Departure from Vera Cruz

We had a visit yesterday from the English and French consuls. M. de — prophesies broken arms and dislodged teeth, if we persist in our plan of taking the diligence,—but all things balanced, we think it preferable to every other conveyance. General Victoria returned to see us this morning, and was very civil and amiable, offering very cordially every service and assistance in his power. We are to rise to-morrow at two, being invited to breakfast with General Santa Anna, at his country-seat Manga de Clavo, a few leagues from this.

We have been sitting on the balcony till very late, enjoying the moonlight and refreshing breeze from the sea, and as we rise before daybreak, our rest will be but short.

LETTER THE FIFTH


JALAPA, 23rd December.

YESTERDAY morning at two o'clock we rose by candle-light, with the pleasant prospect of leaving Vera Cruz and of seeing Santa Anna. Two boxes, called carriages, drawn by mules, were at the door, to convey us to Magna de Clavo. Señor V—o, C—n, the commander of the Jason, and I being encased in them, we set off half-asleep. By the faint light, we could just distinguish as we passed the gates, and the carriages ploughed their way along nothing but sand—sand—as far as the eye could reach; a few leagues of Arabian desert.

At length we began to see symptoms of vegetation; occasional palm-trees and flowers, and by the time we had reached a pretty Indian village, where we stopped to
change mules, the light had broke in, and we seemed to have been transported, as if by enchantment, from a desert to a garden. It was altogether a picturesque and striking scene; the huts composed of bamboo, and thatched with palm-leaves, the Indian women with their long black hair standing at the doors with their half-naked children, the mules rolling themselves on the ground, according to their favourite fashion, snow-white goats browsing amongst the palm-trees, and the air so soft and balmy, the first fresh breath of morning; the dew-drops still glittering on the broad leaves of the banana and palm, and all around so silent, cool, and still.

The huts, though poor, were clean; no windows, but a certain subdued light makes its way through the leafy canes. We procured some tumblers of new milk, and having changed mules, pursued our journey, now no longer through hills of sand, but across the country, through a wilderness of trees and flowers, the glowing productions of tierra caliente. We arrived about five at Manga de Clavo, after passing through leagues of natural garden, the property of Santa Anna.

The house is pretty, slight-looking, and kept in nice order. We were received by an aide-de-camp in uniform, and by several officers, and conducted to a large, cool, agreeable apartment, with little furniture, into which shortly entered the Señora de Santa Anna, tall, thin, and, at that early hour of the morning, dressed to receive us in clear white muslin, with white satin shoes, and with very splendid diamond earrings, brooch, and rings. She was very polite, and introduced her daughter Guadalupe, a miniature of her mamma, in features and costume.

In a little while entered General Santa Anna himself; a gentlemanly, good-looking, quietly-dressed, rather melancholy-looking person, with one leg, apparently somewhat of an invalid, and to us the most interesting person in the group. He has a sallow complexion, fine dark eyes, soft and penetrating, and an interesting expression of face. Knowing nothing of his past history, one would have said a philosopher, living in dignified retirement—one who had tried the world, and found that all was vanity—one who had suffered ingratitude, and who, if he were ever persuaded to emerge from his retreat, would only do so, Cincinnatus-like, to benefit his country. It is strange, how frequently this expression of philosophic
resignation, of placid sadness, is to be remarked on the countenance of the deepest, most ambitious, and most designing men. C——n gave him a letter from the Queen, written under the supposition of his being still President, with which he seemed much pleased, but merely made the innocent observation, “How very well the Queen writes!”

It was only now and then, that the expression of his eye was startling, especially when he spoke of his leg, which is cut off below the knee. He speaks of it frequently, like Sir John Ramornny of his bloody hand, and when he gives an account of his wound, and alludes to the French on that day, his countenance assumes that air of bitterness which Ramornny’s may have exhibited when speaking of “Harry the Smith.”

Otherwise, he made himself very agreeable, spoke a great deal of the United States, and of the persons he had known there, and in his manners was quiet and gentlemanlike, and altogether a more polished hero than I had expected to see. To judge from the past, he will not long remain in his present state of inaction, besides having within him, according to Zavala, “a principle of action for ever impelling him forward.”

