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 lime, 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
the patronage of the most distinguished ladies of Mexico. After much deliberation amongst the patronesses, it is decided that it shall be a bal costume, and I have some thoughts of going in the Poblana dress, which I before described to you. As I am told that the Señora G—a wore it at a ball in London, when her husband was minister there, I have sent my maid to learn the particulars from her.

We called to-day on a family nearly related to the C—as, and who have been already excessively kind to us; Señor A—d, who is married to a daughter of Don Francisco Tagle, a very distinguished Mexican. We found a very large, very handsome house, the walls and roof painted in the old Spanish style, which, when well executed, has an admirable effect. The lady of the house, who is only nineteen, I took a fancy to at first sight. She is not regularly beautiful, but has lovely dark eyes and eyebrows, with fair complexion and fair hair, and an expression of the most perfect goodness, with very amiable manners. I was surprised by hearing her sing several very difficult Italian songs with great expression and wonderful facility. She has a fine contralto, which has been cultivated; but some Spanish ballads, and little songs of the country, she sang so delightfully, and with so much good-nature and readiness, that had it not been a first visit, I should have begged her to continue during half the morning. Fine voices are said to be extremely common, as is natural in a country peopled from Spain; and the opera, while it lasted, contributed greatly to the cultivation of musical taste.

In the evening we went to the theatre. Such a theatre! Dark, dirty, redolent of bad odours; the passages leading to the boxes so ill-lighted, that one is afraid in the dark to pick one’s steps through them. The acting was nearly of a piece. The first actress, who is a favourite, and who dresses well, and bears a high reputation for good conduct, is perfectly wooden, and never frightened out of her propensities in the most tragical scenes. I am sure there is not a fold deranged in her dress when she goes home. Besides, she has a most remarkable trick of pursing up her mouth in a smile, and frowning at the same time with tears in her eyes, as if personifying an April day. I should like to hear her sing

"Said a smile to a tear."
There was no applause, and half the boxes were empty, whilst those who were there seemed merely to occupy them from the effect of habit, and because this is the only evening amusement. The prompter spoke so loud, that as every word was made known to the audience in confidence, before it came out upon the stage officially. The whole pit smoked, the galleries smoked, the boxes smoked, the prompter smoked, a long stream of smoke curling from his box, giving something oracular and Delphic to his prophecies.

"The force of smoking could no further go."

The theatre is certainly unworthy of this fine city.

31st.—We have spent the day in visiting the castle of Chapultepec, a short league from Mexico, the most haunted by recollections of all the traditionary sites of which Mexico can boast. Could these hoary cypress trees speak, what tales might they not disclose, standing there with their long gray beards, and outstretched venerable arms, century after century: already old when Montezuma was a boy, and still vigorous in the days of Bustamante! There has the last of the Aztec emperors wandered with his dark-eyed harem. Under the shade of these gigantic trees he has rested, perhaps smoked his "tobacco mingled with amber," and fallen to sleep, his dreams unhaunted by visions of the stern traveller from the far-east, whose sails even then might be within sight of the shore. In these tanks he has bathed. Here were his gardens, and his aviaries, and his fish-ponds. Through these now tangled and deserted woods, he may have been carried by his young nobles in his open litter, under a splendid dais, stepping out upon the rich stuffs which his slaves spread before him on the green and velvet turf.

And from the very rock where the castle stands, he may have looked out upon his fertile valley and great capital, with its canoe-covered lakes and outspreading villages and temples, and gardens of flowers, no care for the future darkening the bright vision!

Tradition says, that now these caves and tanks and woods are haunted by the shade of the conqueror's Indian love, the far-famed Doña Marina, but I think she would be afraid of meeting with the wrathful spirit of the Indian emperor.
The castle itself, modern though it be, seems like a tradition! The Viceroy Galvez, who built it, is of a bygone race! The apartments are lonely and abandoned, the walls falling to ruin, the glass of the windows and the carved work of the doors have been sold; and standing at this great height, exposed to every wind that blows, it is rapidly falling to decay. We were accompanied by Count C—a, and received by a Mexican governor, who rarely resides there, and who very civilly conducted us everywhere. But Chapultepec is not a show-place. One must go there early in the morning, when the dew is on the grass, or in the evening, when the last rays of the sun are gilding with rosy light the snowy summits of the volcanoes; and dismount from your horse, or step out of your carriage and wander forth without guide or object, or fixed time for return.

