding the nature of her wound,
her reason has not gone, and as she sat upright in her little bed, with her head bandaged, and her fixed and sightless eyes, she answered meekly and readily to all the questions we put to her. Poor little thing! she was shocking to look at; one of the many innocent beings whose lives are to be rendered sad and joyless by this revolution. The doctor seemed very kind to her.

A curious accident happened to Señor — in this last pronunciamiento. He had already lost his leg in the first one; and was limping along the street, when he was struck by a ball. He was able to reach his house, and called to his wife, to tell her what had occurred. Her first impulse was to call for a doctor, when he said to her very coolly, "Not this time,—a carpenter will do better." He had been shot in his wooden leg!

At the end of the women's apartment in this hospital, there is a small chapel where mass is said to the invalids. It is only remarkable as having over the altar an image of the Purisima, brought from Spain by Cortes. We went all through the building, even to the enclosure on the azotea, where dead bodies are dissected; and on which azotea was a quantity of wool, taken from the mattresses of those who die in the hospital, and which is left in the sun during a certain period before it is permitted to be used again. The whole establishment struck us as being healthy, cleanly, and well-conducted. We then visited the fine old church, which has but one broad aisle with a handsome altar, and near it is the small monument, under which the bones of the conqueror were placed. The sacristy of the church is remarkable for its ceiling, composed of the most intricately and beautifully carved mahogany; a work of immense labour and taste, after the Gothic style. The divisions of the compartments are painted blue and ornamented with gilding. In the centre of the apartment is an immense circular table, formed of one piece of mahogany; for which large sums have been refused.

We went in the evening to visit the Cuna, which is not a fine building, but a large, healthy, airy house. At the door, where there are a porter and his wife, the babies are now given in. Formerly they were put in at the reja, at the window of the porter's lodge; but this had to be given up, in consequence of the tricks played by boys or idle persons, who put in dogs, cats, or dead animals. As
Old Woman and Baby

we were going upstairs, we heard an old woman singing a cheerful ditty in an awfully cracked voice, and as we got a full view of her before she could see us, we saw a clean, old body sitting, sewing and singing, while a baby rolling on the floor in a state of perfect ecstasy, was keeping up a sort of crowing duet with her. She seemed delighted to see these ladies, who belong to the Junta, and led us into a large hall where a score of nurses and babies were performing a symphony of singing, hushing, crying, lullabying, and other nursery music. All along the room were little green painted beds, and both nurses and babies looked clean and healthy. The ——s knew every baby and nurse and directress by name. Some of the babies were remarkably pretty, and when we had admired them sufficiently, we were taken into the next hall, occupied by little girls of two, three, and four years old. They were all seated on little mats at the foot of their small green beds; a regiment of the finest and healthiest children possible; a directress in the room sewing. At our entrance, they all jumped up simultaneously, and surrounded us with the noisiest expressions of delight. One told me in a confidential whisper, that "Manuelita had thumped her own head, and had a pain in it;" but I could not see that Manuelita seemed to be suffering any acute agonies, for she made more noise than any of them. One little girl sidled up to me, and said in a most insinuating voice, "Me llevas tu?" "Will you take me away with you?"—for even at this early age they begin to have a glimmering idea that those whom the ladies choose from amongst them are peculiarly favoured. We staid some time with them, and admired their healthy, happy, and well-fed appearance; and then proceeded to the apartment of the boys; all little things of the same age, sitting ranged in a row like senators in congress, and, strange to say, much quieter and graver than the female babies; but this must have been from shyness, for before we came away, we saw them romping in great style. The directresses seem good respectable women, and kind to the children, who, as I mentioned before, are almost all taken away and brought up by rich people, before they have time to know that there is anything peculiar or unfortunate in their situation. After this adoption, they are completely on a level with the other children of the family—an equal portion is left them, and although their condition is never
made a secret of, they frequently marry as well as their adopted brothers and sisters.

