with much spirit and enthusiasm. This was the finale of the serenade, and then the serenaders were invited in, and were in such numbers that the room would scarcely hold them all. More cigars, more punch, more giving of thanks. About three o'clock the crowd began to disperse, and at length, after those Spanish leave-takings, which are really no joke, had ended, Captain E—, C—n, and I, all three excessively cold and shivering, having passed the night at the open windows, consoled ourselves with hot chocolate and punch, and went to dream of sweet-sounding harmonies. Altogether, it was a scene which I would not have missed for a great deal.

The enthusiasm caused by the arrival of the first minister from Spain seems gradually to increase. The actors are to give him a "funcion extraordinaria," in the theatre—the matadors a bull-fight extraordinary, with fireworks. . . But in all this you must not suppose there is any personal compliment. It is merely intended as a mark of good will towards the first representative of the Spanish monarchy who brings from the mother-country the formal acknowledgment of Mexican independence.

LETTER THE SEVENTH


I made my début in Mexico by going to mass in the cathedral. We drove through the Alameda, near which we live, and admired its noble trees, flowers, and fountains, all sparkling in the sun. We met but few carriages there, an occasional gentleman on horseback, and a few solitary-looking people resting on the stone benches, also plenty of beggars, and the forçats in chains, watering the avenues. We passed through the Calle San Francisco, the handsomest street in Mexico, both as to shops and houses (containing, amongst others, the richly-carved but now half-ruined palace of Yturbiade), and which terminates in the great square where stand the cathedral and the palace. The streets were crowded, it being a
holiday; and the purity of the atmosphere, with the sun pouring down upon the bright-coloured groups, and these groups so picturesque, whether of soldiers or monks, peasants or veiled ladies; the very irregularity of the buildings, the number of fine churches and old convents, and everything on so grand a scale, even though touched by the finger of time, or crushed by the iron heel of revolution, that the attention is constantly kept alive, and the interest excited.

The carriage drew up in front of the cathedral, built upon the site of part of the ruins of the great temple of the Aztecs; of that pyramidal temple, constructed by Ahuitzotl, the sanctuary so celebrated by the Spaniards, and which comprehended with all its different edifices and sanctuaries, the ground on which the cathedral now stands, together with part of the plaza and streets adjoining.

We are told, that within its enclosure were five hundred dwellings, that its hall was built of stone and lime, and ornamented with stone serpents. We hear of its four great gates, fronting the four cardinal points of its stone-paved court, great stone stairs, and sanctuaries dedicated to the gods of war; of the square destined for religious dances, and the colleges for the priests, and seminaries for the priestesses; of the horrible temple, whose door was an enormous serpent’s mouth; of the temple of mirrors and that of shells; of the house set apart for the emperor’s prayers; of the consecrated fountains, the birds kept for sacrifice, the gardens for the holy flowers, and of the terrible towers composed of the skulls of the victims—a strange mixture of the beautiful and the horrible! We are told that five thousand priests chanted night and day in the Great Temple, to the honour and in the service of the monstrous idols, who were anointed thrice a day with the most precious perfumes; and that of these priests the most austere were clothed in black, their long hair dyed with ink, and their bodies anointed with the ashes of burnt scorpions and spiders; their chiefs were the sons of kings.

It is remarkable, by the way, that their god of war, Mejitli, was said to have been born of a woman, a Holy Virgin, who was in the service of the temple; and that when the priests, having knowledge of her disgrace, would have stoned her, a voice was heard, saying, “Fear not,
mother, for I shall save thy honour and my glory," upon which the god was born, with a shield in his left hand, an arrow in his right, a plume of green feathers on his head, his face painted blue, and his left leg adorned with feathers! Thus was his gigantic statue represented.

There were gods of the Water, of the Earth, of Night, Fire, and Hell; goddesses of Flowers and of Corn: there were oblations offered of bread and flowers and jewels, but we are assured that from twenty to fifty thousand human victims were sacrificed annually in Mexico alone! That these accounts are exaggerated, even though a bishop is among the narrators; we can scarcely doubt; but if the tenth part be truth, let the memory of Cortes be sacred, who, with the cross, stopped the shedding of innocent blood, founded the cathedral on the ruins of the temple which had so often resounded with human groans, and in the place of these blood-smeared idols enshrined the mild form of the Virgin.

Meanwhile we entered the Christian edifice, which covers an immense space of ground, is of the Gothic form, with two lofty ornamented towers, and is still immensely rich in gold, silver, and jewels. A balustrade running through it, which was brought from China, is said to be very valuable, but seems to me more curious than beautiful. It is a composition of brass and silver. Not a soul was in the sacred precincts this morning but miserable léperos, in rags and blankets, mingled with women in ragged rebosos;—at least a sprinkling of ladies with mantillas was so very slight, that I do not think there were half a dozen in all. The floor is so dirty that one kneels with a feeling of horror, and an inward determination to effect as speedy a change of garments afterwards as possible. Besides, many of my Indian neighbours were engaged in an occupation which I must leave to your imagination; in fact, relieving their heads from the pressure of the colonial system, or rather, eradicating and slaughtering the colonists, who swarm there like the emigrant Irish in the United States. I was not sorry to find myself once more in the pure air after mass; and have since been told that, except on peculiar occasions, and at certain hours, few ladies perform their devotion in the cathedral. I shall learn all these particulars in time.

