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A MEXICAN FIESTA.

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A cloudless sky, an old adobe church dazzling white in the glare of a December sunshine, near by la Plaza de Taros (the bull ring), and some short streets of gambling tents and booths reached by dusty chocolate colored roads, these were the main features of the scene where the principal doings of the *Fiesta* were to be enacted.

The church is an old one, having been built nearly three hundred years ago by those zealous Spanish *Padres*, who, in the sixteenth century, founded missions along the banks of the Rio Grande. I entered it across the flat tomb-stones covering the dust of some of the long since forgotten attendants of its early days, whose very names even have passed into oblivion, for the inscriptions on the stones are blurred and worn away by the tread of centuries of worshippers. It is an odd-shaped rambling building, with an open belfry on one side, surmounted by a cross. The belfry, in which an ancient iron bell swings, is the home of dozens of black birds, which go whirling in and out casting great dark shadows on the sun-baked chocolate earth below.

Inside the church devoid of chairs or benches, has a somewhat bare look. There is some rather fine carving, and the ceiling is constructed of trunks of cotton-wood trees carved, the space between the beams being filled in with strips of wood that looked to me like bamboo. On one side of the altar gaudy, but picturesque, there is a sad looking Madonna in a black dress and veil, and on the other, a representation of the Holy Sepulchre, with the figure of our Saviour inside, all draped in blue gauze and white lace. There are many pictures on the walls, but one of them I shall never forget. It is called, I think, "The vision of the Madonna," and is

certainly realistic. It represents a Mexican interior with the usual rafted roof, the Madonna herself is kneeling on a square bit of carpet in a stream of thick light, while the infant Christ lies in a Mexican cradle, with a red-covered table convenient to it, on which is carefully arranged a nursing bottle and some medicine!

The confessional on one side of the church, looks very much like a sentry box, and has a tiny round window on either side, covered with perforated tin, something in the style of a colander, and lined inside with pink tissue paper, an uncovered hole allows the voice of the penitent to reach the ear of the priest.

A woman in a black skirt, and a black *rebosa* around her head and shoulders was relieving her conscience of its burden, and the soft murmur of her voice as she glibly rattled off her sins, reached me as I passed her. The old priest leaned with his ear glued to the hole in a most uncomfortable looking attitude, but his broad fat back had a sleepy repose about it, as if he had grown so accustomed to the position that he could indulge in a quiet forty winks in between the sins, so to speak.

As I watched, the woman arose from her knees with a satisfied air, as if *that* were off her mind, and her place was instantly taken by a young girl, who had been devoutly telling her beads near. She looked about seventeen, though judging from the rapidity with which the Mexicans mature, I suppose she was really younger. I think I have never seen a more beautiful face and form. Her slim, lithe figure, with something of the grace of a forest animal about it, was clad in a faded pink cotton gown, and the pale blue *rebosa* twisted around her head and shoulders, made a pretty frame for the