En attendant, breakfast was announced. The Señora de Santa Anna led me in. C——n was placed at the head of the table, I on his right, Santa Anna opposite, the Señora on my right. The breakfast was very handsome, consisting of innumerable Spanish dishes, meat and vegetables, fish and fowl, fruits and sweatmeats, all served in white and gold French porcelain, with coffee, wines, etc. After breakfast, the Señora having despatched an officer for her cigar-case, which was gold, with a diamond latch, offered me a cigar, which I having declined, she lighted her own, a little paper “cigarito,” and the gentlemen followed her good example.

We then proceeded to look at the out-houses and offices; at the General’s favourite war-horse, an old white charger, probably a sincerer philosopher than his master; at several game-cocks, kept with especial care, cock-fighting being a favourite recreation of Santa Anna’s; and at his litera, which is handsome and comfortable. There are no gardens, but, as he observed, the whole country, which for twelve leagues square belongs to him, is a garden. The appearance of the family says little for the healthiness of
the locale; and indeed its beauty and fertility will not compensate for its insalubrity.

As we had but a few hours to spare, the General ordered round two carriages, both very handsome, and made in the United States, one of which conveyed him and C—n, the Señora and me. In the other were the little girl and the officers; in which order we proceeded across the country to the high-road, where the diligence and servants, with our guide, Don Miguel S—, were to overtake us. The diligence not having arrived, we got down and sat on a stone bench, in front of an Indian cottage, where we talked, while the young lad amused herself by eating apples, and C—n and the General remained moralizing in the carriage.

Shortly after, and just as the sun was beginning to give us a specimen of his power, our lumbering escort of Mexican soldiers galloped up (orders having been given by the government that a fresh escort shall be stationed every six leagues) and announced the approach of the diligence. We were agreeably disappointed by the arrival of a handsome new coach, made in the United States, drawn by ten good-looking mules, and driven by a smart Yankee coachman. Our party consisted of ourselves, Don Miguel, the captain of the Jason and his first lieutenant, who accompany us to Mexico. The day was delightful, and every one apparently in good-humour. We took leave of General Santa Anna, his lady and daughter, also of our hospitable entertainer, Señor V—o; got into the diligence—doors shut—all right—lash up the mules, and now for Mexico!

Gradually, as in Dante’s Commedia, after leaving Purgatory, typified by Vera Cruz, we seemed to draw nearer to Paradise. The road is difficult, as the approach to Paradise ought to be, and the extraordinary jolts were sufficient to prevent us from being too much enraptured by the scenery, which increased in beauty as we advanced. At Santa Fé and Sopilote we changed horses, and at Tolomé, one of the sites of the civil war, came to the end of Santa Anna’s twelve leagues of property.

We arrived at Puente Nacional, formerly Puente del Rey, celebrated as the scene of many an engagement during the Revolution, and by occupying which, Victoria frequently prevented the passage of the Spanish troops, and that of the convoys of silver to the port. Here we
stopped a short time to admire the beautiful bridge thrown over the river Antigua, with its stone arches, which brought Mrs. Ward’s sketch to my recollection, though it is very long since I saw the book. We were accompanied by the commander of the fort. It is now a peaceful-looking scene. We walked to the bridge, pulled branches of large white flowers, admired the rapid river dashing over the rocks, and the fine, bold scenery that surrounds it. The village is a mere collection of huts, with some fine trees.

It was difficult to believe, as we journeyed on, that we were now in the midst of December. The air was soft and balmy. The heat, without being oppressive, that of a July day in England. The road through a succession of woody country; trees covered with every variety of blossom, and loaded with the most delicious tropical fruits; flowers of every colour filling the air with fragrance, and the most fantastical profusion of parasitical plants intertwining the branches of the trees, and flinging their bright blossoms over every bough. Palms, cocoas, oranges, lemons, succeeded one another, and at one turn of the road, down in a lovely green valley, we caught a glimpse of an Indian woman, with her long hair, resting under the shade of a lofty tree—beside a running stream—an Oriental picture. Had it not been for the dust and the jolting, nothing could have been more delightful. As for Don Miguel, with his head out of the window, now desiring the coachman to go more quietly, now warning us to prepare for a jolt, now pointing out everything worth looking at, and making light of difficulties, he was the very best conductor of a journey I ever met with. His hat of itself was a curiosity to us; a white beaver with immense brim, lined with thick silver tissue, with two large silver rolls and tassels round it.