Those who are opposed to this institution, are so on the plea that it encourages and facilitates vice. That the number of children in the hospital is a proof that much vice and much poverty do exist, there is no doubt; that by enabling the vicious to conceal their guilt, or by relieving the poor from their burden, it encourages either vice or idleness, is scarcely probable. But even were it so, the certain benefits are so immense, when laid in the balance with the possible evils, that they cannot be put in competition. The mother who leaves her child at the Cuna, would she not abandon it to a worse fate, if this institution did not exist? If she does so to conceal her disgrace is it not seen that a woman will stop at no cruelty, to obtain this end? as exposure of her infant, even murder? and that, strong as maternal love is, the dread of the world’s scorn has conquered it? If poverty be the cause, surely the misery must be great indeed, which induces the poorest beggar or the most destitute of the Indian women (whose love for their children amounts to a passion) to part with her child; and though it is suspected that the mother who has left her infant at the Cuna, has occasionally got herself hired as a nurse, that she may have the pleasure of bringing it up, it seems to me that no great evil can arise, even from that.

These orphans are thus rescued from the contamination of vice, from poverty, perhaps from the depths of depravity; perhaps their very lives are saved, and great sin prevented. Hundreds of innocent children are thus placed under the care of the first and best ladies in the country, and brought up to be worthy members of society.

Another day we devoted to visiting a different and more painful scene—the Acordada, or public jail; a great solid building, spacious, and well ventilated. For this also there is a Junta, or society of ladies of the first families, who devote themselves to teaching the female malefactors. It is painful and almost startling to see the first ladies in Mexico familiarly conversing with and embracing women who have been guilty of the most atrocious crimes; especially of murdering their husbands; which is the chief crime of the female prisoners. There are no bad faces amongst them; and probably not one who has committed a premeditated crime. A moment of jealousy during in-
toxication, violent passions without any curb, suddenly aroused and as suddenly extinguished, have led to these frightful results. We were first shown into a large and tolerably clean apartment, where were the female prisoners who are kept apart as being of a more decent family than the rest. Some were lying on the floor, others working—some were well dressed, others dirty and slovenly. Few looked sad; most appeared careless and happy, and none seemed ashamed. Amongst them were some of the handsomest faces I have seen in Mexico. One good-looking common woman, with a most joyous and benevolent countenance, and lame, came up to salute the ladies. I inquired what she had done. "Murdered her husband, and buried him under the brick floor!" Shade of Lavater! It is some comfort to hear that their husbands were generally such brutes, they deserved little better! Amongst others confined here is the wife, or rather the widow, of a governor of Mexico, who made away with her husband. We did not see her, and they say she generally keeps out of the way when strangers come. One very pretty and coquettish little woman, with a most intellectual face, and very superior-looking, being in fact a relation of Count ——'s, is in jail on suspicion of having poisoned her lover. A beautiful young creature, extremely like Mrs. ——, of Boston, was among the prisoners. I did not hear what her crime was. We were attended by a woman who has the title of Presidenta, and who, after some years of good conduct, has now the charge of her fellow-prisoners—but she also murdered her husband! We went upstairs, accompanied by various of these distinguished criminals, to the room looking down upon the chapel, in which room the ladies give them instruction in reading, and in the Christian doctrine. With the time which they devote to these charitable offices, together with their numerous devotional exercises, and the care which their houses and families require, it cannot be said that the life of a Mexican señora is an idle one; nor, in such cases, can it be considered a useless one.

We then descended to the lower regions, where, in a great, damp, vaulted gallery, hundreds of unfortunate women of the lowest class, were occupied in travaux forcés—not indeed of a very hard description. These were employed in baking tortillas for the prisoners. Dirty, ragged, and miserable-looking creatures there were
in these dismal vaults, which looked like purgatory, and
smelt like—Heaven knows what! But, as I have fre-
quently had occasion to observe in Mexico, the sense of
smell is a doubtful blessing. Another large hall near
this, which the prisoners were employed in cleaning and
sweeping, has at least fresh air, opening on one side into
a court, where poor little children, the saddest sight there,
were running about—the children of the prisoners.

