

feet above the level of the sea. Far out in the Gulf of Mexico you see it in the form of a dimly defined white cloud, and until you arrive in the harbour, or what should be the harbour, (for it has none) of Vera Cruz, you find it difficult to believe that the shapeless mass is in reality a snow-capped mountain reaching far beyond the clouds.

My recollections of Vera Cruz, the principal seaport of Mexico, will ever constitute a mixture of sweet and bitter,—the latter probably predominating. It was little advantage to my wearied body that the quaint city reminded me of old Nuremburg in Bavaria, with its antique custom-house and curiously built dwellings and places of business, whilst I suffered purgatory at the hotel Diligencios, and with the mercury away up to blood heat, struggled bravely to make myself clean, happy and comfortable on one diminutive towel a day! Vera Cruz can boast of being the terminus of one of the most wonderful railroads in the world, that to the city of Mexico, which cost \$27,000,000 to construct and was open in 1873. Vera Cruz can also boast of perhaps the most expensive fortress ever built. Yet, despite these engineering prodigies, even the street cars are little patronized, the people being too poor to afford the luxury of a ride. The dreaded yellow fever, too, runs riot here from May till November, and can only be escaped by flying to the more elevated and healthier inland districts. I thought I should catch it from want of proper hotel accommodation, and but for the kind attention of Mr. Ritter and his son Hans I should have undoubtedly fallen a prey to at least a fit of despondency, if indeed I had not become a victim of anything else.

I was tired of Vera Cruz, ten minutes after landing, and did not feel the least bit relieved when at intervals of an hour or so during my stay some cracked old church bell clanged forth its exact number of melancholy strokes as a signal for the observance of some gross relic of middle-age superstition.

The Lonja Mercantil de Vera Cruz is the name of a Club at which Mr. Miron, to whom I am indebted for much kindness, entered my name. It is from no feeling of ingratitude to him or to the gentlemen who compose this peculiar institution that I am compelled to say it reminded me forcibly of a large vault, built and equipped at almost the same period and in about the same style as Noah's Ark. The day may come when Mexicans will be able to obtain tasteful furniture at reasonable prices, only present indications are that that much-to-be-desired period is still a long way in the distance. The cities may possibly at some remote future period employ human scavengers. At present a very useful and not altogether unornamental biped, the buzzard, holds the contract from the Corporation. Hundreds of these black, shining birds parade the streets, fattening on the offal and refuse of the city. They are respected and protected in proportion to the value of their services; that is, they are simply venerated, and it is a crime entailing severe punishment, to injure one of them.

Vera Cruz boasts a goodly number of resident Consuls and representatives of foreign powers. During my short stay I was grieved to see an instance of most hard-hearted conduct on the part of the German Consul. I was struck by the circumstance the more as Consuls, from the very nature of their office, are usually found to be men of large and liberal views, especially in their dealings with their own countrymen, and should be always ready, when it lies in their power, to succor the distressed. A poor German doctor, of Medina, had suffered the loss of his little all by robbery. His prospects were ruined, and he made his way despairingly to Vera Cruz armed with proper papers authenticating all the circumstances of his case. He was eminently deserving of something more than mere sympathy, but at the hands of the representative of the rule of Kaiser William he received nothing but wanton and gratuitous abuse. The surly response to the narration of his story was, "You had better get out of this city if you do not want to die like a dog." That is the nearest translation I can give of the soothing remarks of the German Consul. I wish no man ill, but I must confess I should be pleased to learn that his superiors had sent this precious official his letter of recall.

D. A. Ansell.

BOYS.

(Concluded.)

But the mustache grows: It comes on very short at the ends, very no longer in the middle and very blonde all round. Whenever you see a mustache do not laugh at it: encourage it, admire it, pray for it; for it is a first. They always come that way. And when in the fulness of time it can be pulled, we know what a boy's hand is made for. It has to be coloured, and there is far more science in colouring a mustache than any meerschaum. The sun that tans Tom's cheeks and blisters his nose, only bleaches his mustache; nothing ever hastens its colour, nothing ever does it any good, nothing but patience and faith and persistent pulling. Certain it is, there is one thing Tom will do, just about this period of his existence; he will fall in love with somebody before his mustache is long enough to wax: perhaps one of the earliest indications of this event, though it does not always break out in the same manner, is a sudden increase in the number and variety of Tom's neck-ties. In his boxes and on his dressing case his mother is constantly startled by the changing and increasing assortment of the display. He wears one of a different colour for each

