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 Trojes 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
of Guanajuato; to the east and north-east it bounds that of Mexico, and to the west, that of Guadalajara. It lies on the western slope of the Great Cordillera of Anahuac. Hills, woods, and beautiful valleys diversify its surface; its pasture-grounds are watered by numerous streams, that rare advantage under the torrid zone, and the climate is cool and healthy. The Indians of this department are the Teracos—the Ottomi and the Chichimeca Indians. The first are the most civilized of the tribes, and their language the most harmonious. We are now travelling in a north-westerly direction, towards the capital of the state, Valladolid, or Morelia, as it has been called since the independence, in honour of the curate Morelos, its great supporter.

We had a pleasant ride of nine leagues through an open pasture-country, meeting with nothing very remarkable on our journey, but an Indian woman seated on the ground, her Indian husband standing beside her. Both had probably been refreshing themselves with pulque—perhaps even with its homeopathic extract mescal; but the Indian was sober and sad, and stood with his arms folded, and the most patient and pitying face, while his wife, quite overcome with the strength of the potation, and unable to go any further, looked up at him with the most imploring air, saying repeatedly—"Matame, Miguel, matame" (Kill me, Miguel—kill me)—apparently considering herself quite unfit to live.

About five o'clock we came in sight of the pretty village and old church of Taximaroa; and riding up to the meson, or inn, found two empty dark rooms with mud floors—without windows, in fact without anything but their four walls—neither bench, chair, nor table. Although we travel with our own beds, this looked rather uninviting, especially after the pleasant quarters we had just left; and we turned our eyes wistfully towards a pretty small house upon a hill, with a painted portico, thinking how agreeably situated we should be there! Colonel Y—thereupon rode up the hill, and presenting himself to the owner of this house, described our forlorn prospects, and he kindly consented to permit us all to sup there, and moreover to receive the ladies for the night. For the gentlemen he had no room, having but one spare apartment, as one of his family was a great invalid, and could not be moved. Accordingly, our travelling luggage was
carried up the hill; the horses and mules and servants were quartered in the village, the gentlemen found lodging for themselves in a bachelor's house, and we found ourselves in very agreeable quarters, on a pretty piazza, with an extensive view, and one large room, containing a table and some benches, at our service. Meanwhile, M. de B—- rushed through the village, finding eggs and hens and tortillas, and then returning, he and Mr. W—- produced the travelling stores of beef and tongue, and set about making mustard and drawing bottles of wine, to the great wonderment and edification of the honest proprietor. Even a clean tablecloth was produced; a piece of furniture which he had probably never seen before, and now eyed wistfully, doubtless taking it for a sheet. We had a most amusing supper, some performing dexterously with penknives, and others using tortillas as forks. We won the heart of the bourgeois by sending a cup of tea to his invalid, and inviting him to partake of another, which he seemed to consider a rare and medicinal beverage. About nine o'clock the gentlemen departed to their lodgings, and our beds were erected in the large room where we had supped; the man assuring us that he was quite pleased to have us under his roof, and liked our company extremely well; adding, "Me cuadra mucho la gente decente" (I am very fond of decent people).

We left Taximarcá at six o'clock, having spent rather a disturbed night, in consequence of the hollow coughs with which the whole family seemed afflicted, at least the poor invalid on one side of our room, and the master of the house on the other. The morning was so cold, that every manga and sarape was put in requisition. Our ride this day was through superb scenery, every variety of hill and valley, water and wood, particularly the most beautiful woods of lofty oaks, the whole with scarcely a trace of cultivation, and for the most part entirely uninhabited. Our numbers were augmented by Colonel Y—-s troop, who rode from Morelia to meet him. We had a long journey, passed by the little village of San Andrés, and stopped to eat tortillas in a very dirty hut at Pueblo Viejo, surrounded by the dirtiest little Indian children. Throughout the whole ride, the trees and flowering shrubs were beautiful, and the scenery so varied, that although we rode for eleven hours in a hot sun, we scarcely felt fatigued, for wherever there are trees and
water and fresh green grass, the eye is rested. In this and in our last few days' journey, we saw a number of blue birds, called by the common people guardia-bosques, wood guardians. About half-past five we entered a winding road, through a natural shrubbery, leading to Querendaro, the fine hacienda of Señor Pimentel, a senator. When we arrived the family were at dinner, and we were invited to join them, after which we went out to see the hacienda, and especially the handsome and well-kept stables, where the proprietor has a famous breed of horses, some of which were trotted out for our inspection—beautiful, spirited creatures—one called "Hilo de Oro" (golden thread)—another, "Pico Blanco" (white mouth), etc. In the inner courtyard are many beautiful and rare flowers, and everything is kept in great order.