Leaving the side of the building devoted to the women,
we passed on to another gallery, looking down upon an
immense paved court with a fountain, where were several
hundreds of male prisoners, unfortunately collected
together without any reference to the nature of their
crime; the midnight murderer with the purloiner of a
pocket-handkerchief; the branded felon with the man
guilty of some political offence; the debtor with the false
coiner; so that many a young and thoughtless individual
whom a trifling fault, the result of ignorance or of un-
formed principles, has brought hither, must leave this
place wholly contaminated and hardened by bad example
and vicious conversation. Here there were indeed some
ferocious, hardened-looking ruffians—but there were many
mild, good-humoured faces; and I could see neither sad-
ness nor a trace of shame on any countenance; indeed
they all seemed much amused by seeing so many ladies.
Some were stretched full-length on the ground, doing
nothing; others were making rolls for hats, of different
coloured beads, such as they wear here, or little baskets
for sale; whilst others were walking about alone, or con-
versing in groups. This is the first prison I ever visited,
therefore I can compare it with no other; but the system
must be wrong which makes no distinctions between
different degrees of crime. These men are the same
_forçats_ whom we daily see in chains, watering the Ala-
meda or Paséo, or mending the streets. Several hundreds
of prisoners escaped from the Acordada in the time of the
_pronunciamiento_—probably the worst amongst them—yet
half the city appears to be here now. We were shown the
row of cells for criminals whom it is necessary to keep in
solitary confinement, on account of disorderly behaviour—
also the apartments of the directors.

In passing downstairs, we came upon a group of dirty-
looking soldiers, busily engaged in playing at cards. The
alcalde, who was showing us through the jail, dispersed
them all in a great rage, which I suspected was partly assumed for our edification. We then went into the chapel, which we had seen from above, and which is handsome and well kept. In the sacristy is a horrid and appropriate image of the bad thief. We were also shown a small room off the chapel, with a confessional, where the criminal condemned to die spends the three days preceding his execution with a padre chosen for that purpose. What horrid confessions, what lamentations and despair that small dark chamber must have witnessed! There is nothing in it but an altar, a crucifix, and a bench. I think the custom is a very humane one.

We felt glad to leave this palace of crimes, and to return to the fresh air.

The following day we went to visit San Hipólito, the insane hospital for men, accompanied by the director, a fine old gentleman, who has been a great deal abroad, and who looks like a French marquis of the ancien régime. I was astonished, on entering, at the sweet and solitary beauty of the large stone courts, with orange trees and pomegranates now in full blossom, and the large fountains of beautifully clear water. There must be something soothing in such a scene to the senses of these most unfortunate of God's creatures. They were sauntering about, quiet and for the most part sad; some stretched out under the trees, and others gazing on the fountain; all apparently very much under the control of the administrador, who was formerly a monk, this San Hipólito being a dissolved convent of that order. The system of giving occupation to the insane is not yet introduced here.

On entering, we saw rather a distinguished-looking, tall and well-dressed gentleman, whom we concluded to be a stranger who had come to see the establishment, like ourselves. We were therefore somewhat startled when he advanced towards us with long strides, and in an authoritative voice shouted out, "Do you know who I am? I am the Deliverer of Guatemala!" The administrador told us he had just been taken up, was a Frenchman, and in a state of furious excitement. He continued making a tremendous noise, and the other madmen seemed quite ashamed of him. One unhappy-looking creature, with a pale, melancholy face, and his arms stretched out above his head, was embracing a pillar, and when asked what he was doing, replied that he was "making sugar."
We were led into the dining-hall, a long airy apartment, provided with benches and tables, and from thence into a most splendid kitchen, high, vaulted, and receiving air from above, a kitchen that might have graced the castle of some feudal baron, and looked as if it would most surely last as long as men shall eat and cooks endure. Monks of San Hipólito! how many a smoking dinner, what viands steaming and savoury must have issued from this noblest of kitchens to your refectory next door.

The food for the present inmates, which two women were preparing, consisted of meat and vegetables, soup and sweet things; excellent meat, and well-dressed frijoles. A poor little boy, imbecile, deaf and dumb, was seated there cross-legged, in a sort of wooden box; a pretty child, with a fine colour, but who has been in this state from his infancy. The women seemed very kind to him, and he had a placid, contented expression of face; but took no notice of us when we spoke to him. Strange and unsolvable problem, what ideas pass through the brain of that child!

When we returned to the dining-hall, the inmates of the asylum, to the number of ninety or a hundred, were all sitting at dinner, ranged quietly on the benches, eating with wooden spoons out of wooden bowls. The poor hero of Guatemala was seated at the lower end of the table, tolerably tranquil. He started up on seeing us, and was beginning some furious explanations, but was prevented by his neighbour, who turned round with an air of great superiority, saying, "He’s mad!" at which the other smiled with an air of great contempt, and looking at us said, "He calls me mad!" The man of the pillar was eyeing his soup, with his arms as before, extended above his head. The director desired him to eat his soup, upon which he slowly and reluctantly brought down one arm, and ate a few spoonfuls. "How much sugar have you made to-day?" asked the director. "Fifty thousand kingdoms!" said the man.

