LETTER THE FIFTY-FIRST

San Bartolo—Mass—Market—Rancheros—San Andrés—Insanity—
Rancho—House of Don Carlos Heimburger—Wild Scenery—
German Songs—Las Millas—Leave-taking—Storm—Rainbow—El
Pilar—La Gabia—Toluca—News—Copper Pronunciamiento—
—Return to Mexico—General Moran—Funeral Obsequies—New
Theatre—Cock’s Mass—Santa Clara—Santa Fé Prisoners—New
Year.

ANGANGUEO, 14th.

After taking leave of all our hospitable friends in Morelia,
we set off in the afternoon, and had a delightful ride to
San Bartolo. Fortunately the following day (Sunday) was
that of the Virgin of Guadalupe, one of the greatest
festivals here; so that we had an opportunity of seeing
all the people from the different villages, who arrived
in the courtyard by daybreak, and held a market in front of
the hacienda. Various were the articles for sale, and
picturesque the dresses of the sellers. From cakes, chile,
atole, and ground-nuts, to rebosos and bead rosaries,
nothing was omitted. In one part of the market the
sturdy rancheros were drinking pulque and devouring
hot cakes; in another, little boys were bargaining for nuts
and bananas; countrywomen were offering low prices for
smart rebosos; an Indian woman was recommending a
comb, with every token of endearment, to a young country-
girl, who seemed perfectly ignorant of its use, assuring
her customer that it was an instrument for unravelling
the hair, and making it beautiful and shining, and enforcing
her argument by combing through some of the girl’s
tangled locks.

Before breakfast we went to mass in the large chapel
of the hacienda. We and the family went to the choir;
and the body of the chapel was filled with rancheros and
their wives. It is impossible to see anywhere a finer race
of men than these rancheros—tall, strong, and well made,
with their embroidered shirts, coarse sarapes, and dark
blue pantaloons embroidered in gold. After mass, the
marketing recommenced, and the rebosos had a brisk sale.
A number were bought by the men for their wives, or
novias, at home; which reminds me of a story of ——s of
a poor Indian woman in their village, who desired her
husband to buy a petticoat for her in Mexico, where he
was going to sell his vegetables. She particularly im-
pressed upon him that she wished it to be the colour of the sky, which at sunrise, when he was setting off, was of a flaming red. He returned in the evening, bringing, to her great indignation, a petticoat of a dusky gray, which happened to be the colour of the sky when he made his purchase.

In the evening we rode through the fields, the servants and the young master of the house amusing themselves as they went, by the chasing and colear of the bulls. They have one small, ugly, yellow-coloured bull, which they call tame, and which the mosos ride familiarly. They persuaded me to try this novel species of riding, a man holding the animal’s head with a rope; but I thought that it tossed its horns in a most uncomfortable and alarming manner, and very soon slipped off. We stopped during our ride, at a house where the proprietors make a small fortune by the produce of their numerous beehives; and walked along the banks of a fine clear river, winding through beautiful and verdant groves.

The next morning by six o’clock we were again on horseback, and took leave of San Bartolo. We rode by Yndaparapeo, a considerable village, with sloping shingle roofs; and about ten reached Querendaro, breakfasted with Señor Pimentel, and then continued our journey towards San Andrés, where we were to pass the night. We had a horse with us which occasionally fell down on the road, shivering all over, groaning, and apparently dying; but which had twice recovered from these fits. But this day, having stopped beside a running stream to water our horses, the unfortunate beast fell again, and when we had remounted, and were riding forward, a servant galloped after us, to tell us that the horse was dead at last; so we left him to his lonely grave by the river’s side. Great, therefore, was our amazement, when, some time after, we perceived him trotting along the road at a great rate, in pursuit of his party, apparently quite recovered.