One circumstance must be observed by all who travel in Mexican territory. There is not one human being or passing object to be seen that is not in itself a picture, or which would not form a good subject for the pencil. The Indian women with their plaited hair, and little children slung to their backs, their large straw hats, and petticoats of two colours—the long strings of arriérés with their loaded mules, and swarthy, wild-looking faces—the chance horseman who passes with his sarape of many colours, his high ornamented saddle, Mexican hat,
silver stirrups, and leathern boots—this is picturesque. Salvador Rosa and Hogarth might have travelled here to advantage, hand-in-hand; Salvador for the sublime, and Hogarth taking him up where the sublime became the ridiculous.

At La Calera we had a distant view of the sea. Occasionally we stopped to buy oranges fresh from the trees, pineapples, and granaditas, which are like Brobdinagian gooseberries, the pulp enclosed in a very thick yellow or green rind, and very refreshing.

It was about seven in the evening, when very dusty, rather tired, but very much enchanted with all we had seen, we arrived at Plan del Rio. Here the diligence passengers generally stop for the night; that is, sleep a few hours on a hard bed, and rise at midnight to go on to Jalapa. But to this arrangement, I for one made vociferous objections, and strongly insisted upon the propriety and feasibility of sleeping at Jalapa that night. Don Miguel, the most obsequious of dons, declared that it should be exactly as the Señora ordered.

Accordingly it was agreed that we should wait for the moon, and then pursue our journey; and meanwhile we walked out to a short distance, to see the bridge, the river, and the wood. The bridge consists of a single large arch thrown over the river, and communicating with a great high-road, formerly paved, but now going to ruin.

We returned to the inn, a long row of small rooms, built of brick and prettily situated, not far from the water. Here we had the luxury of water and towels, which enabled us to get rid of a certain portion of dust before we went to supper.

The diligence from Jalapa has just deposited at the inn, a German with his wife and child, he bearing so decidedly the stamp of a German musician, that we at once guessed his calling. They are from Mexico, from whence the fine arts seem to be taking their flight, and gave a most woeful account of the road between this and Jalapa.

We had a very tolerable supper; soup, fish, fowls, steak, and frijoles, all well seasoned with garlic and oil. The jolting had given me too bad a headache to care for more than coffee. We were strongly advised to remain the night there, but lazy people know too well what it is to rise in the middle of the night, especially when they
are much fatigued; and when the moon rose, we packed ourselves once more into the diligence, sufficiently refreshed to encounter new fatigues. The moon was very bright, and most of the party prepared themselves for sleep with cigars in their mouths; not a very easy matter, for the roads were infamous, a succession of holes and rocks. As we were gradually ascending, the weather became cooler, and from cool began to grow cold, forcing us to look out for cloaks and shawls. We could now discern some change in the vegetation, or rather a mingling of the trees of a colder climate with those of the tropics, especially the Mexican oak, which begins to flourish here. Fortunately, at one part of the road, the moon enabled us to see the captain of the escort lying on the ground fast asleep, his horse standing quietly beside him, he having fallen off while asleep, and continued his nap. The soldiers shook him up with some difficulty.

At Carral falso we changed mules, and from the badness of the road, continued to go slowly.

The cold increased, and at last by the moonlight, we had a distinct view of the Peak of Orizava, with his white nightcap on (excuse the simile, suggested by extreme sleepiness), the very sight enough to make one shiver.

As we approached Jalapa, the scene was picturesque. The escort had put on their sarapes, and with their high helmets and feathers, went galloping along, and dashing amongst the trees and shrubs. Orizava and the Cofre de Perote shone white in the distance, while a delicious smell of flowers, particularly of roses, gave token of the land through which we were passing.

It was nearly two in the morning when we reached Jalapa, tired to death, and shivering with cold. Greatly we rejoiced as we rattled through its mountainous streets, and still more when we found ourselves in a nice clean inn, with brick floors and decent small beds, and everything prepared for us. The sight of a fire would have been too much luxury; however, they gave us some hot tea, and very shortly after, I at least can answer for myself, that I was in bed, and enjoying the most delightful sleep that I have had since I left New York.

This morning the diligence being at our disposal we did not rise by break of day, but on the contrary, continued to sleep till eight o'clock. I was waited on by such a
nice, civil, clean little old woman, that I should like to
carry her off with me. Meanwhile, various authorities
of the town were stationed at the door to give C—n
welcome when he should appear.