day in the week, and it is a query to tell whether Tom is trying to express the distracted state of his feelings by his ties, or trying to find a colour that will harmonize with his mustache or match Laura's dress. And during the variegated necktie period of the boy's existence, how tenderly that mustache is coaxed and petted and caressed; how it is brushed to make it lie down and waxed to make it stand out, and how he notes its slow growth and weeps and mourns and prays and swears over it day after weary day; and now, if ever, and generally now, he buys things to make it take colour; Tom buys a beautiful glossy black or brown at one application without stain or injury to the skin, but he never repeats the purchase. Tom has a taste now for immaculate linen and faultless collars, and how he likes tight boots—too tight in the instep, too narrow at the toes, too short at both ends, the only thing about those boots that do not hurt him are the straps—and with these tight boots he goes to see his Laura. He does not know how he gets there, nor does he know that Laura sees him trying to rest one foot by setting it up on the heel and sees him sneak it back under his chair and tilt it up on the toe for a change; she sees him ease the other foot a little by tugging the heel of the boot at the leg of the chair. But never mind—while on the way to the house Tom has composed certain sentences to say to Laura, in order to impress her with his originality and genius. Real romantic expressions you know, not hollow conventional compliments, but such things as no other fellow can say, and he has them all in beautiful order when he gets at the foot of the hill. The remark about the weather to begin with; not the stereotyped old phrase, but something very original and funny; then after the opening overture about the weather, he intends to say something about music and Beethoven's sonata in B flat and Haydn's symphonies and somebody else's mass, in heaven knows how many flats, and a profound thought or two on science and philosophy, and so on to poetry and from poetry to business. But before Tom had reached the gate all these original thoughts had forsaken him to return no more that evening, and he sat with Laura for five minutes without saying a word, when Laura proposed that they should talk of something else. You can see how oft it is that the well laid plans of men and mice gang aft a'glee. Finally he musters up courage to say good evening; this hardly satisfies his idea of what conversation ought to be, so he asks "how is your mother," and then he proceeds to forget every single thing he ever knew in his life. He returns to consciousness to find himself conversing about the crops and a new method of paying Canada's debt, subjects upon which he is as well informed as the town clock, and then he says he thinks it will rain before morning, and at last he rises to go, but he does not go; he does not know how, he says good evening, and then says it again, and shakes hands and catches hold of the door knob and asks Laura if she went to the Centennial or was going to Forepaugh's circus. "No." "Such a pity," he begins, but stops lest she may consider his sympathy a reflection upon her financial standing. Did he go? Yes, yes, that is no; he staid at home, in fact he had not been away this summer; then he looks at the tender little face; he looks at the brown eyes sparkling with suppressed merriment; he looks at the white hands, dimpled and soft, twin daughters of the snow; and the fairy picture grows more lovely as he looks at it until his heart outruns its fear. He must speak, he must say something impressive and meaning, for how can he go away with this suspense in his breast. His heart trembles as does his hand, his quivering lips part, and—he sees Laura yawn; he says good night and is gone. There is a dejected drop to the mustache that night, and his heart is full of sorrow and bitterness; he carries his kid gloves in his pocket, and is so heart-broken that he throws them away, cursing his fate. It appears to him that he has made an ass of himself, and that Laura will never want to see him again; so he manfully makes up his mind never to think of her again, and then proceeds during the whole of that Friday night to think of nothing and nobody else. How the tender face haunts him! He pitches himself into bed with an aimless recklessness that tumbles pillows, bolster and sheets into one shapeless, wild, chaotic mass, and vainly tries to sleep; he stands his pillow up on end and pounds it into a wad, he props his head against it. But he cannot sleep, and he gets up and smokes like a steam-engine, though but three hours before he told Laura he detested tobacco. This state of mind and experience every boy has to go through until the time when he finds Providence on his side, and gets frightened nearly to death by being left alone with Laura in the parlor, and almost without knowing how or why, they talk about life and its realities, of their plans and their day-dreams and of their ideals of real men and women, and the room seems strangely silent when their voices hush—when the flush of earnestness upon her face gives it a tinge of sadness that makes it more beautiful than ever; when the picture of a home Eden and home life and home love grows every moment more lovely, more entrancing to him until Tom speaks without knowing what he is going to say,—speaks without preparation or rehearsal,—speaks, and his honest, natural manly heart touches his lips with an eloquence and tenderness that all the rhetoric in the world cannot inspire, and—well, that is all we know about it. Nobody knows how it is said or done—nobody, only the silent stars or the whispering leaves or the cat or Laura's younger brother or the hired girl who generally comes in just as Tom reaches the climax. But we do know that Tom does not come away so early that night, and that when he reaches the door he holds a pair of dimpled hands instead of the door-knob. He only holds that