At nine o'clock the following morning we left Querendaro, and rode on to San Bartolo, a vast and beautiful property, belonging to Señor Don Joaquin Gomez, of Valladolid. The family were from home, with the exception of his son and nephew, who did the honours of the house with such cordial and genuine hospitality, that we felt perfectly at home before the day was over. I think the Mexican character is never seen to such advantage as in the country, amongst these great landed proprietors of old family, who live on their own estates, engaged in agricultural pursuits, and entirely removed from all the party feeling and petty interests of a city life. It is true that the life of a country gentleman here is that of a hermit, in the total absence of all society, in the nearly unbroken solitude that surrounds him. For leagues and leagues there is no habitation but his own; the nearest miserable village may be distant half a day's journey, over an almost impassable road. He is "monarch of all he surveys," a king amongst his farm servants and Indian workmen. Nothing can exceed the independence of his position; but to enjoy this wild country life, he must be born to it. He must be a first-rate horseman, and addicted to all kinds of country sport; and if he can spend the day in riding over his estate, in directing his workmen, watching over his improvements, redressing disputes and grievances, and can sit down in the evening in his large and lonely halls, and philosophically bury himself in the pages of some favourite author, then his time will probably not hang heavy on his hands.
As for the young master here, he was up with the lark—he was on the most untractable horse in the hacienda, and away across the fields with his followers, chasing the bulls as he went—he was fishing—he was shooting—he was making bullets—he was leagues off at a village, seeing a country bull-fight—he was always in a good humour, and so were all who surrounded him—he was engaged in the dangerous amusement of colear—and by the evening it would have been a clever writer who had kept his eyes open after such a day's work. Never was there a young lad more evidently fitted for a free life in the country.

There was a generous, frank liberality apparent in everything in this hacienda, that it was agreeable to witness; nothing petty or calculating. Señor—lame through an accident, and therefore unable to mount his horse, or to go far on foot, seemed singularly gentle and kind-hearted. The house is one of the prettiest and most cheerful we have seen yet; but we passed a great stone building on the road, which the proprietor of San Bartolo is having constructed for one of his family, which, if it keep its promise, will be a palace when finished. The principal produce of this hacienda is pimiento, the capsicum. There is the pimiento dulce and the pimiento picante, the sweet fruit of the common capsicum, and the fruit of the bird pepper capsicum. The Spaniards gave to all these peppers the name of chile, which they borrowed from the Indian word guachchilli, and which, to the native Mexicans, is as necessary an ingredient of food as salt is to us. At dinner we had the greatest variety of fine fruit, and pulque, which is particularly good in this neighbourhood. They also make here a quantity of excellent cheese.

After dinner they proceeded to amuse us with the colear of the bulls, of which amusement the Mexicans throughout the whole republic are passionately fond. They collect a herd, single out several, gallop after them on horseback; and he who is most skilful, catches the bull by the tail, passes it under his own right leg, turns it round the high pummel of his saddle, and wheeling his horse round at right angles by a sudden movement, the bull falls on his face. Even boys of ten years old joined in this sport. It is no wonder that the Mexicans are such centaurs, seeming to form part and parcel of their horses, accustomed as
they are from childhood to these dangerous pastimes. This is very dangerous, since the horses’ legs constantly get entangled with those of the falling bull, which throws both horse and rider. Manifold are the accidents which result from it, but they are certainly not received as warnings; and after all, such sports, where there is nothing bloody, nor even cruel, saving the thump which the bull gets, and the mortification which he no doubt feels, but from both of which he soon recovers; and which are mere games of skill, trials of address—are manly and strengthening, and help to keep up the physical superiority of that fine race of men—the Mexican rancheros.

The next day we parted from our travelling companions, the Count de B—— and Mr. W——, who are on their way to the fair of San Juan, and are from thence going to Tepic, even to the shores of the Pacific Ocean. Unfortunately, our time is limited, and we cannot venture on so distant an expedition; but we greatly regretted separating from such pleasant compagnons de voyage. We spent the morning in walking about the hacienda, seeing cheese made, and visiting the handsome chapel, the splendid stone granaries, the great mills, etc. We also hope to spend some time here on our return. By letters received this morning from Mexico, we find that Señor Gomez Pedraza has left the ministry.