Our breakfast was delicious. Such fresh eggs, and
fresh butter, and good coffee and well-fried chickens;
moreover, such good bread and peculiarly excellent water,
that we felt very much in love with Jalapa.

After breakfast we walked out, accompanied by various
gentlemen of the place. The town consists of little more
than a few steep streets, very old, with some large and
excellent houses, the best as usual belonging to English
merchants, and many to those of Vera Cruz, who come
to live in or near Jalapa, during the reign of the
"Vomito." There are some old churches, a very old
convent of Franciscan monks, and a well-supplied market-
place. Everywhere there are flowers—roses creeping
over the old walls, Indian girls making green garlands
for the virgin and saints, flowers in the shops, flowers at
the windows, but, above all, everywhere one of the most
splendid mountain views in the world.

The Cofre de Perote, with its dark pine forests and
gigantic chest (a rock of porphyry which takes that form),
and the still loftier snow-white peak of Orizava, tower
above all the others, seeming like the colossal guardians
of the land. The intervening mountains, the dark cliffs
and fertile plains, the thick woods of lofty trees clothing
the hills and the valleys; a glimpse of the distant ocean;
the surrounding lanes shaded by fruit trees: aloe, bananas, chirimoyas, mingled with the green Liquidambar,
the flowering myrtle, and hundreds of plants and shrubs
and flowers of every colour and of delicious fragrance,
all combine to form one of the most varied and beautiful
scenes that the eye can behold.

Then Jalapa itself, so old and gray, and rose-recoversed,
with a sound of music issuing from every open door and
window, and its soft and agreeable temperature, presents,
even in a few hours, a series of agreeable impressions not
easily effaced.

But we are now returned to our inn, for it is near noon,
and the veil of clouds, that earlier in the morning en-
veloped Orizava, has passed away, leaving its white sum-
mit environed by a flood of light. I shall probably have
no opportunity of writing until we reach Puebla.
Yesterda\' morning we took leave of the Jalapenos, and once more found ourselves en route. Such a view of the mountains as we ascended the steep road! and such flowers and blossoming trees on all sides! Large scarlet blossoms, and hanging purple and white flowers, and trees covered with fragrant bell-shaped flowers like lilies, which the people here call the floripundio, together with a profusion of double pink roses that made the air fragrant as we passed; and here and there a church, a ruined convent, or a white hacienda. We had the advantage of clear weather, not always to be found at Jalapa, especially when the north wind, blowing at Vera Cruz, covers this city and its environs with a dense fog.

We stopped at a small village to change horses (for on leaving Jalapa, our mules were exchanged for eight strong white horses), and here Don Miguel made us enter a very pretty house belonging to some female friends of his, one of whom was very handsome, with a tasteful white turban. The curiosity of this place is a rock behind the house, covered with roses, clove-carnations, and every variety of bright flower-tree, together with oranges, lemons, limes, and cedrats, all growing out of the rock. The ladies were very civil, though I dare say surprised at our admiration of their December flowers, and gave us orangeade and cake, with large cedrats and oranges from the trees; but above all, the most delicious bouquet of roses and carnations; so that, together with the unknown scarlet and purple blossoms which the captain of the escort had gathered for me, the diligence inside looked like an arbour.

We continued our journey, the road ascending towards the tableland, and at one striking point of view we got out and looked back upon Jalapa, and round upon a panorama of mountains. Gradually the vegetation changed: fine, fresh-looking European herbage and trees succeeded the less hardy though more brilliant trees and flowers of the tropics; the banana and chirimoya gave place to the strong oak, and higher still, these were interspersed with the dark green of the pine.

At San Miguel de los Soldados we stopped to take some refreshment. The country became gradually more bleak, and before arriving at the village of Las Vigas, nearly all trees had disappeared but the hardy fir, which flourishes amongst the rocks. The ground for about two leagues
was covered with lava, and great masses of black calcined rock, so that we seemed to be passing over the crater of a volcano. This part of the country is deservedly called the Mal Pais, and the occasional crosses with their faded garlands, that gleam in these bleak, volcanic regions, give token that it may have yet other titles to the name of "Evil Land." The roses and carnations that I had brought from Jalapa were still unwithered, so that in a few hours we had passed through the whole scale of vegetation.