We passed the night at San Andrés, a poor venta, but clean, consisting of three empty rooms, a spirit-shop, and a kitchen. Our escort slept in the piazza, rolled in their sarapes. Our beds were stuck up in the empty rooms, and we got some supper upon fowl and tortillas. We were interested by the melancholy air of a poor woman, who sat aloof on the piazza, uncared for, and noticing
no one. We spoke to her, and found that she was insane, wandering from village to village, and subsisting on charity. She seemed gentle and harmless, but the very picture of misery, and quite alone in the world, having lost all her family. But "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb." We saw her again in the morning before we set off, and saw her get some breakfast in the kitchen. The poor people of the _venta_ seemed kind to her. They who dwell in comfortable houses, surrounded by troops of friends, and who repine at their lot, would do well to compare it with that of such a being.

This morning we left San Andrés, and have had a pleasant ride, in spite of a hard-trotting horse, which fell to my lot. Impossible to conceive more beautiful scenery than that which we passed through to-day. Some of the hills have a singular formation, each large hill appearing composed of a variety of smaller ones, of a pyramidal shape. We rode through Taximaroa without stopping, and breakfasted at a rancho, where the whole family were exceedingly handsome. The ranchero himself was a model for a fine-looking farmer, hospitable and well-bred; knowing his place, yet without any servility. The rancherita, who was engaged in the kitchen, was so handsome, that we made every possible excuse for going to look at her.

About four o'clock we once more crossed the hills and came down upon the plains by which we left Angangueo; and passed over a river as red as blood, that looked as if hostile armies had been engaged in fierce combat by its banks, and their bodies rolled in the tide. This ensanguined hue is, however, caused, not by warlike steel, but by peaceful copper; not peaceful in its effects, by the way, at this moment, for the whole country, more or less, is in commotion on the subject of copper coin.

You must know, that some few years ago, the value of copper was suddenly reduced by law to one half, causing a great loss to all, but much distress to the poor. The intrinsic value of the copper, however, bore so little relation to the value given to it, that it was a very productive business to counterfeit it, of which many unprincipled individuals availed themselves to such an extent, that it had almost become an openly exercised branch of industry all through the republic. When Santa Anna became provisional president, he ordered that all the copper coin, whose currency was now reduced to six or
eight per cent. below par, should be given in to certain deposits which he named, promising to repay it in genuine coin of real value. But this naturally caused a still greater depreciation, bringing it down as low as sixty per cent.; and still greater discontent, the people having little faith in the promise, and, in fact, the payment could not be made at the appointed time, because there were not sufficient coining machines; and as the few new cents that did circulate, were said not to contain their real value, the distress became greater than ever. The merchants refused to receive copper, and there was no silver or small change. In the mean time, in many of the large haciendas, the proprietors have given checks to the workmen, with which they have been able to buy what they required at the shops, which are attached to these haciendas.

The amount of the copper in circulation cannot be calculated, for it is almost all counterfeit. It is supposed, however, to be at least from eight to nine millions of dollars. You may easily imagine the fortunes that will be made (and as they say are being made) by those of the government party, who are buying up for sixty, what will be paid them by favour of the government at the rate of a hundred.

We rode up the hills that lead to the house of Don Carlos Heimbürger, and were again hospitably received by him and his German friends. Nothing can have a finer effect than the view from the piazza of his house in the evening, looking down upon the valley. The piazza itself has a screen of green creepers, which have the effect of a curtain of a theatre half drawn up. Behind the house rises a dark frowning hill, in the form of a pyramid. In front is the deep ravine, with the huts of the workmen, and while the moon throws her quivering beams over the landscape, the metallic fires of livid blue light up the valley. There is something wild and diabolic in the scene; and as the wind howls round the valley with a dismal sound, it seems as if one were looking on at some unholy, magical incantation; so that it is pleasant to return after a while to the comfortable rooms and cheerful fires within, which have so homely and domestic an air. We hope to spend tomorrow here, and the following day to go on to Toluca, from whence I shall continue my letter.

TOLUCA, 19th.

The next day we visited the works, which are like all
others, excepting that here they do not use quicksilver to extract the silver from the lead, but do so by the process of oxidation, by the means of a reverberatory furnace. The people generally have an unhealthy appearance, as nearly all have who are engaged in these works—the air being loaded with particles of metal. After visiting the mills and the sheds where the process of oxidation is carried on, and admiring the metallic riches of these mountains, we left the hot and poisoned atmosphere, and walked up the mountains clothed with a hardy vegetation—with every noble tree and flowering shrub—and pursued our course till we came to a fine waterfall, which plunges from a great height over the gigantic rocks.