As we had but six leagues to ride in order to reach Morelia, we did not leave San Bartolo till four in the afternoon, and enjoyed a pretty ride through a fertile and well-wooded country, the road good and the evening delightful. As the sun set, millions and tens of millions of ducks, in regular ranks and regiments, darkening the air, flew over our heads, changing their quarters from one lake to another. Morelia is celebrated for the purity of its atmosphere and the exceeding beauty of its sky; and this evening upheld its reputation. Toward sunset, the whole western horizon was covered with myriads of little lilac and gold clouds, floating in every fantastic form over the bright blue of the heavens. The lilac deepened into purple, blushed into rose-colour, brightened into crimson. The blue of the sky assumed that green tint peculiar to an Italian sunset. The sun himself appeared a globe of living flame. Gradually he sank in a blaze of gold and crimson, while the horizon remained lighted as by the flame from a volcano. Then his brilliant retnue
of clouds, after blazing for a while in borrowed splendour, melted gradually into every rainbow hue and tinge; from deep crimson to rose-colour and pink and pale violet and faint blue, floating in silvery vapour, until they all blended into one soft gray tinge, which swept over the whole western sky. But then the full moon rose in cloudless serenity, and at length we heard, faintly, then more distinctly, and then in all its deep and sonorous harmony, the tolling of the cathedral bell, which announced our vicinity to a great city. It has a singular effect, after travelling for some days through a wild country, seeing nothing but a solitary hacienda, or an Indian hut, to enter a fine city like Morelia, which seems to have started up as by magic in the midst of the wilderness, yet bearing all the traces of a venerable old age. By moonlight, it looked like a panorama of Mexico; with a fine square, portales, cathedral, broad streets, and good houses. We rode through the city, to the house of Colonel Y——, where we now are; but as we intend to continue our journey to its furthest limits without stopping, we are now, after a night’s rest, preparing to resume our ride. They are saddling the horses, strapping on the sarapes behind the saddles, taking down and packing up our lits de voyage, and loading the mules, all which is a work of time. On our return we hope to remain here a few days, to see everything that is worthy of notice.

PASCUALO.

Accompanied by several gentlemen of Morelia, who came early in the morning to see C——n, we set off for the warm baths of Cuincho; and as we rode along, the hill of Las Bateas was pointed out to us, where, by order of the Curate Morelos, two hundred Spaniards were murdered in cold blood, to revenge the death of his friend, the Curate Matamoros, who was taken prisoner and shot by orders of Yturbi de. Horrible cruelty in a Christian priest! It is singular, that the great leaders of the independence should have been ecclesiastics; the Curate Hidalgo its prime mover, the Curates Morelos and Matamoros the principal chiefs. Hidalgo, it is said, had no plan, published no manifesto, declared no opinions; but rushed from city to city at the head of his men, displaying on his colours an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe, and inciting his troops to massacre the Spaniards. Morelos
was an Indian, uneducated, but brave and enterprising, and considered the mildest and most merciful of these soldier priests! Matamoros, equally brave, was better informed. Both were good generals, and both misused the power which their position gave them over the minds of the unenlightened populace. When Morelos became generalissimo of the revolutionary forces, he took a step fatal to his interests, and which led to his ultimate ruin. He formed a congress, which met at Chilpancingo, and was composed of lawyers and clergymen; ignorant and ambitious men, who employed themselves in publishing absurd decrees and impossible laws, in assigning salaries to themselves, and giving each other the title of Excellency. Disputes and divisions arose amongst them; and, in 1814, they published an absurd and useless document in the village of Apatzingan, to which they gave the name of the “Mexican Constitution.” The following year, Morelos was defeated in an engagement which took place in the environs of Tesmelaca, taken prisoner, led to Mexico, and, after a short trial, degraded from his ecclesiastical functions, and shot in the village of San Cristobal Ecatepec, seven leagues from the capital. The revolutionary party considered him as a martyr in the cause of liberty, and he is said to have died like a true hero. The appellation of Morelia, given to the city of Valladolid, keeps his name in remembrance, but her blood-stained mountain is a more lasting record of his cruelty.

A vile action is recorded of a Spaniard, whose name, which deserves to be branded with infamy, escapes me at this moment. The soldier of Morelos having come in search of him, he, standing at his door, pointed out his brother, who was in a room inside the house, as the person whom they sought; and escaped himself, leaving his brother to be massacred in his place. We contrasted the conduct of this miserable wretch with the noble action of the Prince de Polignac, under similar circumstances.