The road became steep and dreary, and after passing Cruz Blanca, excepting occasional cornfields and sombre pine-forests, the scene had no objects of interest sufficient to enable us to keep our eyes open. The sun was set—it grew dusk, and by the time we reached Perote, where we were to pass the night, most of us had fallen into an uncomfortable sleep, very cold and quite stupified, and too sleepy to be hungry, in spite of finding a large supper prepared for us.

The inn was dirty, very unlike that at Jalapa, the beds miserable, and we were quite ready to get up by the light of an unhappy specimen of tallow which the landlord brought to our doors at two in the morning.

There are some scenes which can never be effaced from our memory, and such a one was that which took place this morning at Perote at two o'clock, the moon and the stars shining bright and cold.

Being dressed, I went into the kitchen, where C—n, the officers of the Jason, Don Miguel, and the Mexican captain of the last night’s escort, were assembled by the light of one melancholy sloping candle, together with a suspicious-looking landlord, and a few sleepy Indian women with bare feet, tangled hair, copper faces and reboses. They made us some chocolate with goat’s milk, horrid in general, and rancid in particular.

It appeared that all parties were at a standstill, for, by some mistake in the orders, the new escort had not arrived, and the escort of the preceding night could go no further. Don Miguel, with his swarthy face, and great sarape, was stalking about, rather out of humour, while the captain was regretting, in very polite tones, with his calm, Arab-looking, impassive face, that his escort could proceed no further. He seemed to think it extremely probable that we should be robbed, believed, indeed had just heard it
asserted, that a party of ladrones were looking out for el Señor Ministro, regretted that he could not assist us, though quite at our service, and recommended us to wait until the next escort should arrive.

To this advice our conductor would by no means listen. He was piqued that any detention should occur, and yet aware that it was unsafe to go on. He had promised to convey us safely, and in four days, to Mexico, and it was necessary to keep his word. Some one proposed that two of the men should accompany the diligence upon mules, as probably a couple of these animals might be procured. The captain observed, that though entirely at our disposal, two men could be of no manner of use, as, in case of attack, resistance, except with a large escort, was worse than useless. Nevertheless it was remarked by some ingenious person, that the robbers seeing two, might imagine that there were more behind. In short there were various opinions. One proposed that they should go on the coach, another that they should go in it. Here I ventured to interpose, begging that they might ride on mules or go outside, but by no means within. As usual, it was as the Señora pleased.

At length we all collected before the door of the inn, and a queer group we must have made by the light of the moon, and a nice caricature, I thought to myself, our friend Mr. G— would have made of us, had he been there.

The diligence with eight white horses and a Yankee coachman, originally, no doubt, called Brown, but now answering to the mellifluous appellation of Bruno; A—with her French cap, and loaded with sundry mysterious-looking baskets; I with cloak and bonnet; C—n with Greek cap, cloak, and cigar; the captain of the Jason also with cloak and cigar, and very cold; the lieutenant in his navy uniform, taking it coolly; Don Miguel, with his great sarape and silver hat—(six people belonging to five different countries); the Mexican captain, with his pale impassive face and moustaches, enveloped in a very handsome sarape, and surrounded by the sleepy escort of the preceding night; dirty-looking soldiers lounging on the ground, wrapped in their blankets; the Indian women and the host of the inn, and a bright moon and starry sky lighting up the whole—the figures in the foreground, and the lofty snow-clad mountains, and the dismal old town of
Life in Mexico

Perote itself, that looked gray and sulky at being disturbed so early, with its old castle of San Carlos, and cold, sterile plains.

Meanwhile, two soldiers with cloaks and arms had climbed up outside of the coach. The captain remarked that they could not sit there. Bruno made some reply, upon which the captain very coolly drew his sword, and was about to put a very decided impediment to our journey by stabbing the coachman, when Don Miguel, his eyes and cigar all shining angrily, rushed in between them.

High words ensued between him and the captain, and the extreme coolness and precision with which the latter spoke, was very amusing. It was as if he were rehearsing a speech from a play. "I always speak frankly," said Don Miguel, in an angry tone. "And I," said the captain, in a polite, measured voice, "am also accustomed to speak my mind with extreme frankness. I regret, however, that I did not at the moment perceive the Señora at the door, otherwise," etc.

