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;
for at this moment, the whole world is in motion, going
to attend the great annual fair of San Juan de los Lagos;
which begins on the fifth of December, and to which
Toluca is the direct road. Fortunately, the diligence had
broken down the preceding evening, and it was necessary
to repair it; otherwise we should have left behind various
important articles, for in the confusion of our departure,
every one had left some requisite item at the hotel;—
C—n his gun; K— her bag; I everything—and more
especially the book with which I intended to beguile the
weary hours between Mexico and Toluca. Our servant-
boy ran—Señor R—s mounted his horse, and most good-
naturedly galloped between the diligence office and the
hotel, until, little by little, all the missing articles were
restored. We climbed into the coach, which was so
crowded that we could but just turn our heads to groan
an adieu to our friends. The coach rattled off through
the streets, dashed through the Alameda, and gradually
we began to shake down, and, by a little arrangement of
cloaks and sarapes, to be less crowded. A padre with a
very Indian complexion sat between K—and me, and
a horrible, long, lean, bird-like female, with immense red
goggle-eyes, coal-black teeth, fingers like claws, a great
goitre, and drinking brandy at intervals, sat opposite to
us. There were also various men buried in their sarapes.
Satisfied with a cursory inspection of our companions, I
addressed myself to Blackwood's Magazine, but the road
which leads towards the Desierto, and which we before
passed on horseback, is dreadful, and the mules could
scarcely drag the loaded coach up the steep hills. We
were thrown into ruts, horribly jolted, and sometimes
obliged to get out, which would not have been disagree-
able but for the necessity of getting in again. The day
and the country were beautiful, but impossible to enjoy
either in a shut coach. We were rather thankful when
the wheels, sticking in a deep rut, we were forced to
descend, and walk forwards for some time. We had
before seen the view from these heights, but the effect
never was more striking than at this moment. The old
city with her towers, lakes, and volcanoes, lay bathed in
the bright sunshine. Not a cloud was in the sky—not an
exhalation rose from the lake—not a shadow was on the
mountains. All was bright and glittering, and flooded
in the morning light; while in contrast rose to the left
the dark, pine-covered crags, behind which the Desierto lies.

At Santa Fé we changed horses, and found there an escort which had been ordered for us by General Torrel; a necessary precaution in these robber-haunted roads. We stopped to breakfast at Quajimalpa, where the inn is kept by a Frenchman, who is said to be making a large fortune, which he deserves for the good breakfast he had prepared for us by orders of the Count de B—— and Mr. W——, who had preceded us early in the morning on horseback; (enviable fate!). We had white fish from the river of Lerma, which crosses the plains of Toluca, fresh and well dressed, and without that taste of mud which those from the Mexican Laguna occasionally have; also hot cutlets, potatoes, coffee, etc.

After leaving this inn, situated in a country formed of heaps of lava and volcanic rocks, the landscape becomes more beautiful and wooded. It is, however, dangerous, on account of the shelter which the wooded mountains afford to the knights of the road, and to whose predilection for these wild solitudes, the number of crosses bore witness. In a woody defile there is a small clear space called "Las Cruces," where several wooden crosses point out the site of the famous battle between the curate Hidalgo and the Spanish General Truxillo. An object really in keeping with the wild scenery, was the head of the celebrated robber Maldonado, nailed to the pine-tree beneath which he committed his last murder. It is now quite black, and grins there, a warning to his comrades and an encouragement to travellers. From the age of ten to that of fifty, he followed the honourable profession of free-trader, when he expiated his crimes. The padre who was in the coach with us, told us that he heard his last confession. That grinning skull was once the head of a man, and an ugly one too, they say; but stranger still it is to think, that that man was once a baby, and sat on his mother's knee, and that his mother may have been pleased to see him cut his first tooth. If she could but see his teeth now! Under this very head, and as if to show their contempt for law and justice, the robbers lately eased some travellers of their luggage. Those who were robbed, however, were false coiners, rather a common class in Toluca, and two of these ingenious gentlemen were in the coach with us (as we afterwards learnt), and were returning to that city.
These, with the brandy-drinking female, composed our select little party!