We saw, as we passed out, the Aztec Calendar,—a round stone covered with hieroglyphics, which is still preserved
and fastened on the outside of the cathedral. We afterwards saw the Stone of Sacrifices, now in the courtyard of the university, with a hollow in the middle, in which the victim was laid, while six priests, dressed in red, their heads adorned with plumes of green feathers (they must have looked like macaws), with gold and green earrings, and blue stones in their upper lips, held him down while the chief priest cut open his breast, threw his heart at the feet of the idol, and afterwards put it into his mouth with a golden spoon. They then cut off his head, to make use of it in building the tower of skulls, eat some parts of him, and either burnt the rest, or threw it to the wild beasts who were maintained in the palace.

These interesting particulars occurred to us as we looked at the stone, and we were not sorry to think that it is now more ornamental than useful.

After leaving the cathedral, C—n fastened on his orders in the carriage, as this day was appointed for his presentation to the President, and we drove to the place, where I left him, and returned home. He was received with great etiquette, a band of music playing in the court, the President in full uniform, surrounded by all his ministers and aides-de-camp, standing before a throne, under a velvet dais, his feet upon a tabouret, the whole being probably the same as was used by the viceroys. *Viva la Republica!* C—n made a discourse to him, and he made one in return, both of which may be found by those who are curious in these matters, in the *Diario* of the 31st December.

Whilst I am writing a horrible lépero, with great leer- ing eyes, is looking at me through the windows, and performing the most extraordinary series of groans, displaying at the same time a hand with two long fingers, probably the other three tied in. "Señorita! Señorita! For the love of the most Holy Virgin! For the sake of the most pure blood of Christ! By the miraculous Conception!—" The wretch! I dare not look up, but I feel that his eyes are fixed upon a gold watch and seals lying on the table. That is the worst of a house on the ground floor... There come more of them! A paralytic woman, mounted on the back of a man with a long beard. A sturdy-looking individual, who looks as if, were it not for the iron bars, he would resort to more effective measures, is holding up a deformed foot, which I verily
believe is merely fastened back in some extraordinary way. What groans! what rags! what a chorus of whining! This concourse is probably owing to our having sent them some money yesterday. I try to take no notice, and write on as if I were deaf. I must walk out of the room, without looking behind me, and send the porter to disperse them. There are no bell-ropes in these parts. . . .

I come back again to write, hardly recovered from the start that I have just got. I had hardly written the last words, when I heard a footstep near me, and, looking up, lo! there was my friend with the foot, standing within a yard of me, his hand stretched out for alms! I was so frightened, that for a moment I thought of giving him my watch, to get rid of him. However, I glided past him with a few unintelligible words, and rushed to call the servants; sending him some money by the first person who came. The porter, who had not seen him pass, is now dispersing the crowd. What vociferous exclamations! A—— has come in and drawn the curtains, and I think they are going off.

Yesterday evening I was taken to visit the President. The palace is an immense building, containing, besides the apartments of the President and his ministers, all the chief courts of justice. It occupies one side of the square, but is no way remarkable in its architecture. At the end of every flight of steps that we mounted we came upon lounging soldiers, in their yellow cloaks, and women in rebosos, standing about. We passed through a hall filled with soldiers into the antechamber, where we were received by several aides-de-camp, who conducted us into a very well-furnished room, where we sat a few minutes, till an officer came to lead us into the reception-room, which is a handsome apartment, about a hundred feet long, and fitted up with crimson and gold, also well lighted. General Bustamante, now in plain clothes, gave us a very cordial reception.

He looks like a good man, with an honest, benevolent face, frank and simple in his manners, and not at all like a hero. His conversation was not brilliant, indeed I do not know apropos to what, I suppose to the climate, but it chiefly turned on medicine. There cannot be a greater contrast, both in appearance and reality, than between him and Santa Anna. There is no lurking devil in his eye. All is frank, open, and unreserved. It is impossible
to look in his face without believing him to be an honest and well-intentioned man. An unprincipled but clever writer has said of him, that he has no great capacity or superior genius; but that, whether from reflection or from slowness of comprehension, he is always extremely calm in his determinations: that, before entering into any project, he inquires and considers deeply, as to whether it be just or not; but that once convinced that it is or appears to be so, he sustains his ground with firmness and constancy. He adds, that it suits him better to obey than to command; for which reason he was always so devoted a servant of the Spaniards and of Yturbié.

He is said to be a devoted friend, is honest to a proverb, and personally brave, though occasionally deficient in moral energy. He is therefore an estimable man, and one who will do his duty to the best of his ability, though whether he has severity and energy sufficient for those evil days in which it is his lot to govern, may be problematical.