We set off early, passing over a fine paved road, divided by a great and solid aqueduct of nine hundred arches, one of the two great aqueducts by which fresh water is conveyed to the city, and of which the two sources are in the hill of Chapultepec, and in that of Santa Fé, at a much greater distance. When we arrived, the sleepy soldiers, who were lounging before the gates, threw them open to let the carriage enter, and we drew up in front of the great cypress, known by the name of "Montezuma’s Cypress," a most stupendous tree—dark, solemn, and stately, its branches unmoved as the light wind played amongst them, of most majestic height, and forty-one feet in circumference. A second cypress standing near, and of almost equal size, is even more graceful, and they, and all the noble trees which adorn these speaking solitudes, are covered with a creeping plant, resembling gray moss, hanging over every branch like long gray hair, giving them a most venerable and druidical look.

We wandered through the noble avenues, and rested under the trees, and walked through the tangled shrubberies, bright with flowers and coloured berries, and groped our way into the cave, and stood by the large clear tank, and spent some time in the old garden; and then got again into the carriage, that we might be dragged up the precipitous ascent on which stands the castle, the construction of which aroused the jealousy of the government against the young count, whose taste for the picturesque
had induced him to choose this elevated site for his summer palace.

The interior was never finished; yet, even as it stands, it cost the Spanish government three hundred thousand dollars. When we look at its strong military capabilities and commanding position, fortified with salient walls and parapets towards Mexico, and containing on its northern side great moats and subterranean vaults, capable of holding a vast supply of provisions, the jealousy of the government, and their suspicions that it was a fortress masked as a summer retreat, are accountable enough.

The Vice-Queen Galvez, was celebrated for her beauty and goodness, and was universally adored in Mexico. A sister of hers, who still survives, and who paid me a visit the other day, says that her beauty chiefly consisted in the exceeding fairness of her complexion, very few blondes having then been seen in this part of the world.

From the terrace that runs round the castle, the view forms the most magnificent panorama that can be imagined. The whole valley of Mexico lies stretched out as in a map; the city itself, with its innumerable churches and convents; the two great aqueducts which cross the plain; the avenues of elms and poplars which lead to the city; the villages, lakes, and plains, which surround it. To the north, the magnificent cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe—to the south, the villages of San Augustin, San Angel, and Téucubaya, which seem imbosomed in trees, and look like an immense garden. And if in the plains below there are many uncultivated fields, and many buildings falling to ruin, yet with its glorious enclosure of mountains, above which tower the two mighty volcanoes, Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl, the Gog and Magog of the valley, off whose giant sides great volumes of misty clouds were rolling, and with its turquoise sky for ever smiling on the scene, the whole landscape, as viewed from this height, is one of nearly unparalleled beauty.

1st January, 1840.—New Year’s Day! The birth of the young year is ushered in by no remarkable signs of festivity. More ringing of bells, more chanting of mass, gayer dresses amongst the peasants in the streets, and more carriages passing along, and the ladies within rather more dressed than apparently they usually are, when they do not intend to pay visits. In passing through the
Plaza this morning, our carriage suddenly drew up, and the servants took off their hats. At the same moment, the whole population, men, women, and children, vendors and buyers, peasant and señora, priest and layman, dropped on their knees, a picturesque sight. Presently a coach came slowly along through the crowd, with the mysterious Eye painted on the panels, drawn by piebald horses, and with priests within, bearing the divine symbols. On the balconies, in the shops, in the houses, and on the streets, every one knelt while it passed, the little bell giving warning of its approach.

We were then at the door of the palace, where we went this morning to see the opening of Congress, the two houses being included in this building. The House of Representatives, though not large, is handsome, and in good taste. Opposite to the presidential chair is a full-length representation of Our Lady of Guadalupe. All round the hall, which is semicircular, are inscribed the names of the heroes of independence, and that of the Emperor Augustin Yturbié is placed on the right of the presidential chair, with his sword hanging on the wall; while on the left of the chief magistrate’s seat there is a vacant space; perhaps destined for the name of another emperor. The multitude of priests with their large shovel-hats, and the entrance of the president in full uniform, announced by music and a flourish of trumpets, and attended by his staff, rendered it as anti-republican-looking an assembly as one could wish to see. The utmost decorum and tranquillity prevailed. The president made a speech in a low and rather monotonous tone, which in the diplomat’s seat, where we were, was scarcely audible. No ladies were in the house, myself excepted; which I am glad I was not aware of before going, or I should perhaps have stayed away.

Yesterday I received visits from the gentlemen of the diplomatic corps, who are not in great numbers here. England, Belgium, Prussia, and the United States, are the only countries at present represented, Spain excepted. The French minister has not arrived yet, but is expected in a few days. I was not sorry to hear English spoken once more, and to meet with so gentlemanly a person as the minister who for the last fourteen years has represented our island in the Republic. His visit and a large packet of letters just received from Paris and from the
United States, have made me feel as if the distance from home were diminished by one-half.