The scenery without was decidedly preferable to that within, and the leathern sides of the vehicle being rolled up, we had a tolerable view. What hills covered with noble pines! What beautiful pasture-fields, dotted with clumps of trees, that looked as if disposed for effect, as in an English park!—firs, oaks, cedars, and elms. Arrived at the town or village of Lerma, famous for its manufacture of spurs, and standing in a marshy country at the entrance of the valley of Toluca, all danger of the robbers is passed, and with the danger, much of the beauty of the scenery. But we breathed more freely on another account, for here she of the goggle-eyes and goitre, descended with her brandy-bottle, relieving us from the oppressive influence of the sort of day-mare, if there be such a thing, which her presence had been to us.

The valley of Toluca was now before us, its volcano towering in the distance. The plains around looked cold and dreary, with pools of transparent water, and swamps filled with various species of water-fowl. The hacienda of San Nicolas, the property of Señor Mier y Teran, a Spaniard, was the only object that we saw worthy of notice, before we reached Toluca. This hacienda, formerly the property of the Carmelite monks, is a valuable estate. Not a tree is to be seen here, or in the valley, a great extent of which is included in it; but it is surrounded by vast fields of maguey and maize; it is traversed by a fine river, and is one of the most profitable estates in the country. The labourers here are in general the Ottomie Indians, a poor and degraded tribe. Here we dismissed our escort, which had been changed every six leagues, and entered Toluca about four o'clock, passing the Garrita without the troublesome operation of searching, to which travellers in general are subject. We found tolerable rooms in an inn; at least there were two or three wooden chairs in each, and a deal table in one; and Mr. W—— and the Count de B—— looking out for us. Colonel Y—— had not yet made his appearance.

Toluca, a large and important city, lies at the foot of the mountain of San Miguel de Tutucuitlapico; and is an old, quiet, good-looking, respectable-seeming place, about as sad and solitary as Puebla. The streets, the square, and the churches are clean and handsome. To the south
of the city lie extensive plains covered with rich crops; and about ten miles in the same direction is the volcano. We walked out in the afternoon to the Alameda, passing under the portales; handsomer and cleaner than those of Mexico; and sat down on a stone bench beside a fountain, a position which commanded a beautiful view of the distant hills and of the volcano, behind which the sun was setting in a sea of liquid flame, making it look like a great pearl lying amongst melted rubies. The Alameda has not been much ornamented, and is quite untenanted; but walks are cut through the grass, and they were making hay. Everything looked quiet and convent-like, and a fine fresh air passed over the new-mown grass, inclining to cold, but pleasant. The volcano is scooped out into a natural basin, containing, in the very midst of its fiery furnace, two lakes of the purest, coldest and most transparent water. It is said that the view from its summit, the ascent to which is very fatiguing, but has been accomplished, is beautiful and extensive. On the largest lake travellers have embarked in a canoe, but I believe it has never been crossed, on account of the vulgar prejudice that it is unfathomable, and has a whirlpool in the centre. The volcano is about fifteen thousand feet above the level of the sea, and nine thousand above Toluca. It is not so grand as Popocatepetl, but a respectable volcano for a country town—"muy decente" (very decent), as a man said in talking of the pyramids that adorn the wonderful cavern of Cucuhamilpa.

We ordered supper at the inn, and were joined by the Comandante of Toluca, Don M—— A——, the officer who came out to meet us when we arrived in Mexico. I regret to state that such a distinguished party should have sat down, six in number, to fowl and frijoles, with only three knives and two forks between them. The provident travellers had, however, brought good wine; and if our supper was not very elegant, it was at least very gay. Colonel Y—— arrived about ten o'clock; but it is agreed that the animals require one day's rest, and we shall consequently spend to-morrow at Toluca.

17th.——We have spent this day in arranging our route, in which we are guided not by the most direct, but the most agreeable; in walking through the city, which, in the time of federalism, was the capital of the state, in climbing some of the steep roads cut through the hills, at
whose base it lies; and in admiring the churches and
convents, and broad, well-paved streets with their hand-
some houses, painted white and red. It is decided that
the first night of our pilgrimage, we shall request hos-
pitality at the hacienda of the ex-minister Hechavarria—
La Gabia, which is about ten leagues of very bad road
from Toluca—which is sixteen from Mexico. All these
important arrangements being made, and a sketch of our
journey traced out, we are about retiring to rest, in the
agreeable prospect of not entering any four or two wheeled
vehicle, be it a cart, carriage, coach, or diligence, till we
return here.