The scenery here is rude and wild. The great rocks are covered with hardy trees—the pine, the cedar, the oak, and the flowering laurel. The river, after dashing down in this noble cascade, runs brawling amongst the forest-clothed hills, till it reaches the plains, and flows on placidly. We spent an agreeable day, wandering amongst the mountains; and when we returned sat on the piazza to watch the moon as her broad disk rose over the valley, and the fierce blue lights that made her mild fires grow pale.

All Germans are musical, and the gentlemen in this house did not belie the national reputation. After dinner, a bright fire blazing, doors and windows shutting out the cold air that whistled along the hills, they struck up in chorus some of the finest national airs, particularly the Hymn to the Rhine—so that it seemed an illusion that we were in this wild, mining district, inhabited only by the poorest Indians; and we were transported thousands of miles off, across the broad Atlantic, even to the land where

"The castled crag of Drachenfels
Frowns o'er the broad and winding Rhine."

We also amused ourselves by examining Madame B—’s Album; and if those milk-and-water volumes, belonging to young ladies, where young gentlemen write prettinesses, be called Albums, some other name should be found for a book where some of the most distinguished artists in Germany have left proofs of their talent, and where there is not one page which does not contain something striking and original. Nothing pleased me so much as the fanciful illustration of the beautiful legend of Lorelei,
which Madame B—— read to us with great feeling. We became too comfortable here for hardy equestrian travellers, and had we staid much longer should have begun to complain of tough fowls, beds in barns, and other inconveniences, which we had hitherto laughed at; but we tore ourselves away from our Capua, and on the morning of the sixteenth set off for El Pilar.

Don Carlos Heimburger, M. and Madame B——, etc., accompanied us for seven leagues, all through the woods. We had a delightful ride, the day was cool and cloudy, and we were besides, constantly shaded by the noble forest trees. But we had not reached Las Millas before the sky was overcast, the clouds became black and gloomy, and at length broke out in rain. We galloped fast, for the day, besides being rainy, was cold; and in the afternoon reached Las Millas. Here we breakfasted in the little portico, which we preferred to the interior of the cottage, chiefly upon tortillas and boiled tejocotes, a fruit which grows in great abundance, and resembles a small apple. Here again were two Indian girls of admirable beauty, *dans leur genre*, baking tortillas. We were now obliged to part from our kind German friends, and to ride across the plains. But had not gone more than halfway, when the clouds burst forth in torrents, pouring their fury on our devoted heads, so that in five minutes we were all drenched as if we had fallen into a river. We took shelter for a little while under a solitary spreading tree, but the storm increased in violence, and it was advisable to gallop forwards, in order to arrive at El Pilar before it became dark. Suddenly, the most beautiful rainbow I ever beheld smiled out from amongst the watery clouds. It formed a complete and well-defined arch of the most brilliant colours in the heavens, reflected by another on the plains, which, uniting with it, blended its fainter hues with the light of the heavenly bow.

We arrived at El Pilar tired and drenched, and greatly in need of the hospitable reception which was given to us by its mistress.

The following morning we set off early for La Gabia, feeling some regret that our journey was drawing to a close. Some of us, who rode in front, found ourselves surrounded by several suspicious-looking, well-armed men on horseback, who, under pretence of asking some questions, rode very close to us, and then stopped and faced
round on their horses—but there was no danger, our escort being at a short distance, and when they observed its approach, they bestowed no further attention upon us. Don Xavier Hechavarria had returned to Mexico, but we were cordially welcomed by his brother-in-law, Don Manuel Gorospe, and so kindly pressed to remain some days, that nothing but our limited time would have induced us to set off next morning for Toluca. Here we arrived last night, having performed our journey by a different and more agreeable road than that of the “three hundred barrancas.” We entered Toluca by moonlight, and found that respectable city all in commotion on the subject of copper; presenting a very different aspect from the quiet and conventual air of repose which distinguished it little more than a month ago. Yesterday Colonel Y——, who has accompanied us during all this journey, left us, to return to Michoacan, having thus brought us back in safety to the point from which we started.