At half-past ten, after a pleasant ride of about five leagues, we arrived at the natural hot springs of Cuincho. The place is quite wild, the scenery very striking. The building consists of two very large baths, two very damp rooms, and a kitchen. The baths are kept by a very infirm old man, a martyr to intermitting fever, and two remarkably handsome girls, his daughters, who live here completely alone, and, except in summer, when the baths are
resorted to by a number of *canónigos* and occasional gentlemen from Morelia, "waste their sweetness on the desert air." The house, such as it is, lies at the foot of rocky hills, covered with shrubs, and pouring down streams of hot water from their volcanic bosoms. All the streams that cross your path are warm. You step by chance into a little streamlet, and find the water of a most agreeable temperature. They put this water in earthen jars to cool, in order to render it fit for drinking, but it never becomes fresh and cold. It contains muriatic acid, without any trace of sulphur or metallic salt. I think it is Humboldt who supposes that in this part of Mexico there exists, at a great depth in the interior of the earth, a fissure running from east to west, for one hundred and thirty-seven leagues, through which, bursting the external crust of the porphyritic rocks, the volcanic fire has opened itself a passage at different times, from the coasts of the Mexican Gulf, as far as the South Sea. The famous volcano of Jorullo is in this department, and boiling fountains are common in various parts of it.

We stopped here to take a bath, and found the temperature of the water delicious, about the ordinary temperature of the human body. The baths are rather dark, being enclosed in great stone walls, with the light coming from a very small aperture near the roof. A bird, that looked like a wild duck, was sailing about in the largest one, having made its entry along with the water when it was let in. I never bathed in any water which I so much regretted leaving. After bathing, we waited for the arrival of our *núes*, which were to follow us at a gentle pace, that we might have breakfast, and continue our journey to Pascuaro, a city nine leagues farther.

But several hours passed away, and no mules appeared; and at length we came to the grievous conviction that the arrieros had mistaken the road, and that we must expect neither food nor beds that night; for it was now too late to think of reaching Pascuaro. In this extremity, the gentlemen from Morelia, suffering for their politeness in having escorted us, the two damsels of the bath, naiads of the boiling spring, pitying our hungry condition, came to offer their services; one asked me if I should like "to eat a burro in the mean time?" A *burro* being an *ass*, I was rather startled at the proposition, and assured her that I
should infinitely prefer waiting a little longer before resorting to so desperate a measure. "Some people call them pecadoras," (female sinners!) said her sister. Upon this, the gentlemen came to our assistance, and burros or pecadoras were ordered forthwith. They proved to be hot tortillas, with cheese in them, and we found them particularly good. It grew late, but no mules arrived; and at length the young ladies and their father rushed out desperately, caught an old hen that was wandering amongst the hills, killed, skinned, and put it into a pot to boil, baked some fresh tortillas, and brought us the spoil in triumph! One penknife was produced—the boiling pan placed on a deal table in the room off the bath, and every one, surrounding the fowl, a tough old creature, who must have chuckled through many revolutions, we ate by turns, and concluded with a comfortable drink of lukewarm water.

We then tried to beguile the time by climbing amongst the hills at the back of the house—by pushing our way through the tangled briers—by walking to a little lake, where there were ducks and waterfowl, and close to the margin a number of fruit trees. We returned to the baths—the mules had not been heard of—there was no resource but patience. Our Morelian friends left us to return home before it should grow dusk; and shortly after, an escort of twenty-three lancers, with a captain, arrived by orders of the governor, Don Panfilo Galiudo, to accompany us during the remainder of our journey. They looked very picturesque, with their lances, and little scarlet flags, and gave a very formidable aspect to the little portico in front of the baths, where they deposited all their military accoutrements—their saddles, guns, sarapes, etc. The captain had with him his wife and daughter, and a baby of about two years old, which, during all the time they were with us, was constantly carried by one of the soldiers, with the utmost care, in front of his horse.

Meanwhile, the moon rose, and we walked about disconsolate, in front of the baths—fearing greatly that some accident might have overtaken our unescorted mules and servants; that the first might be robbed—and that the drivers might be killed. But it was as well to try to sleep if it were only to get over the interminable night; and at length some clean straw was procured, and spread in a corner of the damp floor. There K—— and I lay down
in our mangas. C—n procured another corner—Colonel Y—a third, and then and thus, we addressed ourselves seriously to repose, but in vain. Between cold and mosquitoes and other animals, we could not close our eyes, and were thankful to rise betimes, shake the straw off, and resume our march.