They showed us two men, of very good family, and one old gentleman who did not come to dinner with the rest, but stood aloof, in the courtyard, with an air of great superiority. He had a cross upon his breast, and belongs to an old family. As we approached, he took off his hat, and spoke to us very politely; and then turning to the director, "Y por fin," said he, "Cuando saldré?" “When
shall I leave this place?" "Very soon," said the director. "You may get your trunks ready." He bowed and appeared satisfied, but continued standing in the same place, his arms folded, and with the same wistful gaze as before. The director told us that the two great causes of madness here are love and drinking, (mental and physical intoxication); that the insanity caused by the former is almost invariably incurable, whereas the victims of the latter generally recover, as is natural. The poor old gentleman with the cross owes the overthrow of his mind to the desertion of his mistress. We saw the chapel, where a padre says mass to these poor creatures, "the Innocents," as they are called here. They do not enter the chapel, for fear of their creating any disturbance, but kneel outside, in front of the iron grating, and the administrador says it is astonishing how quiet and serious they appear during divine service.

As we passed through the court, there was a man busily employed in hanging up various articles of little children’s clothes, as if to dry them—little frocks and trousers; all the time speaking rapidly to himself, and stopping every two minutes to take an immense draught of water from the fountain. His dinner was brought out to him (for he could not be prevailed on to sit down with the others), and he ate it in the same hurried way, dipping his bread in the fountain, and talking all the time. The poor madman of the sugar-kingdoms returned from dinner, and resumed his usual place at the pillar, standing with his arms above his head, and with the same melancholy and suffering expression of face.

The director then showed us the room where the clothes are kept; the straw hats and coarse dresses, and the terrible straight waistcoats made of brown linen, that look like coats with prodigiously long sleeves, and the Botica where the medicines are kept, and the secretary's room where they preserve the mournful records of entry and death—though often of exit. All round the court are strong stone cells, where the furious are confined. He took us into an empty one, where a Franciscan friar had been lodged. He had contrived to pull down part of the wall, and to make a large hole into his neighbour's cell adjoining. Fancy one madman seeing the head of another appear through a hole in his cell! The whole cell was covered with crosses of every description, drawn with a
piece of coal. They had been obliged to remove him into another in the gallery above, where he had already begun a new work of destruction. I was afterwards told by the Padre P——n, the confessor of condemned criminals, and who is of the same order as this insane monk, that this poor man had been a merchant, and had collected together about forty thousand dollars, with which he was travelling to Mexico, when he was attacked by robbers, who not only deprived him of all he possessed, but gave him some severe wounds on the head. When somewhat recovered, he renounced the world, and took his vows in the convent of San Francisco. Shortly after, he became subject to attacks of insanity, and at last became so furious, that the superior was obliged to request an order for his admission to San Hipólito.

The director then led us to the gallery above, where are more cells, and the terrible "Cuarto Negro," the Black Chamber; a dark, round cell, about twelve feet in circumference, with merely a slit in the wall for the admission of air. The floor is thickly covered with straw, and the walls are entirely covered with soft stuffed cushions. Here the most furious madman is confined on his arrival, and whether he throws himself on the floor, or dashes his head against the wall, he can do himself no injury. In a few days, the silence and the darkness soothe his fury, he grows calmer, and will eat the food that is thrust through the aperture in the wall. From this he is removed to a common cell, with more light and air; but until he has become tranquil, he is not admitted into the court amongst the others.

From this horrible, though I suppose necessary den of suffering, we went to the apartments of the administrador, which have a fine view of the city and the volcanoes, and saw a virgin, beautifully carved in wood, and dressed in white satin robes, embroidered with small diamonds. On the ground was a little dog, dying, having just fallen off from the azotea, an accident which happens to dogs here not unfrequently. We then went up to the azotea, which looks into the garden of San Fernando and of our last house, and also into the barracks of the soldiers, who, as observed, are more dangerous madmen than those who are confined. Some rolled up in their dirty yellow cloaks, and others standing in their shirt-sleeves, and many without either; they were as dirty-looking a set of
military heroes as one would wish to see. When we came downstairs again, and had gone through the court, and were passing the last cell, each of which is only lighted by an aperture in the thick stone wall, a pair of great black eyes glaring through, upon a level with mine, startled me infinitely. The eyes, however, glared upon vacancy. The face was thin and sallow, the beard long and matted, and the cheeks sunken. What long years of suffering appeared to have passed over that furrowed brow! I wish I had not seen it.