This morning a very handsome dress was forwarded to me with the compliments of a lady whom I do not know, the wife of General ——; with a request that, if I should go to the fancy ball as a Poblan peas tant, I may wear this costume. It is a Poblan dress, and very superb, consisting of a petticoat of maroon-coloured merino, with gold fringe, gold bands and spangles; an under-petticoat, embroidered and trimmed with rich lace, to come below it. The first petticoat is trimmed with gold up the sides, which are slit open, and tied up with coloured ribbon. With this must be worn a chemise, richly embroidered round the neck and sleeves, and trimmed with lace; a satin vest, open in front, and embroidered in gold; a silk sash tied behind, the ends fringed with gold, and a small silk handkerchief which crosses the neck, with gold fringe. I had already another dress prepared, but I think this is the handsomer of the two.

The actors have just called to inform C—-n, that their "funcion extraordinaria" in his honour, is to be given on the third, that a box is prepared for us, and that the play is to be "Don John of Austria."  

4th.—Having sat through five acts last evening in the theatre, we came home very tired. The play was awfully long, lasting from eight o'clock till one in the morning. At the end of the first act, the prefect and other dignitaries came round with much precipitation and carried off C—-n to a large box in the centre, intended for him; for, not knowing which it was, we had gone to that of the Countess C—-a. The theatre looked much more decent than before; being lighted up, and the boxes hung with silk draperies in honour of the occasion. The ladies also were in full dress, and the boxes crowded, so that one could scarcely recognise the house.

This morning we drove out to see the cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe: C—-n in one carriage with Count C—-a, and the Señora C—-a and I in another, driven by Señor A—-d, who is a celebrated whip; the carriage open, with handsome white horses, frisones, as they here call the northern horses, whether from England or the

1 Translated from the French of Casimir Delavigne.
United States, and which are much larger than the spirited little horses of the country. As usual, we were accompanied by four armed outriders.

We passed through miserable suburbs, ruined, dirty, and with a commingling of odours which I could boldly challenge those of Cologne to rival. After leaving the town, the road is not particularly pretty, but is for the most part a broad, straight avenue, bounded on either side by trees.

At Guadalupe, on the hill of Tepayac, there stood, in days of yore, the Temple of Tonantzin, the goddess of earth and of corn, a mild deity, who rejected human victims, and was only to be propitiated by the sacrifices of turtle-doves, swallows, pigeons, etc. She was the protectress of the Totonacoqui Indians. The spacious church, which now stands at the foot of the mountain, is one of the richest in Mexico. Having put on veils, no bonnets being permitted within the precincts of a church, we entered this far-famed sanctuary, and were dazzled by the profusion of silver with which it is ornamented.

The divine painting of the Virgin of Guadalupe, represents her in a blue cloak covered with stars, a garment of crimson and gold, her hands clasped, and her foot on a crescent, supported by a cherub. The painting is coarse, and only remarkable on account of the tradition attached to it.

We afterwards visited a small chapel, covered by a dome, built over a boiling spring, whose waters possess miraculous qualities, and bought crosses and medals which have touched the holy image, and pieces of white ribbon, marked with the measure of the Virgin’s hands and feet. We climbed (albeit very warm) by a steep path to the top of the hill, where there is another chapel, from which there is a superb view of Mexico; and beside it, a sort of monument in the form of the sails of a ship, erected by a grateful Spaniard, to commemorate his escape from shipwreck, which he believed to be owing to the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe. We then went to the village to call on the bishop, the Excelentísimo Señor Campos, whom we found in his canonicals, and who seems a good little old man, but no conjurer; although I believe he had the honour of bringing up his cousin, Señor Posada, destined to be Archbishop of Mexico. We found him quietly seated in a large, simply-furnished room, and
apparently buried over some huge volume, so that he was not at first aware of our entrance.

A picture of the Virgin of Guadalupe hung on the wall, which C—n having noticed, he observed that he could not answer for its being a very faithful resemblance, as Our Lady did not appear often, not so often as people supposed. Then folding his hands, and looking down, he proceeded to recount the history of the miraculous apparition, pretty much as follows:

In 1531, ten years and four months after the conquest of Mexico, the fortunate Indian whose name was Juan Diego, and who was a native of Cuatitlan, went to the suburb of Tlaltelolco to learn the Christian doctrine which the Franciscan monks taught there. As he was passing by the mountain of Tepeyac, the Holy Virgin suddenly appeared before him and ordered him to go, in her name, to the bishop, the Ylustrísimo D. Fr. Juan de Zumarraga, and to make known to him that she desired to have a place of worship erected in her honour, on that spot. The next day the Indian passed by the same place, when again the Holy Virgin appeared before him, and demanded the result of his commission. Juan Diego replied, that in spite of his endeavours, he had not been able to obtain an audience of the bishop. “Return,” said the Virgin, “and say that it is I, the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, who sends thee.” Juan Diego obeyed the divine orders, yet still the bishop would not give him credence, merely desiring him to bring some sign or token of the Virgin’s will. He returned with this message on the twelfth of December, when, for the third time, he beheld the apparition of the Virgin. She now commanded him to climb to the top of the barren rock of Tepeyac, to gather the roses which he should find there, and to bring them to her. The humble messenger obeyed, though well knowing that on that spot were neither flowers nor any trace of vegetation. Nevertheless, he found the roses, which he gathered and brought to the Virgin Mary, who, throwing them into his tilma, said, “Return, show these to the bishop, and tell him that these are the credentials of thy mission.” Juan Diego set out for the episcopal house, which stood on the ground occupied by the hospital, now called San Juan de Dios, and when he found himself in the presence of the prelate, he unfolded his tilma to show him the roses, when there appeared imprinted on it the
miraculous image which had existed for more than three centuries.

When the bishop beheld it, he was seized with astonishment and awe, and conveyed it in a solemn procession to his own oratory, and shortly after, this splendid church was erected in honour of the patroness of New Spain. “From all parts of the country,” continued the old bishop, “people flocked in crowds to see Our Lady of Guadalupe, and esteemed it an honour to obtain a sight of her. What then must be my happiness, who can see her most gracious majesty every hour and every minute of the day! I would not quit Guadalupe for any other part of the world, nor for any temptation that could be held out to me;” and the pious man remained for a few minutes as if wrapt in ecstasy. That he was sincere in his assertions, there could be no doubt. As evening prayers were about to begin, we accompanied him to the cathedral. An old woman opened the door for us as we passed out. “Have my chocolate ready when I return,” said the bishop, “Sí, padre!” said the old woman, dropping upon her knees, in which posture she remained for some minutes. As we passed along the street, the sight of the reverend man had the same effect; all fell on their knees as he passed, precisely as if the host were carried by, or the shock of an earthquake were felt. Arrived at the door of the cathedral, he gave us his hand, or rather his pastoral amethyst, to kiss.

The organ sounded fine as it pealed through the old cathedral, and the setting sun poured his rays in through the Gothic windows with a rich and glowing light. The church was crowded with people of the village, but especially with leperos, counting their beads, and suddenly in the midst of an “Ave María Purisima,” flinging themselves and their rags in our path with a “Por el amor de la Santissima Virgen!” and if this does not serve their purpose, they appeal to your domestic sympathies. From men they entreat relief “By the life of the Señorita.” From women, “By the life of the little child!” From children it is “By the life of your mother!” And a mixture of piety and superstitious feeling makes most people, women at least, draw out their purses.

Count C——a has promised to send me to-morrow a box of mosquitoe’s eggs, of which tortillas are made, which are considered a great delicacy. Considering
mosquitoes as small winged cannibals, I was rather shocked at the idea, but they pretend that these which are from the Laguna, are a superior race of creatures, which do not sting. In fact the Spanish historians mention that the Indians used to eat bread made of the eggs which the fly called agayacall laid on the rushes of the lakes, and which they (the Spaniards) found very palatable.

LETTER THE NINTH


5th January.

YESTERDAY (Sunday), a great day here for visiting after mass is over. We had a concourse of Spaniards, all of whom seemed anxious to know whether or not I intended to wear a Poblanan dress at the fancy ball, and seemed wonderfully interested about it. Two young ladies or women of Puebla, introduced by Señor —— came to proffer their services in giving me all the necessary particulars, and dressed the hair of Josefa, a little Mexican girl, to show me how it should be arranged; mentioned several things still wanting, and told me that every one was much pleased at the idea of my going in a Poblanan dress. I was rather surprised that every one should trouble themselves about it. About twelve o’clock the president, in full uniform, attended by his aides-de-camp, paid me a visit, and sat about half an hour, very amiable as usual. Shortly after came more visits, and just as we had supposed they were all concluded, and we were going to dinner, we were told that the secretary of state, the ministers of war and of the interior, and others, were in the drawing-room. And what do you think was the purpose of their visit? To adjure me by all that was most alarming, to discard the idea of making my appearance in a Poblanan dress! They assured us that Poblanas generally were femmes de rien, that they wore no stockings, and that the wife of the Spanish minister should by no