

A RIDE FROM THE CAPITAL.

This country is made for the horse, and the horse for the country. He paces and canters deliciously, and the air and the climate fit perfectly to his gait. Horseback in England and the States is a luxury pursued under difficulties. The first difficulty is in the horse, which is seldom trained to such service; and the second and worse one is in the weather, which is not sufficiently uniform to make the luxury a permanency. Here every morning is perfect, and about every horse. The saddle, too, is made for riding; far superior to the English saddle, it holds you on, and does not make you hold yourself on. So if you come to Mexico, take to the horse. Only gentlemen, however, indulge in this pastime, and very handsomely they ride: straight legs, laced with silver buttons, broad hat of white felt, with a wide silver band expanded into a huge snake-like swell and fold; their horses often gayly caparisoned, and delighting evidently in their lordly service. There is no more characteristic or agreeable sight in Mexico than these riders; far more agreeable than it is when witnessed a few miles out of town, more or less, and the graceful horseman politely requests of you the loan of your watch, wallet, horse—if you have one—and sometimes all your outer apparel. That is a sight not infrequently seen, all but the last, close to the city gates. Two of these city riders were relieved by others of these city riders of horses and purses, our last Sabbath night, on the crowded and fashionable drive of the town, not a mile from the Alameda.

But it is safe to take these rides in the morning; and American ladies, with the bravery of their blood, are willing to take them also. The prettiest ride is to Chapultepec. At six in the morning is the hour. A cup of coffee, hot and hot, and a sweet cracker are the inward supports against the jouncing and rocking. The Alameda is pranced past, scowling at us from its deep thickets, its very smiles changed to frowns under the possibilities of its contents, for robbers and revolvers may suddenly appear from out its greenness.

The paseos open at its upper end, broad, straight, and handsome. Two or three of these carriage roads come together here about a statue of a Charles of Spain, the only royal effigy allowed to remain, probably the only one that ever entered the land. The decayed bull-fight arena stands opposite the monument, itself a relic, like the effigy, of by-gone institutions—by-gone in the city, but still extant, if not flourishing, in the rural capitals. Two of these avenues go to the Castle of Chapultepec. The one that leads directly to its gates was built by Maximilian, under his wife's orders, and is now called the "Empress's Drive," but for many a year it was known as "The Mad-woman's Drive." It is straight as an arrow from an Aztec bow, lined with young trees, and besprinkled half the way to the castle. It is the favorite thoroughfare for coach and horsemen, though these dare not usually go over half its length. That is why it

is wet down no farther. To pass that bound is to become possibly the prey of robbers, so bold are these gentlemen of the road.

We canter carelessly on, mindless of robbers in the morning calm. Do you see that little old man who trots easily along? He was the author of the fortunes of the Rothschilds. He was at Waterloo in their employ the day of the battle, took boat before the official messengers, and bore the tidings of the fall of Napoleon to London, to his masters. They instantly bought heavily in European government stocks, and made immense fortunes by their speedy rise. It is odd to meet this representative of the first and most successful of modern private expresses trotting his nag, in his super-eightieth year, on this drive, made by a creature of a third Napoleon from him whom he supposed on that day to be, in person and in family, utterly and forever overthrown; and that creature of his, too, a daughter of a king that succeeded that fallen emperor, and husband of an archduke, the nephew or grand-nephew of his own empress, Maria Theresa. Certainly history, even to-day, has curious combinations. You would never have thought that such a nugget could have been picked up on this far-off road. The hill and buildings rise majestically before you, more ancient than any other like fortress and palace in the world. It was a seat of power before the Spaniards entered the land. It is a solitary hill, apart from all others, thrust out into the plain like a nose upon the face of nature. It is a huge rock, whereon the waves of war have beat for a thousand if not for two thousand years,

"Tempest-buffeted, glory-crowned."

The gate is reached. A high wooden slat-fence keeps out the peon, but does not keep in the view. Soldiers as sentinels stand at its gates. The road winds through groves of ancient woods of Yosemite style in nature and in size. Not far from the entrance rises and spreads the gigantic tree known by the name of the Tree of Montezuma. It probably oft refreshed him before he dreamed of the terrible invasion of the white-face and the loss of his kingdom, and perhaps witnessed his bewilderment after that dread event. It is, however, silent on these scenes, unless these whispering leaves are trying to tell the story.

Farther on we enter a large grove of these large trees, a remnant of the vast forests of such that once overshadowed the land. Here pic-nics are held by city people, who forget the past in their momentarily happy present.

The road winds up the hill, past two Aztec idols hidden in the thick-leaved bushes, up the bare, steep sides which Scott's men bloodily mounted, and ends in a garden near the top. Here the passion-flower hangs along the walls, and a multitude of less hot-blooded kindred blossom by the pathways. Birds as brilliant as the flowers line the walls, and one without beauty of plumage conquers all with his wonderful beauty of song. It is the old law of compen-