We afterwards went to the college of Bizcainos, that K—— might see it—my third and last visit. What a palace! What courts and fountains! We went over the whole building as before, from the azotea downwards, and from the porter's lodge upwards. Many of the scholars, who went out during the revolution, have not yet returned. K—— was in admiration at the galleries, which look like long vaulted streets, and at the chapel, which is certainly remarkably rich.

Having stopped in the carriage on the way home, at a shoemaker's, we saw Santa Anna's leg lying on the counter, and observed it with due respect, as the prop of a hero. With this leg, which is fitted with a very handsome boot, he reviews his troops next Sunday, putting his best foot foremost; for generally he merely wears an unadorned wooden leg. The shoemaker, a Spaniard, whom I can recommend to all customers as the most impertinent individual I ever encountered, was arguing, in a blustering manner, with a gentleman who had brought a message from the general, desiring some alteration in the boot; and wound up by muttering, as the messenger left the shop, "He shall either wear it as it is, or review the troops next Sunday without his leg!" 1

We have ordered mangas to wear in our intended journey, which is now nearly decided on—nothing tolerable to be had under seventy or eighty dollars. They are made of strong cloth, with a hole in the middle for putting

1 Boston, November, 1842.—A propos des bottes, I copy the following paragraph from an Havana newspaper:

"Mexico, 28th September.—Yesterday, was buried with pomp and solemnity in the cemetery of Saint Paul, the foot which his Excellency, President Santa Anna, lost in the action of the 5th December, 1838. It was deposited in a monument erected for that purpose, Don Ignacio Sierra y Roso having pronounced a funeral discourse appropriate to the subject."
the head through, with black velvet capes, fringed either with silk or gold, and are universally lined with strong calico. They are warm and convenient for riding in the country. I have seen some richly embroidered, which cost five hundred dollars.

It is as I prophesied—now that we are about leaving Mexico, we fancy that there still remain objects of interest which we have not seen. We have paid a visit, probably a last visit, to Our Lady of Guadalupe, and certainly never examined her cathedral with so much attention, or lingered so long before each painting and shrine, or listened with so much interest to the particulars of its erection, which were given us by Señor ——, whose authority in these matters is unimpeachable.

It appears that the present sacristy of the parochial church dates back to 1575, and was then a small chapel, where the miraculous image was kept, and where it remained until the beginning of the next century, when a new church was built, to which the image was solemnly transported. Even when enclosed in the first small sanctuary, its fame must have been great, for, by orders of the archbishop, six doweries of three hundred dollars each, to be given to six orphans on their marriage, were annually drawn from the alms offered at her shrine. But in 1629 Mexico suffered the terrible inundation which destroyed so large a part of the city, and the excellent archbishop, D. Francisco Manzo, while devoting his time and fortune to assist the sufferers, also gave orders that the Virgin of Guadalupe should be brought into Mexico, and placed in the cathedral there, then of very different dimensions from the present noble building, occupying, it is said, the space which is now covered by the principal sacristy. When the waters retired, and the Virgin was restored to her own sanctuary, her fame increased to a prodigious extent. Copies of the Divine Image were so multiplied, that there is probably not an Indian hut throughout the whole country where one does not exist. Oblations and alms increased a thousand fold; a silver throne, weighing upwards of three hundred and fifty marks, and beautifully wrought, chiefly at the expense of the viceroy, Count of Salvatierra, was presented to her sanctuary, together with a glass case (for the image), considered at that time a wonder of art. At the end of the century a new temple, the present sanctuary, was begun;
the second church was thrown down, but not until a provisional building (the actual parish church) was erected to receive the image. The new temple was concluded in 1709, and is said to have cost from six to eight hundred thousand dollars, collected from alms alone, which were solicited in person by the viceregal archbishop, D. Juan de Ortega y Montanez. Two private individuals in Mexico gave, the one thirty, the other fifty thousand dollars, towards its erection.