The road was pretty and flowery when the light came in, and we gradually began to open our eyes, after taking leave of our fair hostesses and their father. When I say the road you do not, I trust, imagine us riding along a dusty highway. I am happy to say that we are generally the discoverers of our own pathways. Every man his own Columbus. Sometimes we take short cuts, which prove to be long rounds;

"Over hill, over dale,
Through bush, through brier;"

through valley and over stream; and this kind of journey has something in it so independent and amusing, that with all its fatigues and inconveniences, we find it delightful—far preferable even to travelling in the most commodious London-built carriage, bowling along the queen’s highway with four swift posters, at the rate of twelve miles an hour.

Arrived at the huts, we stopped to make inquiries concerning the mules. Two loaded mules, the peasants said, had been robbed in the night, and the men tied to a tree on the low road leading to Pascuaro. We rode on uneasy enough, and at another hut were told that many robbers had been out in the night, and that amongst others, a woman had been robbed and bound hand and foot. The road now became bleak and uninteresting, the sun furiously hot, and we rode forward with various misgivings as to the fate of the party; when at a cluster of huts called el Correo, we came up with the whole concern. The arrieros had forgotten the name of Cuincho, and not knowing where to go, had stopped here the previous night, knowing that we were bound for Pascuaro, and must pass that way. They had arrived early, and missed the robbers.

We stopped to breakfast at some huts called La Puerta de Chapultepec, where we got some tortillas from a half-caste Indian, who was in great distress, because his wife had run off from him for the fourth time with "another gentleman!" He vowed that though he had taken her
back three times, he never would receive her more; yet I venture to say, that when the false fair one presents herself, she will find him placable; he is evidently in such distress at having no woman to take care of his house.

After leaving Chapultepec, the scenery improves, and at length we had a beautiful view of the hills, at the foot of which lies the ancient city of Tsintsonian, close by the opposite shore of the Lake of Pascuaro; formerly capital of the independent kingdom of Michoacan, an important city, called at the time of Cortes, Hurtsitzila. It was formerly the residence of the monarch, King Calsonsi, an ally of Cortes, and who, with his Indian subjects, assisted him in his Mexican war. It is now a poor Indian village, though it is said that some remains of the monarch’s palace still exist. Apropos to which, we have several times observed, since we entered this state, large stones lying in fields, or employed in fences, with strange hieroglyphic characters engraved on them, some of which may be curious and interesting.

The view as we approach Pascuaro with its beautiful lake studded with little islands, is very fine. The bells were tolling, and they were letting off rockets for some Indian festival, and we met parties of the natives who had been keeping the festival upon pulque or mescal (a strong spirit) and were stumbling along in great glee. We came up to an old church, that looks like a bird’s-nest amongst the trees, and stands at the outskirts of the city. Here, it is said, his Majesty of Michoacan came out to meet his Spanish ally, when he entered this territory.

Pascuaro is a pretty little city with sloping roofs, situated on the shores of the lake of the same name, and in front of the little Indian village of Janicho, built on a beautiful small island in the midst of the lake. C—n says that Pascuaro resembles a town in Catalonia. It is entirely unlike any other Mexican city. We made a great sensation as we entered with our lancers and mules, tired and dust-becovered as we were, and brought all the Pascuaranians to their balconies. We passed churches bearing the date of 1580! We went to the largest and best house in the town, that of Don Miguel H—a (a friend of Colonel Y—'s). He was from home, but we were most hospitably entertained by his wife, who received us without any unnecessary ceremony or compliments, and
made us quite at home. We walked out with her by moonlight to see the Square and the Portales, which is a promenade in the evening, and were followed by crowds of little boys; strangers being rather an uncommon spectacle here. The only foreign lady, Doña — says, whoever was here in her recollection, was a Frenchwoman, to whom she was very much attached, the daughter of a physician, and whose husband was murdered by the robbers.

This morning, the weather being cold and rainy, and our quarters too agreeable to leave in any violent haste, we agreed to remain until to-morrow, and have spent a pleasant day in this fine large house, with Doña —, and her numerous and handsome children. We have not been able to visit the lake, or the Indian islands on account of the weather, but we hope to do so on our return from Uruapa, our next destination. Our hostess is a most agreeable person; lively, kind-hearted, and full of natural talent. We did not expect to meet such a person in this corner of the world.

The first bishop of Michoacan, Vasco de Quiroga, who died in Uruapa, was buried in Pascuaró, and the Indians of this state still venerate his memory. He was the father and benefactor of these Tarrascan Indians, and went far to rescue them from their degraded state. He not only preached morality, but encouraged industry amongst them, by assigning to each village its particular branch of commerce. Thus one was celebrated for its manufacture of saddles, another for its shoes, a third for its bateos (painted trays), and so on. Every useful institution, of which some traces still remain amongst them, is due to this excellent prelate; an example of what one good and zealous and well-judging man can effect.

