

CHAPTER V.

Journey to the Rancho of Nohcacab.—A Fountain and Seybo Tree.—Arrival at the Rancho.—Its Appearance.—A sick Trio.—Effects of a good Breakfast.—Visit to the Ruins.—Terrace and Buildings.—Three other Buildings.—Character of these Ruins.—Disappointment.—Return to Xul.—Visit to another ruined City.—Ruined Building.—An Arch, plastered and covered with Painted Figures.—Other Paintings.—Subterranean Well.—Return to the Village.—Journey to Ticul.—Large Mounds.—Passage of the Sierra.—Grand View.—Arrival at Ticul.—A Village Festival.—Ball of the Mestizas.—Costumes.—Dance of the Toros.—Lassoing Cattle.—Ball by Daylight.—The Fiscales.—Ludicrous Scene.—A Dance.—Love in a Phrensy.—A unique Breakfast.—Close of the Ball.

EARLY the next morning we set out for the rancho of Nohcacab, three leagues distant. The proprietor had gone before daylight, to receive us on the ground. We had not gone far when Mr. C. complained of a slight headache, and wishing to ride moderately, Dr. Cabot and myself went on, leaving him to follow with the luggage. The morning air was fresh and invigorating, and the country rolling, hilly, and picturesque. At the distance of two leagues we reached what was called a hebe, or fountain. It was a large rocky basin, about ninety feet in circumference and ten feet deep, which served as a receptacle for rain-water. In that dry country it was a grateful spectacle, and beside it was a large

seybo tree, that seemed inviting the traveller to repose under its branches. We watered our horses from the same waccal, or drinking cup, that we used ourselves, and felt strongly tempted to take a bath, but, with our experience of fever and ague, were afraid to run the risk. This fountain was a league from the rancho to which we were going, and was the only watering-place for its inhabitants.

At nine o'clock we reached the rancho, which showed the truth of the Spanish proverb, "La vista del amo engorda el caballo;" "The sight of the master fattens the horse." The first huts were enclosed by a well-built stone wall, along which appeared, in various places, sculptured fragments from the ruins. Beyond was another wall, enclosing the hut occupied by the master on his visits to the rancho, the entrance to which was by a gateway formed of two sculptured monuments of curious design and excellent workmanship, raising high our expectations in regard to the ruins on this rancho, and sustaining the accounts we had heard of them.

The proprietor was waiting to receive us, and, having taken possession of an empty hut, and disposed of our horses, we accompanied him to look over the rancho. What he regarded as most worth showing was his tobacco crop, lying in some empty huts to dry, which he contemplated with great satisfaction, and the well, which he looked at with as much sorrow. It was three hundred and fifty-four feet deep, and even at this great depth it was dry.

While we were thus engaged, our baggage carriers arrived with intelligence that Mr. Catherwood was taken ill, and they had left him lying in the road. I immediately applied to the proprietor for a coché and Indians, and he, with great alacrity, undertook to get them ready; in the mean time I saddled my horse and hastened back to Mr. Catherwood, whom I found lying on the ground, with Albino by his side, under the shade of the tree by the fountain, with an ague upon him, wrapped up in all the coverings he could muster, even to the saddle-cloths of the horses. While he was in this state, two men came along, bestriding the same horse, and bringing sheets and ponchas to make a covering for the coché; then came a straggling line of Indians, each with a long pole, and withes to lash them together; and it was more than an hour before the coché was ready. The path was narrow, and lined on each side with thorn bushes, the spikes of which stuck in the naked flesh of the Indians as they carried the coché, and they were obliged to stop frequently and disentangle themselves. On reaching the rancho I found Doctor Cabot down with a fever. From the excitement and anxiety of following Mr. Catherwood under the hot sun, and now finding Doctor Cabot down, a cold shivering crept over me, and in a few minutes we were all three in our hammocks. A few hours had made a great change in our condition; and we came near bringing our host down with us. He had been employed in preparing

breakfast upon a large scale, and seemed mortified that there was no one to do it justice. Out of pure good feeling toward him, I had it brought to the side of my hammock. My effort made him happy, and I began to think my prostration was merely the reaction from over-excitement; and by degrees what I began to please our host I continued for my own satisfaction. The troubles of my companions no longer disturbed me. My equanimity was perfectly restored, and, breakfast over, I set out to look at the ruins.

Ever since our arrival in Yucatan we had received courtesies and civilities, but none more thorough than those bestowed by our host of Nohcacab. He had come out with the intention of passing a week with us, and the Indians and the whole rancho were at our service as long as we chose to remain.