At length the two little men, who with their arms and sarapes looked like bundles of ammunition, and who, half asleep, had been by some zealous person, probably by our friend Bruno, tumbled upon the diligence like packages, were now rolled off it, and finally tumbled upon mules, and we got into the coach. Don Miguel, with his head out of the window, and not very easy in his mind, called up the two bundles and gave them directions as to their line of conduct in a stage whisper, and they trotted off, primed with valour, while we very cold and (I answer for myself) rather frightened, proceeded on our way. The earliness of the hour was probably our salvation, as we started two hours before the usual time, and thus gained a march upon the gentlemen of the road.

We were not sorry, however, when at our first halting-place, and whilst we were changing horses, we descried a company of lancers at full gallop, with a very good-looking officer at their head, coming along the road; though when first I heard the sound of horses' hoofs, clattering along, and, by the faint light, discerned the horsemen enveloped as they were in a cloud of dust, I felt sure that they were a party of robbers. The captain made many apologies for the delay, and proceeded to inform us that the alcalde's of Tepeyagualco, La Ventilla, and of some other villages, whose names I forget, had
Breakfast at La Ventilla

for twenty days prepared a breakfast in expectation of his Excellency's arrival:—whether twenty breakfasts, or the same one cold, or réchauffé, we may never know.

The captain had a very handsome horse, which he caused to caracolear by the side of the diligence, and put at my disposal with a low bow, every time I looked at it. He discoursed with C——n of robbers and wars, and of the different sites which these gentry most affected, and told him how his first wife had been shot by following him in some engagement, yet how his second wife invariably followed him also.

Arrived at Tepeyagualco, after having passed over a succession of sterile plains covered with scanty pasture, an alcalde advanced to meet the diligence, and hospitably made C——n an offer of the before-mentioned twenty days' entertainment, which he with many thanks declined. Who ate that breakfast, is buried in the past. Whether the alcalde was glad or sorry, did not appear. He vanished with a profusion of bows, and was followed by a large, good-looking Indian woman, who stood behind him while he made his discourse. Perhaps they eat together the long-prepared feast; which was at least one of the many tributes paid to the arrival of the first messenger of peace from the mother-country.

At La Ventilla, however, we descended with a good appetite, and found several authorities waiting to give C——n a welcome. Here they gave us delicious chirimoyas, a natural custard, which we liked even upon a first trial, also granaditas, bananas, sapotes, etc. Here also I first tasted pulque; and on a first impression it appears to me, that as nectar was the drink in Olympus, we may fairly conjecture that Pluto cultivated the maguey in his dominions. The taste and smell combined took me so completely by surprise, that I am afraid my look of horror must have given mortal offence to the worthy alcalde who considers it the most delicious beverage in the world; and in fact, it is said, that when one gets over the first shock, it is very agreeable. The difficulty must consist in getting over it.

After a tolerable breakfast, hunger making chile and garlic supportable, we continued our route; and were informed that the robbers, having grown very daring, and the next stage being very dangerous, our escort was to be doubled. Since we left Perote, the country had gradually
become more dreary, and we had again got into the “mal país,” where nothing is to be seen but a few fí-trees and pines, dark and stunted, black masses of lava, and an occasional white cross to mark either where a murder has been committed, or where a celebrated robber has been buried. Of each, Don Miguel gave us a succinct account. Some lines of Childe Harold suit this scene as if written for it:

“And here and there, as up the crags you spring,
Mark many rude-ca-ved crosses near the path:
Yet deem not these devotion’s offering—
These are memorials fra’d of murderous wrath;
For, wheresoe’er the shrieking victim hath
Pour’d forth his blood beneath the assassin’s knife,
Some hand erects a cross of mouldering lath;
And grove and glen with thousand such are rife,
Throughout this purple land, where law secureth not life.”

The whole scene was wild and grand, yet dreary and monotonous, presenting the greatest contrast possible to our first day’s journey. The only signs of life to be met with were the long strings of arriéros with their droves of mules, and an occasional Indian hut, with a few miserable half-naked women and children.

At one small, wild-looking inn, where, very cold and miserable, we stopped, some hot wine was brought us, which was very acceptable. The tavern-keeper, for it was no more than a spirit-shop, if not a robber, had all the appearance of one; wild, melancholy, and with a most sinister expression of countenance. Salvator never drew a more bandit-looking figure, as he stood there with his blanket and slouched hat, and a knife in his belt, tall and thin and muscular, with his sallow visage and his sad, fierce eyes. However, he showed us the marks on his door, where a band of twenty robbers had broken in one night, and robbed some travellers, who were sleeping there, of a large sum of money.