We have been taking another stroll by moonlight, the rain having ceased; we have lingered over a pleasant supper, and have wished Doña — good-night. Yet let me not forget, before laying down my pen, to celebrate the excellence of the white fish from the lake! so greatly surpassing in excellence and flavour those which we occasionally have in Mexico. These no doubt must have constituted "the provisions," which according to tradition, were carried by regular running posts, from Tzintzontzan to Montezuma's palace in Mexico, and with such expedition, that though the distance is about one hundred
leagues, they were placed, still smoking, on the Emperor’s table!

URUAPA, 30th.

We went to mass at six o’clock; and then took leave of the Señora H—–a, who gave us a cordial invitation to spend some days with her on our return. It was about eight o’clock when we left Pascuaro, and mounted the hills over which our road lay, and stopped to look down on the beautiful lake, lying like a sheet of silver in the sun, and dotted with green islands.

Two disagreeable personages were added to our party. Early in the morning, intelligence was brought that a celebrated robber, named Morales, captain of a large band, had been seized along with one of his companions; and permission was requested to take advantage of our large escort, in order that they may be safely conducted to Uruapa, where they are to be shot, being already condemned to death. The punishment of hanging is not in use in Mexico.

The first thing therefore that we saw, on mounting our horses, was the two robbers, chained together by the leg, guarded by five of our lancers, and prepared to accompany us on foot. The companion of Morales was a young, vulgar-looking ruffian, his face livid, and himself nearly naked; but the robber-captain himself was equal to any of Salvator’s brigands, in his wild and striking figure and countenance. He wore a dark-coloured blanket, and a black hat, the broad leaf of which was slouched over his face, which was the colour of death, while his eyes seemed to belong to a tiger or other beast of prey. I never saw such a picture of fierce misery. Strange to say, this man began life as a shepherd; but how he was induced to abandon this pastoral occupation, we did not hear. For years he has been the scourge of the country, robbing to an unheard of extent, (so that whatever he may have done with them, tens of thousands of dollars have passed through his hands,) carrying off the farmers’ daughters to the mountains, and at the head of eighty ruffians, committing the most horrible disorders. His last crime was murdering his wife in the mountains, the night before last, under circumstances of barbarity too shocking to relate, and it is supposed, assisted by the wretch now with him. After committing the crime, they ran to hide them-
selves in an Indian village, as the Indians, probably from fear, never betray the robbers. However, their horror of this man was so great, that perfect hate cast out their fear, and collecting together, they seized the ruffians, bound them, and carried them to Pascuaro, where they were instantly tried, and condemned to be shot; the sentence to be executed at Uruapa.

The sight of these miserable wretches, and the idea of what their feelings must be, occupied us, as they toiled along, each step bringing them nearer to their place of execution; and we could not help thinking what wild wishes must have sometimes throbbed within them, of breaking their bonds, and dashing away from their guards—away through the dark woods, over mountain and river, down that almost perpendicular precipice, over the ravine, up that green and smiling hill, and into these gloomy pine woods, in whose untrod recesses they would be secure from pursuit—and then their despair when they felt the heavy, clanking chain on their bare feet, and looked at the lances and guns that surrounded them, and knew that even if they attempted to fly, could they be insane enough to try it, a dozen bullets would stop their career for ever. Then horror and disgust at the recollection of their savage crimes took the place of pity, and not even—’s suggestion, that the robber-chief might have killed his wife in a transport of jealousy, could lessen our indignation at this last most barbarous murder of a defenceless woman.

But these thoughts took away half the pleasure of this most beautiful journey, through wild woods, where for leagues and leagues we meet nothing but the fatal cross; while through these woods of larches, cedars, oaks, and pines, are bright vistas of distant pasture-fields, and of lofty mountains, covered with forests. Impossible to conceive a greater variety of beautiful scenery—a greater waste of beauty, if one may say so—for not even an Indian hut was to be seen, nor did we meet a single passing human being, nor a trace of cultivation. As we came out of the woods we heard a gun fired amongst the hills, the first token of human life that had greeted us since we left Pascuaro. This, Señor—told us, was the signal-gun usually fired by the Indians on the approach of an armed troop, warning their brethren to hide themselves. Here the Indians rarely speak Spanish, as those do who
live in the neighbourhood of cities. Their language is chiefly the harmonious Tarrascan.