La Gabia, 19th.

To get under weigh the first morning was a work of
some difficulty. Mules to be loaded, horses to be fitted
with saddles; and one mule lame, and another to be pro-
cured, and the trunks found to be too heavy, and so on.
We rose at five, dressed by candlelight, took chocolate,
put on our mangas, and then planted ourselves in the
passage looking down upon the patio, to watch the pro-
ceedings and preparations. Colonel A—— arrived at
seven with a trooper, to accompany us part of the way;
and we set off while it was cool, without waiting for the
rest of the party. Toluca looked silent and dignified as
we passed through the streets—with its old convents and
dark hills. The road, after leaving the city, was stony
and mountainous; and having reached a small rancho
with an old oratorio beside it, we halted to wait for our
travelling companions. Colonel A—— amused us with
an account of his warfare against the Comanches, in which
service he had been terribly wounded. Singular contrast
between these ferocious barbarians and the mild Indians
of the interior! He considers them an exceedingly hand-
some, fine-looking race; whose resources, both for war
and trade, are so great, that were it not for their natural
indolence, the difficulties of checking their aggression
would be formidable indeed. Colonel A—— being obliged
to return to Toluca, left us in charge of his trooper, and
we waited at the rancho for about half an hour, when our
party appeared with a long train of mules and mozos; the
gentlemen dressed Mexican fashion as well as their men;
the best dress in the world for a long equestrian journey.
Colonel Y—— had staid behind to procure another mule,
and there being two roads, we, as generally happens in
these cases, chose the worst; which led us for leagues over
a hilly country, enlivened by tree, shrub, bush, or flower.
The sun was already high, and the day intensely hot.
We passed an occasional poor hut—a chance Indian passed
us—showed his white teeth, and, in spite of the load on his
back, contrived to draw his hat off his matted locks, and
give us a mild good morrow—but for the rest, from Dan
to Beersheba, from Toluca to La Gabia, all was barren.
By twelve o'clock we might have fancied ourselves passing
over the burning plains of Mesopotamia, notwithstanding
an occasional cold breeze which swept across us for a
moment, serving only to make us feel the heat with
greater force. Then barranca followed barranca. The
horses climbed up one crag, and slid down another. By
two o'clock we were all starving with hunger, but nothing
was to be had. Even Nebuchadnezzar would have found
himself at a nonplus. The Count de B—— contrived to
buy some graniditas and parched corn from an Indian,
which kept us quiet for a little while; and we tried to
console ourselves by listening to our arrieros, who struck
up some wild songs in chorus, as they drove the weary
mules up the burning hills. Every Indian that we met
assured us that La Gabia was "cerquita," quite near—
"detras lomita," behind the little hill; and every little
hill that we passed presented to our view another little
hill, but no signs of the much-wished-for dwelling. A
more barren, treeless, and uninteresting country than
this road (on which we have unanimously revenged our-
selves by giving it the name of "the road of the three
hundred barrancas") led us through, I never beheld.
However, "it's a long lane that has no turning," as we
say in Scotland; and between three and four, La Gabia
was actually in sight; a long, low building, whose entrance
appeared to us the very gates of Eden. We were all, but
especially me, who had ridden with my veil up, from a
curiosity to see where my horse was going, burnt to the
colour of Pawnee Indians.

We were most cordially welcomed by Señor Hechavarria
and his brothers-in-law, and soon refreshed by rest and
an excellent dinner. Fortunately K—— and I had no
mirrors; but each gave such a flattering description of
the other's countenance, that it was quite graphic.

This beautiful hacienda, which formerly belonged to
the Count de Regla, whose possessions must have been
royal, is thirty leagues in length and seventeen in width—containing in this great space the productions of every climate, from the fir-clad mountains on a level with the volcano of Toluca, to the fertile plains which produce corn and maize; and lower down, to fields of sugar-cane and other productions of the tropics.