The interior is of the Doric order, and has three aisles, divided by eight pillars, upon which with the walls are placed eighteen arches, the centre one forming the dome of the edifice. It runs from north to south, has three great gates, one fronting Mexico, and two others at the sides. Its length may be two hundred and fifty feet, and its width about one hundred and thirty. In the four external angles of the church are four lofty towers, in the midst of which rises the dome. Three altars were at first erected, and in the middle one, destined for the image, was a sumptuous tabernacle of silver gilt, in which were more than three thousand two hundred marks of silver, and which cost nearly eighty thousand dollars. In the centre of this was a piece of gold, weighing four thousand and fifty castellanos (an old Spanish coin, the fiftieth part of a mark of gold), and here the image was placed, the linen on which it is painted guarded by a silver plate of great value. The rest of the temple had riches corresponding. The candlesticks, vases, railing, etc., contain nearly fourteen thousand marks of silver, without counting the numerous holy vessels, cups and chalices adorned with jewels. One golden lamp weighed upwards of two thousand two hundred castellanos—another seven hundred and fifty silver marks.

In 1802 some part of the walls and arches began to give way—and it was necessary to repair them. But first, under the direction of the celebrated sculptor Tolsa, a new altar was erected for the image. His first care was to collect the most beautiful marbles of the country for this purpose—the black he brought from Puebla, and the white, gray and rose-coloured from the quarries of San José Vizarrón. He also began to work at the bronze ornaments, but from the immense sums of money necessary to its execution, the work was delayed for nearly twenty years. Then, in 1826, it was recommenced with
fresh vigour. The image was removed meanwhile to the neighbouring convent of the Capuchinas, and the same year the altar was concluded, and the Virgin brought back in solemn procession, in the midst of an innumerable multitude. This great altar, which cost from three to four hundred thousand dollars, is a concave hexagonal, in the midst of which rise two white marble pillars, and on each side two columns of rose-coloured marble, of the composite order, which support the arch. Between these are two pedestals, on which are the images of San Joaquin and Santa Anna, and two niches, containing San José and St. John the Baptist. Above the cornices are three other pedestals, supporting the three Saints, Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael; and above St. Michael, in the midst of cherubim and seraphim, is a representation of the Eternal Father. The space between the upper part of the altar and the roof, is covered with a painted crimson curtain, held by saints and angels. The tabernacle in the centre of the altar, is of rose-coloured marble, in which the image is deposited, and all the ornaments of the altar are of gilt bronze and zinc.

Besides the collegiate and the parish church, there are at Guadalupe the church of the Capuchin Nuns, and the churches of the Hill and the Well; all in such close conjunction, that the whole village or city, as it calls itself, seems altogether some religious establishment or confraternity, belonging to these temples and churches, united in the worship of the Virgin, and consequent upon the "Miraculous Apparition" manifested to the chosen Indian, Juan Diego.

I regret not having known till lately, that there exists in Mexico a convent of Indian Nuns: and that each nun, when she takes the veil, wears a very superb Indian dress—the costume formerly worn by the cacicas, or ladies of highest rank.

I went some days ago with the Señorita F— to visit a house for insane women, in the Calle de Canoa, built in 1698, by the rich congregation of el Salvador. The institution is now in great want of funds; and is by no means to be compared with the establishment of San Hipólito. The directress seems a good kind-hearted woman, who devoted herself to doing her duty, and who is very gentle to her patients; using no means but those of kindness and steadiness to subdue their violence. But
what a life of fear and suffering such a situation must be! The inmates look poor and miserable, generally speaking, and it is difficult to shake off the melancholy impression which they produce on the mind. We were particularly struck by the sight of one unfortunate woman of the better class, who, with her long hair all dishevelled, and eyes sparkling with a wild light, stood at the open window of her cell, where for the present they are obliged to confine her, and who poured forth the most piteous lamentations, and adjured every one who passed, in the most pathetic terms, to restore her husband and children to her. One girl was singing cheerfully—one or two women were sewing, but most of them were sitting crouched on the floor, with a look of melancholy vacancy. The poor are admitted gratis, and the richer classes pay a moderate sum for their board.

To turn to a very different theme. We continue to go to the opera, certainly the most agreeable amusement in Mexico, and generally to the —— minister’s box, in the centre. Last evening, Belisario was repeated, but with less splendour than on its representation in honour of Santa Anna.