Towards the afternoon we came to a path which led us into a valley of the most surpassing beauty, entirely carpeted with the loveliest blue, white, pink, and scarlet wild flowers, and clothed with natural orchards of peach- and apricot-trees in full bloom, the grass strewn with their rich blossoms. Below ran a sparkling rivulet, its bright gushing waters leaping over the stones and pebbles that shone in the sun like silver. Near this are some huts called Las Palomas, and it was so charming a spot, that we got off our horses, and halted for half-an-hour; and while they prepared breakfast for us, a basket of provisions from Pascuarro having been brought on by the provident care of Doña ——, we clambered out amongst the rocks and luxuriant trees that dipped their leafy branches in the stream, and pulled wild flowers that would grace any European garden.

Having breakfasted in one of the huts, upon fowl and tortillas, on which memorable occasion two penknives were produced (and I still wonder why we did not bring some knives and forks with us, unless it be that we should never have had them cleaned), we continued our journey: and this mention of knives leads me to remark, that all common servants in Mexico, and all common people, eat with their fingers! Those who are rather particular, roll up two tortillas, and use them as a knife and fork, which, I can assure you from experience, is a great deal better than nothing, when you have learnt how to use them.

Our road after this, though even wilder and more picturesque, was very fatiguing to the horses—up and down steep rocks, among forests of oak and pine, through which we slowly wended our way; so that it was dark when we descended a precipitous path, leading to a small Indian village, or rather encampment, called Curi. It was now too late to think of reaching Uruapa, or of venturing to climb by night the series of precipices called the Cuesta de Curi, over which we should have had to pass. But such a place as Curi for Christians to pass the night in! A few miserable huts filled with Indians, and not, so far as we could discern, even an empty shed, where we might rest under cover. However, there was no remedy. The carreiro had already unloaded his mules, and was endeavouring to find some provender for them and the poor
horses. It was quite dark, but there was a delicious fragrance of orange-blossoms, and we groped our way up to the trees, and pulled some branches by way of consolation. At length an old wooden barn was discovered, and there the beds of the whole party were put up! We even contrived to get some boiling water and to have some tea made—an article of luxury which, as well as a teapot, we carry with us. We sat down upon our trunks, and a piece of candle was procured and lighted, and, after some difficulty, made to stand upright on the floor. The barn, made of logs, let the air in on all sides, and the pigs thrust their snouts in at every crevice, grunting harmoniously. Outside, in the midst of the encampment, the soldiers lighted a large fire, and sat round it roasting maize. The robbers sat amongst them, chained, with a soldier mounting guard beside them. The fire, flashing on the livid face of Morales, who, crouched in his blanket, looked like a tiger about to spring—the soldiers, some warming their hands at the blaze, some lying rolled in their sarapes, and others devouring their primitive supper—together with the Indian women bringing them hot tortillas from the huts—the whole had a curious and picturesque effect. As for us, we also rolled ourselves in our mangas, and lay down in our barn, but passed a miserable night. The pigs grunted, the mosquitoes sang, a cold air blew in from every corner, and, fortunately, we were not until morning aware of the horrid fact, that a whole nest of scorpions, with their tails twisted together, were reposing above our heads in the log wall. Imagine the condition of the unfortunate slumberer on whose devoted head they had descended en masse! In spite of the fragrant orange-blossom, we set off early the next morning.

Uruapa.

On leaving the fascinating village of Curu, we began to ascend La Cuesta; and travelled slowly four leagues of mountain-road, apparently inaccessible; but the sure-footed horses, though stepping on loose and nearly precipitous rocks, rarely stumbled. The mountain of Curu is volcanic, a chaos of rent rocks, beetling precipices, and masses of lava that have been disgorged from the burning crater. Yet from every crag and crevice of the rock spring the most magnificent trees, twisted with flowering parasites, shrubs of the brightest green, and pale delicate
flowers, whose gentle hues seem all out of place in this savage scene. Beside the forest oak and the stern pine, the tree of the white blossoms, the graceful *floripundio*, seems to seek for shelter and support. Creepers that look like scarlet honeysuckles, and flowering vines of every variety of colour, hang in bright garlands and festoons, intwining the boughs of the trees; adorning, but not concealing the masses of bare rock and the precipitous crag that frowns amidst all this luxury of vegetation. The whole scene is "horribly beautiful."

As we wound through these picturesque paths, where only one can go at a time, our train stretched out to an immense distance, and the scarlet streamers and lances of the soldiers looked very picturesque, appearing and then vanishing amongst the rocks and trees. At one part, looking back to see the effect, I caught the eye of the robber Morales, glaring with such a frightful expression, that, forgetful of his chains, I whipped up my horse in the greatest consternation, over stones and rocks. He and the scene were, in perfect unison.