We are spending a very tiresome day in the inn, which, however, is a more decent place, and belongs to a better line of coaches than the other. We have been enlivened by several visits, amongst others, from the commandant, and from an aide-de-camp of General Valencia’s. For the first time since we left it, we have news from Mexico. Santa Anna, dit-on, is now Dictator or King, in all but the name; affecting more than royal pomp, yet endeavouring by his affability to render himself popular. Above all, he has made known his determination of not seizing an inch of ground belonging to the clergy; which seizure of church property was the favourite idea of Paredes and the progresistas. This resolution he has not printed, probably in order not to disgust that party, but his personal declara-
tion to the archbishop and the padres of the Profesa, and in a letter to the bishop of Puebla, is, that he will not only leave their property untouched, but that, were he out of power, he would draw his sword in their defence—for that, good or bad, he is a sincere Catholic. This has done much to re-establish him in the good opinion of the clergy, and it is said that in every convent in Mexico, monks and nuns are now wearying Heaven with prayers in his behalf. In short, the conquerors and the conquered, those of the Progress, and those of the Dictatorship, seem all, barring a few noble exceptions, actuated by one motive; personal interest.
Count C—a is restored to the command of his battalion del Comercio, which has been re-established (it having deserted to the federalists in the last revolution). It appears that the president’s favourite plan is to have thirty thousand men under arms; and there is little doubt that he will bring this about. Sixteen new generals have been created; and General Torneil is made a General of Division. The Señora V—a has given a ball, at which she and other ladies appeared with trains, rehearsing, as it would seem, before the court drawing-rooms. I was told, and by good authority, that the present sent by Santa Anna to the lady of the commander-in-chief on her birthday, was a box containing three general’s belts, with a request that she would bestow them on those whom she considered most deserving of them; and that the lady herself buckled the sashes on her favourite knights, in her own boudoir. Thus was valour rewarded by the hand of beauty; and

“Thus should desert in arms be crowned.”

Meanwhile the master of the house presents himself with a disturbed and gloomy countenance, and doubts much whether we can have any dinner to-day, because no one will sell anything, either for copper or silver; moreover hints darkly that they expect a copper pronunciamiento to-morrow; and observes that the shops are shut up.

Since we could get no dinner, we went out to take a walk; and methinks the Tolucanos have a fierce and agitated aspect. We attempted to go to mass this morning, but there was a congregation of léperos, who filled not only the church, but the whole enclosure and the street beyond, so that we could not even approach the church door. Unfortunately we cannot get a diligence until the 21st.

They have brought us at last, I will not say dinner—but something to eat.

20th.—This morning, the firing of squibs, the beating of drums, the shouting and confusion on the streets, announced that the ragamuffin population of Toluca had turned out; and going to the balcony, I very nearly received the salutation of

“A sky-
Recket in my eye.”
Orders have been given out by the alcalde, that copper shall be received in payment by the merchants, some of whom have declared they will only receive silver. A large mob has collected before the alcalde’s door, with shouts of “Viva la plata! Muerta al cobre!” (Long live silver! Death to copper!)—apostrophizing these useful metals, as if they were two generals.

The merchants have issued a declaration, that during three days only, they will sell their goods for copper (of course at an immense advantage to themselves). The Indians and the poorer classes are now rushing to the shops, and buying goods, receiving in return for their copper about half its value. If Santa Anna keeps his word, the patriotism of the merchants will be rewarded.

C—n has just had a visit from one of the merchants, who wishes his conduct to be represented in a proper light in Mexico.

Mexico, 22nd.