We expect to leave this on the sixteenth, going in a diligence as far as Toluca, where a Mexican officer, Colonel Y—-, has kindly promised to meet us with mules and horses. M. le Comte de B—— and Mr. W——, secretaries of the French and English Legations, have made arrangements for accompanying us as far as Valadolid; with which agreeable travelling companions we may reasonably expect a pleasant journey.

Last Sunday was the festival of All Saints; on the evening of which day, we walked out under the portales, with M. and Madame de ——— minister and his wife, to look at the illumination, and at the numerous booths filled with sugar skulls, etc.; temptingly ranged in grinning rows, to the great edification of the children. In general there are crowds of well-dressed people on the occasion of this fête, but the evening was cold and disagreeable, and though there were a number of ladies, they were enveloped in shawls, and dispersed early. The old women at their booths, with their cracked voices, kept up the constant cry of “Skulls, niñas, skulls!”—but there were also animals done in sugar, of every species, enough to form specimens for a Noah’s ark.
14th.—We leave this the day after to-morrow, and shall write from our first halting-place; and as on our return we shall do little more than pass through Mexico, we are almost taking leave of all our friends. Were I to tell you all the kindness and hospitality, and cordial offers of service that we receive, and the manner in which our rooms (albeit the rooms of an inn) are filled from morning till night, it would seem an exaggeration. One acquaintance we have made lately, whom we like so much, that we have been vociferously abusing the system of faire part in this city, since, owing to the mistake of a servant, we have until now been deprived of the pleasure of knowing her. The mistake is rectified at the eleventh hour. The lady is the Señora de G—z P—a, one of the most accomplished and well-informed women in Mexico; and though our friendship has been short, I trust it may be enduring.

Two evenings since, we went with the Señora de C—s to an amateur concert; and I question whether in any capital of Europe, so many good amateur voices could be collected. I do not speak of the science or cultivation, though the hostess, the Señora A—, has a perfect method. But yesterday we spent a most agreeable evening in a delightful family reunion, at the house of Señor N—i del B—o. It was strictly limited to the family relations, and was, I believe, his jour de fête. If all Mexican society resembled this, we should have too much regret in leaving it. The girls handsome, well educated, and simple in their manners and tastes—the Countess a model of virtue and dignity. Then so much true affection and love of home amongst them all! So much wealth and yet good taste and perfect simplicity visible in all that surrounds them! Mexico is not lost as long as such families exist, and though they mingle little in society, the influence of their virtues and charities is widely felt.

This morning C—n had an audience of the new president. He also paid a visit to General Bustamante, who is still at Guadalupe, and preparing for his departure. He will probably sail in the Jason, the man-of-war which brought us to Vera Cruz, and it is probable that we shall leave the republic at the same period. The Dowager Marquesa de Vivanco, who in consequence of ill health has not left her house for months, was among our visitors this morning.
Leave Mexico

To-day Count C—-a dined here, and brought for our inspection the splendid sword presented by Congress to General Valencia, with its hilt of brilliants and opals; a beautiful piece of workmanship, which does credit to the Mexican artificers. He was particularly brilliant and eloquent in his conversation to-day—-whether his theories are right or wrong, they are certainly entrainant.

Our next letters will probably be dated from Toluca.

LETTER THE FORTY-EIGHTH


TOLUCA, 16th.

In vain would be a description with the hopes of bringing them before you, of our last few days in Mexico!—of the confusion, the bustle, the visits, the paying of bills, the packing of trunks, the sending off of heavy luggage to Vera Cruz, and extracting the necessary articles for our journey; especially yesterday, when we were surrounded by visitors and cargadores, from half-past seven in the morning till half-past eleven at night. Our very last visitors were the families of C—-a and E—-n. The new president, on dit, is turning his sword into a ploughshare. Preferring a country to a city life, nearly every Sunday he names the house in which he desires to be fêté the following week—now at the villa of Señor —- at Tacubaya—now at the hacienda of Señor —- at San Agustin. As yet the diplomatic corps do not attend these assemblies, not having been officially received; but we hear that there is singing and dancing, and other amusements, and that his excellency is extremely amiable and galant.

By six o'clock this morning several of our friends were assembled to accompany us to the diligence (Señors C—-o, M—-e, R—-s, A—-e, etc.), which, unfortunately, we had not been able to secure for ourselves;