At length we came to the end of this extraordinary mountain-forest, and after resting the tired horses for a little while, in a grove of pines and yellow acacias, entered the most lovely little wood, a succession of flowers and shrubs, and bright green grass, with vistas of fertile cornfields bordered by fruit trees—a peaceful scene, on which the eye rests with pleasure, after passing through these wild, volcanic regions.

On leaving the woods, the path skirts along by the side of these fields, and leads to the valley where Uruapa, the gem of the Indian villages, lies in tranquil beauty. It has indeed some tolerable streets and a few good houses; but her boast is in the Indian cottages—all so clean and snug, and tasteful, and buried in fruit trees.

We rode through shady lanes of trees, bending under the weight of oranges, *chirimoyas*, *granaditas*, *platanos*, and every sort of delicious fruit. We found that, through the kindness of Señor Ysasaga, the principal person here, the curate's house had been prepared to receive us—an old unfurnished house next the church, and at present unoccupied, its owner being absent. We found the whole family extremely kind and agreeable; the father a well-informed, pleasant old gentleman, the mother still beautiful, though in bad health; and all the daughters pretty
and unaffected. One is married to a brother of Madame Yturbié's. They made many apologies for not inviting us to their own house, which is under repair; but as it is but a few steps off, we shall spend most of our time with them. It seems strange to meet such people in this secluded spot! Yet, peaceful and solitary as it appears, it has not escaped the rage of civil war, having been burnt down four different times by insurgents and by Spaniards. Señor Ysasaga, who belongs to Valladolid, has taken an active part in all these revolutions, having been the personal friend and partisan of Hidalgo. His escapes and adventures would fill a volume.

I could not help taking one last look of the robbers, as we entered this beautiful place, where Morales at least is to be shot. It seemed to me as if they had grown perfectly deathlike. The poor wretches must be tired enough, having come on foot all the way from Pascuarro.

31st.—This place is so charming, we have determined to pitch our tent in it for a few days. Our intention was to proceed twenty leagues farther, to see the volcano of Jorullo; but as the road is described to us as being entirely devoid of shade, and the heat almost insupportable—with various other difficulties and drawbacks—we have been induced, though with great regret, to abandon the undertaking, which it is as tantalizing to do, as it is to reflect that yesterday we were but a short distance from a hill which is but thirty leagues from the Pacific Ocean.

In 1813, M. de Humboldt and M. Bonpland, ascended to the crater of this burning mountain, which was formed in September 1759. Its birth was announced by earthquakes, which put to flight all the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages; and three months after, a terrible eruption burst forth, which filled all the inhabitants with astonishment and terror, and which Humboldt considers one of the most extraordinary physical revolutions that ever took place on the surface of the globe.

Flames issued from the earth for the space of more than a square league. Masses of burning rock were thrown to an immense height, and through a thick cloud of ashes, illuminated by the volcanic fire, the whitened crust of the earth was gradually seen swelling up. The ashes even covered the roofs of the houses at Querétaro, forty-eight leagues distance! and the rivers of San Andres and Cuitumba sank into the burning masses. The flames
were seen from Pascuaro; and from the hills of Agua-Zarca was beheld the birth of this volcanic mountain, the burning offspring of an earthquake, which bursting from the bosom of the earth, changed the whole face of the country for a considerable distance round.

"And now, the glee
Of the loud hills shakes with its mountain mirth,
As if they did rejoice o'er a young earthquake's birth."

Here the earth returned the salutation, and shook, though it was with fearful mirth, at the birth of the young volcano.

In a letter written at the time of the event to the bishop of Michoacan by the curate of the neighbouring village, he says, that the eruption finished by destroying the hacienda of Jorullo, and killing the trees, which were thrown down and buried in the sand and ashes vomited by the mountain. The fields and roads were, he says, covered with sand, the crops destroyed, and the flocks perishing for want of food, unable to drink the pestilential water of the mountains. The rivulet that ran past his village was swelled to a mighty river, that threatened to inundate it; and he adds, that the houses, churches, and hospitals are ready to fall down from the weight of the sand and the ashes—and that "the very people are so covered with the sand, that they seem to have come out of some sepulchre." The great eruptions of the volcano continued till the following year, but have gradually become rarer, and at present have ceased.

Having now brought our journey to its furthest limits, I shall conclude this letter.

LETTER THE FIFTIETH


Uruapa, 31st.

The dress of the Indian women of Uruapa is pretty, and they are altogether a much cleaner and better-looking race