We retired to rest betimes, and early this morning rode out with these gentlemen, about five leagues through the hacienda. The morning was bright and exhilarating, and our animals being tired, we had fresh, strong little horses belonging to their stud, which carried us delightfully. We rode through beautiful pine-woods and beside running water, contrasting agreeably with our yesterday’s journey; and were accompanied by three handsome little boys, children of the family, the finest and manliest little fellows I ever saw, who, dressed in a complete Mexican costume, like three miniature rancheros, rode boldly and fearlessly over everything. There was a great deal of firing at crows and at the wild duck on a beautiful little lake, but I did not observe that any one was burdened with too much game. We got off our horses to climb through the wooded hills and ravines, and passed some hours lying under the pine-trees, listening to the gurgling of the little brook, whose bright waters make music in the solitude; and, like the soldiers at the pronunciamiento, but with surer aim, pelting each other from behind the parapets of the tall trees, with fir tops. About ten o’clock we returned to breakfast; and Colonel Y—having arrived, we are now preparing to continue our journey this afternoon.

ANGANGUEO, 20th.

We left La Gabia at four o’clock, accompanied by our hospitable hosts for some leagues, all their own princely property, through great pasture-fields, woods of fir and oak, hills clothed with trees, and fine clear streams. We also passed a valuable stone-quarry; and were shown a hill belonging to the Indians, presented to them by a former proprietor. We formed a long train, and I pitied the mistress of El Pilar, our next halting-place, upon whom such a regiment was about to be unexpectedly quartered. There were C—-n, K—-, and I, and a servant; the Count de B— and his servant; Mr. W— and his servant; Colonel Y— and his men; mules, arrieros, spare mules, and led horses; and all the mozos armed,
forming altogether a formidable gang. We took leave of the Hechavarria family when it was already growing dusk, and when the moon had risen found we had taken a great round; so that it was late at night when we arrived at El Pilar, a small hacienda, situated in a wild-looking, solitary part of the country. A servant had been sent forward to inform the lady of the establishment of our approach, and we were most kindly received. The house is clean and pretty, and, tired as we were, the salu, boasting of an old piano, tempted us to try a waltz while they were preparing supper. The man who waited at table, before he removed the things, popped down upon his knees, and recited a long prayer aloud. The gentlemen had one apartment prepared for them—we another, in which, nay, even in the large four-posted and well-curtained bed allotted to us, Madame Yturbié had slept when on her way to Mexico before her coronation. The Señora M—also showed us her picture, and spoke of her and the emperor with great enthusiasm.

This morning we rose by candlelight, at five o’clock, with the prospect of a long ride, having to reach the Trojes of Angangueo, a mining district (trojes literally mean granaries), fourteen leagues from El Pilar. The morning was cold and raw, with a dense fog covering the plains, so that we could scarcely see each other’s faces, and found our mangas particularly agreeable. We were riding quickly across these ugly marshy wastes, when a curious animal crossed our path, a zorillo, or epatl, as the Indians call it, and which Boufont mentions under the generic name of mouffetés. It looks like a brown and white fox, with an enormous tail, which it holds up like a great feather in the air. It is known not only for the beauty of its skin, but for the horrible and pestilential odour with which it defends itself when attacked, and which poisons the air for miles around. Notwithstanding the warnings of the mozos as to its peculiar mode of defence, the gentlemen pursued it with guns and pistols, on horseback and on foot, but fired in vain. The beast seemed bullet-proof; turning, doubling, winding, crossing pools, hiding itself, stopping for a moment as if it were killed, and then trotting off again with its feathery tail much higher than its head; so that it seemed to be running backwards. The fog favoured it very much. It was certainly wounded in the paw, and as it stopped and seemed
to hesitate, the sportsmen thought they had caught him; but a minute afterwards away went the waving tail amongst the pools and the marshy grass, the zorillo, no doubt, accompanying it, though we could not see him, and fortunately without resorting to any offensive or defensive measures. While they were chasing the zorillo, and we had rode a little way off, that we might not be accidentally shot in the fog; an immense wolf came looming by in the mist, with its stealthy gallop, close to our horses, causing us to shout for the sportsmen; but our numbers frightened it; besides which, it had but just breakfasted on a mule belonging to the hacienda, as we were told by the son of the proprietress of El Pilar, who, hearing all this distant firing, had ridden out to inquire into its cause, supposing that we might have lost our way in the fog, and were firing signals of distress.