Passing through one of the huts, we soon came to a hill covered with trees and very steep, up which the proprietor had cut, not a mere Indian path, but a road two or three yards wide, leading to a building standing upon a terrace on the brow of the hill. The façade above the cornice had fallen, and below it was of plain stone. The interior was entire, but without any distinguishing features. Following the brow of this hill, we came to three other buildings, all standing on the same range, and without any important variations in the details, except that in one the arch had no overlapping stone, but the two sides of the ceiling ran up to a point, and

formed a complete angle. These, the Indians told us, were the only buildings that remained. That from which the pillars in the church at Xul were taken was a mere mass of ruins. I was extremely disappointed. From the accounts which had induced us to visit this place, we had made larger calculations. It was the first time I had been thoroughly disappointed. There were no subjects for the pencil, and, except the deep and abiding impression of moving among the deserted structures of another ruined and desolate city, there was nothing to carry away. The proprietor seemed mortified that he had not better ruins to show us, but I gave him to understand that it was not his fault, and that he was in no wise to blame. Nevertheless, it was really vexatious, with such good-will on his part, and such a troop of Indians at command, that there was nothing for us to do. The Indians sympathized in the mortification of their master, and, to indemnify me, told me of two other ruined cities, one of which was but two leagues from the village of Xul.

I returned and made my report, and Mr. Catherwood immediately proposed a return to the village. Albino had given him an alarming account of the unhealthiness of the rancho, and he considered it advisable to avoid sleeping there a single night. Doctor Cabot was sitting up in his hammock, dissecting a bird. A recurrence of fever might detain us some time, and we determined on returning immediately to Xul. Our decision was carried into

execution as promptly as it was made, and, leaving our luggage to the care of Albino, in half an hour, to the astonishment of the Indians and the mortification of the proprietor, we were on our way to the village.

It was late in the evening when we arrived, but the cura received us as kindly as before. During the evening I made inquiries for the place of which the Indians at the rancho had told me. It was but two leagues distant, but of all who happened to drop in, not one was aware of its existence. The cura, however, sent for a young man who had a rancho in that direction, and who promised to accompany me.

At six o'clock the next morning we started, neither Mr. Catherwood nor Doctor Cabot being able to accompany me. At the distance of about two leagues we reached an Indian rancho, where we learned from an old woman that we had passed the path leading to the ruins. We could not prevail on her to go back and show us the way, but she gave us a direction to another rancho, where she said we could procure a guide. This rancho was situated in a small clearing in the midst of the woods, enclosed by a bush fence, and before the door was an arbour covered with palm leaves, with little hammocks swinging under it, and all together the picture of Indian comfort.

My companion went in, and I dismounted, thinking that this promised a good stopping-place, when,

looking down, I saw my pantaloons brown with garrapatas. I laid hold of a twig, intending to switch them off, and hundreds fell upon my hand and arm. Getting rid of those in sight as well as I could, and mounting immediately, I rode off, hoping most earnestly not to find any ruins, nor any necessity of taking up our abode in this comfortable-seeming rancho.

We were fortunate in finding at this place an Indian, who, for reasons known to himself and the wife of the master, was making a visit during the absence of the latter at his milpa; but for which we should not have been able to procure a guide. Retracing our steps, and crossing the camino real, we entered the woods on the other side, and tying our horses, the Indian cut a path up the side of a hill, on the top of which were the ruins of a building. The outer wall had fallen, leaving exposed to view the inner half of the arch, by which, as we approached it, my attention was strongly attracted. This arch was plastered and covered with painted figures in profile, much mutilated, but in one place a row of legs remained, which seemed to have belonged to a procession, and at the first glance brought to my mind the funeral processions on the walls of the tombs at Thebes. In the triangular wall forming the end of the room were three compartments, in which were figures, some having their heads adorned with plumes, others with a sort of steeple cap, and carrying on their heads something like a basket;

and two were standing on their hands with their heels in the air. These figures were about a foot high, and painted red. The drawing was good, the attitudes were spirited and life-like, and altogether, even in their mutilated state, they were by far the most interesting paintings we had seen in the country.

Another apartment had been plastered and covered with paintings, the colours of which were in some places still bright and vivid. In this apartment we cornered and killed a snake five feet long, and as I threw it out at the door a strong picture rose up before me of the terrific scenes which must have been enacted in this region; the cries of wo that must have ascended to Heaven when these sculptured and painted edifices were abandoned, to become the dwelling-place of vultures and serpents.