Having made a sufficiently long visit to his Excellency, we went to return that of the Countess C——, who has a magnificent house, with suites of large rooms, of which the drawing-room is particularly handsome, of immense size, the walls beautifully painted, the subjects religious, and where I found one of Broadwood's finest grand pianos. But although there are cabinets inlaid with gold, fine paintings, and hundreds of rich and curious things, our European eyes are struck with numerous inconsistencies in dress, servants, etc., in all of which there is a want of keeping very remarkable. Yet this house, and the one adjoining, which also belongs to the family, are palaces in vastness, and the Countess receives me more as if I were her daughter, than a person with whom she has been acquainted but a few days.

There are an extraordinary number of street-cries in Mexico, which begin at dawn and continue till night, performed by hundreds of discordant voices, impossible to understand at first; but Señor — has been giving me an explanation of them, until I begin to have some distinct idea of their meaning. At dawn you are awakened by the shrill and desponding cry of the Carbonero, the coalmen, "Carbon, Señor?" which, as he pronounces it, sounds like "Carbosiú?" Then the grease-man takes up the song, "Mantequilla! lard! lard! at one real and
a half." "Salt beef! good salt beef!" ("Cecina buena!") interrupts the butcher in a hoarse voice. "Hay cebo-o-o-o-o-o-o?" This is the prolonged and melancholy note* of the woman who buys kitchen-stuff, and stops before the door. Then passes by the cambista, a sort of Indian she-trader or exchanger, who sings out, "Tejocotes por venas de chile?" a small fruit which she proposes exchanging for hot peppers. No harm in that.

A kind of ambulating pedler drowns the shrill treble of the Indian cry. He calls aloud upon the public to buy needles, pins, thimbles, shirt-buttons, tape, cotton-balls, small mirrors, etc. He enters the house, and is quickly surrounded by the women, young and old, offering him the tenth part of what he asks, and which, after much haggling, he accepts. Behind him stands the Indian with his tempting baskets of fruit, of which he calls out all the names, till the cook or housekeeper can resist no longer, and putting her head over the balustrade, calls him up with his bananas, and oranges, and granaditas, etc.

A sharp note of interrogation is heard, indicating something that is hot, and must be snapped up quickly before it cools. "Gorditas de horna caliente?" "Little fat cakes from the oven, hot?" This is in a female key, sharp and shrill. Follows the mat-seller. "Who wants mats from Puebla? mats of five yards?" These are the most matinal cries.

At midday the beggars begin to be particularly impor-
tunate, and their cries, and prayers, and long recitations, form a running accompaniment to the other noises. Then above all rises the cry of "Honey-cakes!" "Cheese and honey?" "Requeson and good honey?" (Requeson being a sort of hard curd, sold in cheeses.) Then come the dulce-men, the sellers of sweetmeats, of meringues, which are very good, and of all sorts of candy. "Caramelos de esperma! bocadillo de coca!" Then the lottery-men, the messengers of Fortune, with their shouts of "The last ticket yet unsold, for half a real!" a tempting announcement to the lazy beggar, who finds it easier to gamble than to work, and who may have that sum hid about his rags.

Towards evening rises the cry of "Tortillas de cuajada?" "Curd-cakes?" or, "Do you take nuts?" succeeded by the night-cry of "Chestnuts hot and roasted!" and by the affectionate vendors of ducks; "Ducks, oh my soul, hot ducks!" "Maize-cakes," etc., etc. As the-
night wears away, the voices die off, to resume next morning in fresh vigour.

Tortillas, which are the common food of the people, and which are merely maize cakes mixed with a little lyme, and of the form and size of what we call scones, I find rather good when very hot and fresh-baked, but insipid by themselves. They have been in use all through this country since the earliest ages of its history, without any change in the manner of baking them, excepting that, for the noble Mexicans in former days, they used to be kneaded with various medicinal plants, supposed to render them more wholesome. They are considered particularly palatable with chile, to endure which, in the quantities in which it is eaten here, it seems to me necessary to have a throat lined with tin.

In unpacking some books to-day, I happened to take up "Sartor Resartus," which, by a curious coincidence, opened of itself, to my great delight, at the following passage:

"The simplest costume," observes our Professor, "which I anywhere find alluded to in history, is that used as regimental by Bolivar's cavalry, in the late Columbian wars. A square blanket, twelve feet in diagonal, is provided, (some were wont to cut off the corners, and make it circular;) in the centre a slit is effected, eighteen inches long; through this the mother-naked trooper introduces his head and neck; and so rides, shielded from all weather, and in battle from many strokes (for he rolls it about his left arm); and not only dressed, but harnessed and draperied." Here then we find the true "Old Roman contempt of the superfluous," which seems rather to meet the approbation of the illustrious Professor Teufelsdroch.

**LETTER THE EIGHTH**


A great ball is to be given on the 8th of January, in the theatre, for the benefit of the poor, which is to be under