With much joy we stepped into the diligence early yesterday morning, accompanied by the commandant of Toluca, and retraced our road to Mexico; for though Toluca is a fine city, with clean, airy houses, wide, well-paved streets, and picturesque in its situation, there is something sad and deserted in its appearance, an air of stagnation that weighs upon the spirits; and the specimens we have seen of its lower orders are not inviting. We had rather an agreeable journey, as the day was cool, and we had the diligence to ourselves. We breakfasted again at Cuajimalpa, took leave of the interesting itzcuin tepozotli, still hanging from its hook—and again ascended the eminence from which Mexico suddenly bursts upon the view, and after a short absence, with all the charms of novelty. Before we arrived at Tacubaya, we were met by a carriage containing Señor A—and his lady, who insisted on our leaving the diligence; and carried us off to their own house, where we now are. On the second of January we expect to take our final departure from the “great city of the lake.”

December 28th.—Another old year about to chime in! Another Christmas past away! But during these last few days it has been all in vain to attempt finishing my letter, between making arrangements for our journey, receiving and returning visits, going to the opera, and seeing and revisiting all that we had left unseen or wished to
see again before leaving this. People seem determined
that we shall regret them, and load us with kindness and
attentions, the more flattering, that now at least they are
entirely personal, and cannot proceed from any interested
motive. We have reason to think them both steady and
sincere in their friendship.

General Moran has died, universally regretted. He has
been embalmed according to the system of Ganal, and his
funeral was performed with extraordinary magnificence,
the troops out, the foreign ministers and the cabinet fol-
lowing on foot, the former in full uniform, and a great
train of carriages reaching along the whole Calle San
Francisco, from the church to the square. The body,
dressed in a general’s uniform, was carried upon a splendid
bier, and was so perfectly embalmed, that he seemed not
dead, nor even asleep, but lying in an attitude of repose.
The expense of this operation will probably prevent its
ever becoming very common; and certainly there are but
few cases where it can be advisable to adopt it. An
embalmed dynasty might be a curious sight. To trace
the features of a royal line, from Charlemagne to Charles
X.—from Alfred to William IV., would be a strange
study. Mary of Scotland and Elizabeth, lying in the
repose of death, yet looking as they lived and hated
centuries back, might be a curious piece of antiquity. A
Hernan Cortes—a Washington—a Columbus—a Napo-
leon; men, whose memory for good or for evil, will
survive time and change—it would be a strange and
wondrous thing, if we could look on their features as
they were in life. But it is to be trusted that this method
of successfully wrestling with the earth for what it claims
as its due, will not generally prevail; or, at the end of a
few centuries, the embalmed population would scarce
leave room for their living and breathing descendants:
nor is it an agreeable idea that one might, in a lapse of
ages, grace the study of an antiquary, or be preserved
amongst the curiosities of a museum. I would stuff birds
and beasts, and preserve them in cabinets, but not the
remains of immortal man. Dust unto dust; and the eye
of faith turned from the perishing remains to the spirit
which has gone to the God who gave it.

The funcion performed in the general’s honour, within
the church, was as magnificent as ecclesiastic and military
splendour could render it. We were in the gallery above.
The bier, placed on a lofty scaffold, covered with black velvet and lighted with wax tapers, was placed near the altar. The music was solemn and impressive. Every respect has been shown to the deceased general, by Santa Anna's orders. Excepting the corps diplomatique and the officers, all within the church were in deep mourning.

The chief difficulty we have in arranging our affairs here, consists in the perfect impossibility of persuading any tradesman to keep his word. They name the day, the hour, the minute, at which they are to be with you, or at which certain goods are to be sent to you. They are affronted if you doubt their punctuality, and the probability is, you never hear of them or their goods again. If they are not exact for their own interest, they will not be so for yours; and although we have had frequent proofs of this carelessness, we are particularly annoyed by it now that we are within a few days of our departure. During our residence here we have had little to do with shops and shopkeepers, having found it more convenient and economical to send to Paris or even to the United States for all articles of dress. Now, though everything must still be comparatively dear, the bad times have caused a great reduction in prices; and dear as all goods are, they would be still dearer, were it not for the quantity that is smuggled into the republic. There are an amazing number of French shopkeepers; French tailors, hatters, shoemakers, apothecaries, etc.; but especially French modistes and perruquiers. The charges of the former are exorbitant, the latter are little employed except by gentlemen. There are also many Spanish shops, some German, and a few English; but I think the French preponderate.