C—n asked him how the robbers treated the women when they fell into their power. “Las saludan,” said he, “and sometimes carry them off to the mountains, but rarely, and chiefly when they are afraid of their giving information against them.”

At Ojón de Agua, where we changed horses, we saw the accommodations which those who travel in private coach or litera must submit to, unless they bring their own beds along with them, and a stock of provisions besides—
a common room like a barn, where all must herd together; and neither chair, nor table, nor food to be had. It was a solitary-looking house, standing lonely on the plain, with a few straggling sheep nibbling the brown grass in the vicinity. A fine spring of water from which it takes its name, and Orizava, which seems to have travelled forward, and stands in bold outline against the sapphire sky, were all that we saw there worthy notice.

We changed horses at Nopalua, Acagete and Amosque, all small villages, with little more than the posada, and a few poor houses, and all very dirty. The country, however, improves in cultivation and fertility, though the chief trees are the sombre pines. Still accompanied by our two escorts, which had a very grandiloquent effect, we entered, by four o'clock, Puebla de los Angeles, the second city to Mexico (after Guadalajara) in the republic, where we found very fine apartments prepared for us in the inn, and where, after a short rest and a fresh toilet, we went out to see what we could of the city before it grew dusk, before it actually became what it now is, Christmas-eve!

It certainly does require some time for the eye to become accustomed to the style of building adopted in the Spanish colonies. There is something at first sight exceedingly desolate-looking in these great wooden doors, like those of immense barns, the great iron-barred windows, the ill-paved courtyards, even the flat roofs; and then the streets, where, though this is a fête-day, we see nothing but groups of peasants or of beggars—the whole gives the idea of a total absence of comfort. Yet the streets of Puebla are clean and regular, the houses large, the cathedral magnificent, and the plaza spacious and handsome.

The cathedral was shut, and is not to be opened till midnight mass, which I regret the less as we must probably return here some day.

The dress of the Poblana peasants is pretty, especially on fête-days. A white muslin chemise, trimmed with lace round the skirt, neck, and sleeves, which are plaited neatly; a petticoat shorter than the chemise, and divided into two colours, the lower part made generally of a scarlet and black stuff, a manufacture of the country, and the upper part of yellow satin, with a satin vest of some bright colour, and covered with gold or silver, open in front, and turned back. This vest may be worn or
omitted, as suits the taste of the wearer. It is without sleeves, but has straps; the hair plaited in two behind, and the plaits turned up and fastened together by a diamond ring; long earrings, and all sorts of chains and medals and tinkling things worn round the neck. A long, broad, coloured sash, something like an officer’s belt, tied behind after going twice or thrice round the waist, into which is stuck a silver cigar-case. A small coloured handkerchief like a broad ribbon, crossing over the neck, is fastened in front with a brooch, the ends trimmed with silver, and going through the sash. Over all is thrown a rebozo, not over the head, but thrown on like a scarf; and they wear silk stockings, or more commonly no stockings, and white satin shoes trimmed with silver.

This is on holidays. On common occasions, the dress is the same, but the materials are more common, at least the vest with silver is never worn; but the chemise is still trimmed with lace, and the shoes are satin.

Christmas-eve in Puebla! The room is filled with visitors, who have come to congratulate C—n on his arrival, and a wonderfully handsome room it is, to do it justice, with chairs and sofas of scarlet stuff. But I was anxious to see something. As we are to leave Puebla very early, I am prohibited from going to the midnight mass. I proposed the theatre, where there is to be a Nacimiento, a representation in figures of various events connected with the Birth of Christ; such as the Annunciation, the Holy Family, the Arrival of the Wise Men of the East, etc. But after some deliberation, it was agreed that this would not do; so finding that there is nothing to be done, and tired of polite conversation, I betake myself to bed.

Christmas-day.

It is now about three o’clock, but I was awakened an hour ago by the sounds of the hymns which ushered in Christmas morning; and looking from the window, saw, by the faint light, bands of girls dressed in white, singing in chorus through the streets.

We have just taken chocolate, and, amidst a profusion of bows and civilities from the landlord, are preparing to set off for Mexico.