There was one other building, and these two, my guide said, were all, but probably others lie buried in the woods. Returning to our horses, he led me to another extraordinary subterraneous well, which probably furnished water to the ancient inhabitants. I looked into the mouth, and saw that the first descent was by a steep ladder, but had no disposition to explore it.

In a few minutes we mounted to return to the village. Ruins were increasing upon us, to explore which thoroughly would be the work of years; we had but months, and were again arrested by illness. For some days, at least, Mr. Catherwood would not be able to resume work. I was really

distressed by the magnitude of what was before us, but, for the present, we could do nothing, and I determined at once to change the scene. The festival of Ticul was at hand, and that night it was to open with el báyle de las Mestizas, or the Mestiza ball. Ticul lay in our return route, nine leagues from the village of Xul, but I determined to reach it that evening. My companion did not sympathize in my humour; his vaquero saddle hurt him, and he could not ride faster than a walk. I had need to economize all my strength; but I took his hard-trotting horse and uneasy saddle, and gave him mine. Pushing on, at eleven o'clock we reached Xul, where I had my horse unsaddled and washed, ordered him a good mess of corn, and two boiled eggs for myself. In the mean time, Mr. Catherwood had a recurrence of fever and ague, and my horse was led away; but the attack proved slight, and I had him brought out again. At two o'clock I resumed my journey, with a sheet, a hammock, and Albino. The heat was scorching, and Albino would have grumbled at setting out at this hour, but he, too, was ripe for the fiesta of Ticul.

In an hour we saw in the woods on our right large mounds, indicating that here, too, had once stood an ancient city. I rode in to look at them, but the buildings which had crowned them were all fallen and ruined, and I only gained an addition to the stock of garrapatas already on hand. We had not heard of these ruins at the village, and, on inquiring afterward, I could find no name for them.

At the distance of three leagues we commenced ascending the sierra, and for two hours the road lay over an immense ledge of solid rock. Next to the Mico Mountain, it was the worst range I ever crossed, but of entirely different character; instead of gullies, and holes, and walls of mud, it consisted of naked, broken rock, the reflection of the sun upon which was intense and extremely painful to the eyes. In some places it was slippery as glass. I had crossed the sierra in two different places before, but they were comparatively like the passage of the Simplon with that of San Bernard or San Gothard across the Alps. My horse's hoofs clattered and rang at every step, and, though strong and sure-footed, he stumbled and slid in a way that was painful and dangerous to both horse and rider; indeed, it would have been an agreeable change to be occasionally stuck in the mud. It was impossible to go faster than a walk, and, afraid that night would overtake us, in which case, as there was no moon, we might lose our way, I dismounted and hurried on, leading my horse.

It was nearly dark when we reached the top of the last range. The view was the grandest I had seen in the country. On the very brink stood the church of La Hermita, below the village of Oxcutzcab, and beyond a boundless wooded plain, dotted in three places with villages. We descended by a steep and stony path, and, winding along the front of La Hermita, came upon a broad pavement of stones

from the ruined buildings of an aboriginal town. We passed under an imposing gateway, and, entering the village, stopped at the first house for a draught of water, where, looking back, we saw the shades of night gathering over the sierra, a token of our narrow escape. There were ruined mounds in the neighbourhood, which I intended to look at in passing, but we had still four leagues to make, and pushed on. The road was straight and level, but stony, and very soon it became so dark that we could see nothing. My horse had done a hard day's work, and stumbled so that I could scarcely keep him from falling. We roused the barking dogs of two villages, of which, however, I could distinguish nothing but the outline of their gigantic churches, and at nine o'clock rode into the plaza of Ticul. It was crowded with Indians, blazing with lights, and occupied by a great circular scaffold for a bull-ring, and a long, enclosed arbour, from the latter of which strains of music gave notice that the *báyle de las Mestizas* had already begun.

Once more I received a cordial welcome from the cura Carillo; but the music from the arbour reminded me that the moments of pleasure were fleeting. Our trunks had been ordered over from Nohcacab, and, making a hurried toilet, I hastened to the ball-room, accompanied by the padre Brizeña; the crowd outside opened a way, Don Philippe Peon beckoned to me as I entered, and in a moment more I was seated in one of the best places at

the *báyle de las Mestizas*. After a month in Indian ranchos, that day toiling among ruins, almost driven to distraction by garrapatas, clambering over a frightful sierra, and making a journey worse than any sixty miles in our country, all at once I settled down at a fancy ball, amid music, lights, and pretty women, in the full enjoyment of an arm-chair and a cigar. For a moment a shade of regret came over me as I thought of my invalid friends, but I soon forgot them.