We went some time ago to see the Monte Pio, which is under the auspices of Señor Tagle; and it is melancholy enough to see the profusion of fine diamonds and pearls that are displayed in these large halls. After a certain time has elapsed without their being redeemed, the pledged articles are sold; gold and silver, in whatever form, by the weight, but jewels for their intrinsic value. There is a sale once a week. We were shown privately the jewels of the Virgen de los Remedios; which are very superb.

There is a small theatre lately established, called the Theatre of New Mexico, where there is a Spanish com-
pany, the same whom we saw two years ago in Vera Cruz. They are drawing away various persons from the principal theatre. Their object seems to be to make people laugh, and they succeed. On Christmas eve we went there to see the *gracioso* (harlequin) in a woman's dress, dance *Tripili*, an old Spanish dance, accompanied with singing. They introduced some appropriate lines concerning the late troubles about the *copper*, which were received with great applause. Just as they were concluding the Tripili, a young gentleman in the pit, I do not know whether Mexican or Spanish, rose, and waving his hand after the manner of a man about to make an address, and requesting attention, kindly favoured the audience with some verses of his own, which were received with great good-nature; the actors bowing to him, and the pit applauding him. It seemed to me a curious piece of philanthropy on his part.

At midnight we went to the church of Santa Clara, to attend what is called the *Misa del Gallo*, the Cock’s Mass; which is private,—only respectable persons being admitted by a private entrance; for midnight mass in Mexico takes place with shut doors, as all nightly reunions are dreaded. Santa Clara being attached to the convent of that name, we remained after mass to see the white-robed sisters receive the sacrament from the hands of a priest, by the small side-door that opens from the convent to the church. The church was lighted, but the convent was in darkness; and looking in through the grating, we could only distinguish the outline of their kneeling figures, enveloped in their white drapery and black veils. I do not think there were a dozen persons in the church besides ourselves.

A good deal of interest has been excited here lately about the Texian prisoners taken in the Santa Fé expedition, the first detachment of whom have arrived, after a march of nearly two thousand miles, and are now lodged in the convent of Santiago, about two miles from the centre of the city. As their situation is represented to be very miserable, and as it is said that they have been stripped of their hats, shoes, and coats; some of the Mexican families, and amongst others, that of Don Francisco Tígle, regardless of political enmity, have subscribed to send them a supply of linen and other necessary articles, which they carried out there themselves. Being invited to accompany them to Santiago, I did so; and we found
the common men occupying the courtyard, and the officers the large hall of the convent. So far they have been treated as prisoners of war generally are; but it is said to be the intention of Santa Anna to have them put in chains, and sent out to sweep the streets, with the miserable prisoners of the Acordada. Colonel C—, who was presented to me, seemed to treat the whole affair very lightly, as the fortune of war; and had evidently no idea that any such fate was in store for them; seeming rather amused by the dress of the monks, whom he now saw for the first time. In the Mexicans generally, there seems very little if any vindictive feeling against them; on the contrary, a good deal of interest in their favour, mingled with some curiosity to see them. The common men appeared more impatient and more out of spirits than the officers. We shall probably know nothing more of their fate, before leaving Mexico.

We had some intention of paying a last visit to the Museum before we went; and Don José Maria Bustamante, a friend of ours, professor of botany, and considered a man of learning, was prepared to receive us; but we were prevented from going. I must, however, find time to answer your question as to the population. The Mexican republic is supposed to contain upwards of seven millions of inhabitants; the capital, two hundred thousand. Their number cannot be exactly fixed, as there has been no general census for some time; a labour in which a commission, with Count Cortina at its head, has been employed for some time past, and the result of which will be published shortly. All other questions must be replied to de vive voix.

I must now conclude my last letter written from this place; for we are surrounded by visitors, day and night; and, to say the truth, feel that it is only the prospect of returning to our family, which can counterbalance the unfeigned regret we feel at leaving our friends in Mexico. My next letter will most probably be dated from Vera Cruz.