We continued our journey across these plains for about three leagues, when the sun rose and scattered the mist; and after crossing a river, we entered the woods and rode between the shadows of the trees, through lovely forest scenery, interspersed with dells and plains and sparkling rivulets. But by the time we left these woods, and made our way up amongst the hills, the sun was riding high in the heavens, the pastures and green trees disappeared, and, though the country was still fertile and the soil rich, its beauties lay hid in the valleys below. K——'s horse received a sort of coup de soleil, shivered and trembled, and would not go on; so she mounted another, and one of the mozos led hers slowly by a different road to a village, to be watered. About one o'clock we began to wish for breakfast, but the mules which carried the provisions had taken a different path, and were not in sight; so that, arriving at an Indian hut close by a running stream, we were unanimous in dismounting, and at least procuring some tortillas from the inmates. At the same time, the Count de —— very philanthropically hired an old discoloured-looking horse, which was grazing peaceably outside the hut, and mounting the astonished quadruped, who had never, in his wildest dreams, calculated upon having so fine a chevalier on his back, galloped off in search of more solid food, while we set the Indian women to baking tortillas. He returned in about half an hour, with some bones of boiled mutton, tied up in a handkerchief! some salt, and thick tortillas, called
gorditas, and was received with immense applause. Everything vanished in an incredibly short space of time, and we resumed our journey with renewed vigour. Towards the afternoon we entered the state of Michoacan, by a road (destined to be a highway) traced through great pine-forests, after stopping once more to rest at Las Millas, a few huts, or rather wooden cages, at the outskirts of the wood. Nothing can be more beautiful or romantic than this road, ascending through these noble forests, whose lofty oaks and gigantic pines clothe the mountains to their highest summits; sometimes so high, that, as we look upwards, the trees seem diminished to shrubs and bushes; the sun darting his warm, golden light between the dark-green extended branches of these distant forest pyramids, so that they seem to be basking in the very focus of his rays. Untrodden and virgin as these forests appear, an occasional cross, with its withered garland, gives token of life, and also of death; and green and lonely is the grave which the traveller has found among these Alpine solitudes, under the shadows of the dark pine, on a bed of fragrant wild-flowers, fanned by the pure air from the mountain-tops. The flowers which grow under the shade of the trees are beautiful and gay in their colours. Everywhere there are blue lupins, marigolds, dahlias, and innumerable blossoms with Indian names. Sometimes we dismounted and walked up the steepest parts, to rest our horses and ourselves; but, as it was impossible to go fast on these stony paths, it became entirely dark before Angangueo was in sight; and the road, which, for a great part of the way, is remarkably good, now led us down a perpendicular descent amongst the trees, covered with rocks and stones, so that the horses stumbled, and one, which afterwards proved to be blind of one eye, and not to see very clearly with the other, fell and threw his rider, who was not hurt. It was near eight o’clock (and we had been on horseback since six in the morning), when, after crossing a shallow stream, we saw the fires of the furnaces of Angangueo, a mining village, at the foot of some wild hills. We rode past the huts, where the blazing fires were shining on the swarthy faces of the workmen, the road skirting the valley, till we reached the house of Don Carlos Heimbürger, a Polish gentleman at the head of the German mining establishment. This house, the only one of any consequence at
Angangueo, is extremely pretty, with a piazza in front, looking down upon the valley, which at night seems like the dwelling of the Cyclops, and within a very picture of comfort. We were welcomed by the master of the house, and by Madame B—n, a pretty and accomplished German lady, the wife of a physician who resides there. We had already known her in Mexico, and were glad to renew our acquaintance in this outlandish spot. One must have travelled fourteen leagues, from morning till night, to know how comfortable her little drawing-room appeared, with its well-cushioned red sofas, bright lights, and vases of flowers, as we came in from the cold and darkness, and how pretty and extra-civilized she looked in her black satin gown, not to mention the excellent dinner and the large fires, for they have chimneys in this part of the world. In a nice little bedroom, with a cheerful fire, the second time I have seen one in two years, I indite these particulars, and shall continue from our next place of rest.

LETTER THE FORTY-NINTH


VALLADOLID, 25th.

As the house was so agreeable, and our next day’s journey short, we could not prevail upon ourselves to leave the Tiroes before nine o'clock; and even then, with the hopes of spending some time there on our return to see the mining establishment; the mills for grinding ore, the horizontal water-wheels, etc., etc.; and still more, the beautiful scenery in the neighbourhood.

That you may understand our line of march, take a map of Mexico, and you will see that Michoacan, one of the most beautiful and fertile territories in the world, is bounded on the north by the river Lerma, afterwards known by the name of Rio Grande; also by the department