The *enramada*, or enclosure for the ball-room, was an arbour about one hundred and fifty feet long and fifty feet wide, surrounded by a railing of rude lattice-work, covered with costal, or hemp bagging, as a protection against the night air and sun, and lighted by lamps with large glass shades. The floor was of hard cement; along the railing was a row of chairs, all occupied by ladies; gentlemen, boys, and girls, children and nurses, were sitting promiscuously on the floor, and Don Philippe Peon, when he gave me his chair, took a place among them. The *báyle de las Mestizas* was what might be called a fancy ball, in which the *señoritas* of the village appeared as *las Mestizas*, or in the costume of *Mestiza* women: loose white frock, with red worked border round the neck and skirt, a man's black hat, a blue scarf over the shoulder, gold necklace and bracelets. The young men figured as *vaqueros*, or *major domos*, in shirt and pantaloons of pink striped muslin, yellow buckskin shoes, and low, round-crowned, hard-plat-

ted straw hat, with narrow brim rolled up at the sides, and trimmed with gold cord and tassels. Both costumes were fanciful and pretty, but at first the black hat was repulsive. I had heard of the sombreros negros as part of the Mestiza costume, and had imagined some neat and graceful fabric of straw; but the faces of the girls were so soft and mild that even a man's hat could not divest them of their feminine charm. Altogether the scene was somewhat different from what I expected, more refined, fanciful, and picturesque.

To sustain the fancy character, the only dance was that of the toros. A vaquero stood up, and each Mestiza was called out in order. This dance, as we had seen it among the Indians, was extremely uninteresting, and required a movement of the body, a fling of the arms, and a snapping of the fingers, which were at least inelegant; but with las Mestizas of Ticul it was all graceful and pleasing, and there was something particularly winning in the snapping of the fingers. There were no dashing beauties, and not one who seemed to have any idea of being a belle; but all exhibited a mildness, softness, and amiability of expression that created a feeling of promiscuous tenderness. Sitting at ease in an arm-chair, after my sojourn in Indian ranchos, I was particularly alive to these influences. And there was such a charm about that Mestiza dress. It was so clean, simple, and loose, leaving

"Every beauty free
To sink or swell as Nature pleases."

The ball broke up too soon, when I was but beginning to reap the fruit of my hard day's work. There was an irruption of servants to carry home the chairs, and in half an hour, except along a line of tables in front of the *audiencia*, the village was still. For a little while, in my quiet chamber at the convent, the gentle figures of las Mestizas still haunted me, but, worn down by the fatigues of the day, I very soon forgot them.

At daylight the next morning the ringing of bells and firing of rockets announced the continuance of the *fiesta*; high mass was performed in the church, and at eight o'clock there was a grand exhibition of lassoing cattle in the plaza by amateur vaqueros. These were now mounted, had large vaquero saddles, spurs to match, and each was provided with a coil of rope in hand; bulls of two years old were let loose in the plaza, with the bull-ring to double round, and every street in the village open to them. The amateurs rode after them like mad, to the great peril of old people, women, and children, who scampered out of the way as well as they could, but all as much pleased with the sport as the bull or the vaqueros. One horse fell and hurt his rider, but there were no necks broken.

This over, all dispersed to prepare for the *báyle de dia*, or ball by daylight. I sat for an hour in the corridor of the convent, looking out upon the plaza.

The sun was beaming with intense heat, and the village was as still as if some great calamity had suddenly overtaken it. At length a group was seen crossing the plaza : a vaquero escorting a Mestiza to the ball, holding over her head a red silk umbrella to protect her from the scorching rays of the sun ; then an old lady and gentleman, children, and servants, a complete family group, the females all in white, with bright-coloured scarfs and shawls. Other groups appeared crossing in other directions, forming picturesque and pleasing spectacles in the plaza. I walked over to the arbour. Although in broad daylight, under the glare of a midday sun, and shaded only on one side by hemp bagging, as the Mestizas took their seats they seemed prettier than the night before. No adjustment of curtain light was necessary for the morning after the ball, for the ladies had retired at an early hour. The black hat had lost its repugnant character, and on some it seemed most becoming. The costumes of the vaqueros, too, bore well the light of day. The place was open to all who chose to enter, and the floor was covered with Indian women and children, and real Mestizoes in cotton shirts, drawers, and sandals ; the barrier, too, was lined with a dense mass of Indians and Mestizoes, looking on good-humouredly at this personification of themselves and their ways. The whole gathering was more informal and gayer, and seemed more what it was intended to be, a fiesta of the village.

The báyle de dia was intended to give a picture of life at a hacienda, and there were two prominent personages, who did not appear the evening before, called fiscales, being the officers attendant upon the ancient caciques, and representing them in their authority over the Indians. These wore long, loose, dirty camisas hanging off one shoulder, and with the sleeves below the hands ; calzoncillos, or drawers, to match, held up by a long cotton sash, the ends of which dangled below the knees ; sandals, slouching straw hats, with brims ten or twelve inches wide, and long locks of horse hair hanging behind their ears. One of them wore awry over his shoulder a mantle of faded blue cotton cloth, said to be an heirloom descended from an ancient cacique, and each flourished a leather whip with eight or ten lashes. These were the managers and masters of ceremonies, with absolute and unlimited authority over the whole company, and, as they boasted, they had a right to whip the Mestizas if they pleased.

As each Mestiza arrived they quietly put aside the gentleman escorting her, and conducted the lady to her seat. If the gentleman did not give way readily, they took him by the shoulders, and walked him to the other end of the floor. A crowd followed wherever they moved, and all the time the company was assembling they threw everything into laughter and confusion by their whimsical efforts to preserve order.

At length they undertook to clear a space for

dancing, backing the company in a summary way as far as they could go, and then taking the men and boys by the shoulder, and jamming them down upon the floor. While they were thus engaged, a stout gentleman, of respectable appearance, holding some high office in the village, appeared in the doorway, quietly lighting another straw cigar, and as soon as they saw him they desisted from the work they had in hand, and, in the capricious and wanton exercise of their arbitrary power, rushed across, seized him, dragged him to the centre of the floor, hoisted him upon the shoulders of a vaquero, and, pulling apart the skirts of his coat, belaboured him with a mock vigour and earnestness that convulsed the whole company with laughter. The sides of the elevated dignitary shook, the vaquero shook under him, and they were near coming down together.

This over, the rogues came directly upon me. El Ingles had not long escaped their eye. I had with difficulty avoided a scene, and my time seemed now to have come. The one with the cacique's mantle led the way with long strides, lash raised in the air, a loud voice, and his eyes, sparkling with frolic and mischief, fastened upon mine. The crowd followed, and I was a little afraid of an attempt to hoist me too on the shoulders of a vaquero; but all at once he stopped short, and, unexpectedly changing his language, opened upon me with a loud harangue in Maya. All knew that I did not understand a word

he said, and the laugh was strong against me. I was a little annoyed at being made such a mark, but, recollecting the achievement of our vernacular at Noh-cacab, I answered him with an English oration. The effect was instantaneous. He had never before heard a language that he could not understand, bent his ear earnestly, as if by close attention he could catch the meaning, and looked up with an air of real perplexity that turned the laugh completely against him. He began again, and I answered with a stanza of Greek poetry, which had hung by me in some unaccountable way; this, again, completely silenced him, and he dropped the title. Ingles, put his arms around my neck, called me "amigo," and made a covenant not to speak in any language but Castilian.

This over, he ordered the music to commence, planted a vaquero on the floor, and led out a Mestiza to dance, again threw all the bystanders into confusion, and sat down quietly on the floor at my feet. All the Mestizas were again called out in order, presenting the same pretty spectacle I had seen the evening before. And there was one whom I had noticed then, not more than fifteen, delicate and fragile, with eyes so soft and dovelike that it was impossible to look upon them without a feeling of tenderness. She seemed sent into the world to be cherished and cared for, and closeted like the finest china, the very emblem of purity, innocence, and loveliness; and, as I had learned, she was the child of shame, being the crianza, or natural daugh-

ter, of a gentleman of the village; perhaps it was that she seemed so ill fitted to buffet with contumely and reproach that gave such an indescribable interest to her appearance; but, fortunately, brought up in her father's house, she may go through life without meeting an averted face, or feeling that a stain rests upon her name.

As may be supposed, the presence of this señorita on the floor did not escape the keen eyes of the mercurial fiscal. All at once he became excited and restless, and, starting to his feet, gazed at her for a moment as if entranced by a vision, and then, as if carried away by his excitement, and utterly unconscious of what he was about, he pushed aside the vaquero who was dancing with her, and, flinging his sombrero on the ground, cried out in a tone of ecstasy, "Voy baylár con vd, mi corazón!" "I am going to dance with you, my heart!" As he danced, his excitement seemed to increase; forgetting everything around him, the expression of his face became rapt, fixed, intense; he tore off his cacique's mantle, and, dancing toward her, spread it at the lady's feet. This seemed only to excite him more; and, as if forgetful of everything else, he seized the collar of his camisa, and, dancing violently all the time, with a nervous grasp, tugged as if he meant to pull it over his head, and throw all that he was worth at her feet. Failing in this, for a moment he seemed to give up in despair, but all at once he thrust his hands under the long garment,

seized the sash around his waist, and, still dancing with all his might, unwound it, and, moving up to her with mingled grace, gallantry, and desperation, dropped it at her feet, and danced back to his place. By this time his calzoncillos, kept up by the sash, were giving way. Grasping them furiously, and holding them up with both hands, as if by a great effort, he went on dancing with a desperate expression of face that was irresistibly ludicrous.

During all this time the company was convulsed with laughter, and I could not help remarking the extreme modesty and propriety of the young lady, who never even smiled or looked at him, but, when the dance was ended, bowed and returned to her seat. The poor fiscal stood gazing at the vacant place where she had stood, as if the sun of his existence had set. At length he turned his head and called out "amigo," asked if there were any such Mestizas in my country; if I would like to take her home with me; then said that he could not spare this one, but I might take my choice of the others; insisting loudly upon my making a selection, and promising to deliver any one I liked to me at the convent.

At first I supposed that these fiscales were, like the vaqueros, the principal young men of the village, who, for that day, gave themselves up to frolic and fun, but I learned that these were not willing to assume such a character, but employed others known to them for wit and humour, and, at the same time,

for propriety and respectability of behaviour. This was a *matador de cochinos*, or pig butcher, of excellent character, and *muy vivo*, by which may be understood "a fellow of infinite wit and humour." The people of the village seemed to think that the power given him to whip the Mestizas was the extremity of license, but they did not consider that, even for the day, they put him on equal terms with those who, in his daily walks, were to him as beings of another sphere; for the time he might pour out his tribute of feeling to beauty and attraction, but it was all to be regarded as a piece of extravagance, to be forgotten by all who heard it, and particularly by her to whom it was addressed. Alas, poor *matador de cochinos*!

According to the rules, the mantle and sash which he had thrown at the feet of the lady belonged to her, and he was obliged to appeal to the charity of the spectators for money to redeem them. In the mean time the dance continued. The *fiscales*, having once taken ground as dancers, were continually ordering the *vaqueros* to step aside, and taking their places. At times, too, under the direction of the *fiscales*, the idle *vaqueros* seated themselves on the ground at the head of the arbour, and all joined in the hacienda song of the *vaqueria*, in alternate lines of Maya and Castilian. The chorus was led by the *fiscales*, with a noise that drowned every other sound; and while this boisterous merriment was going on,

the light figures of the Mestizas were moving in the dance.

At twelve o'clock preparations were made for a *déjeuner à la fourchette*, dispensing, however, with knives and forks. The centre of the floor was cleared, and an enormous earthen jar, equal in capacity to a barrel, was brought in, containing *frigoles*, or black beans fried. Another vessel of the same size had a preparation of eggs and meat, and near them was a small mountain of tortillas, with all which it was the business of the Mestizas to serve the company. The *fiscal* did not neglect his *amigo*, but led to me one of whom I had expressed my opinion to him in confidence, and who brought in the palm of her hand a layer of tortillas, with *frigoles* in the centre, and turned up at the sides by means of the fingers, so as to prevent the *frigoles* from escaping. An attempt to acknowledge the civility was repressed by the *fiscal*, who crowded my hat over my eyes, saying that they passed no compliments on the haciendas, and we were all Indians together. The tortillas, with the *frigoles* in them, were not easy to hold without endangering my only pair of white pantaloons. I relieved myself by passing them over the railing, where any number of Indians stood ready to receive them; but I had hardly got rid of this when another Mestiza brought another portion, and while this engaged my one hand a third placed tortillas with eggs in the other, and left me afraid to move; but I contrived to pass

both handfult over the railing. Breakfast over, the dancing was resumed with new spirit. The fiscales were more amusing than ever; all agreed that the ball was muy allégre, or very gay, and I could not but notice that, amid all this motley company and extraordinary license, there was less noise than in a private drawing-room at home. At two o'clock, to my great regret, the ball of las Mestizas broke up. It was something entirely new, and remains engraven on my mind as the best of village balls.