

CHAPTER VI.

Bull-fights.—Horse-race.—Bull-fighters.—Their villanous Appearance.—Death of a Bull.—A Ball of Etiquette.—Society in Yucatan.—Costumes at the Ball.—More Bull-fights.—A Mestiza.—Scenes in the Bull-ring.—A Storm.—Dispersion of the Spectators.—A Discovery.—A new Reformation in Yucatan.—Celibacy of Priests.—A few Words about the Padres.—Arrival of Mr. Catherwood and Dr. Cabot.—Rain.—Daguerreotyping.—“The Ancient Chronology of Yucatan.”—Don Pio Perez.—Calendar of the Ancient Indians.—Substantially the same with that of the Mexicans.—This Fact tends to show the common Origin of the aboriginal Inhabitants of Yucatan and Mexico.

IN the afternoon commenced the first bull-fight. The bull-fights of Ticul had a great reputation throughout the country. At the last, a toreador was killed, which gave a promise of something exciting. The young men of the village still appeared in character as vaqueros, and before the fight they had a horse-race, which consisted in riding across the ring, one at a time, in at one door and out at the other, and then racing in the same way through the other two doors. It was a fine opportunity for exhibiting horses and horsemanship, and was a sort of pony scamper.

After these came the toreadores, or bull-fighters, who, to do them justice, were by far the worst-look-

ing men I saw in the country, or anywhere else, except, perhaps, the libellous representatives of the twelve apostles in the feet-washing scene, at which I was once a spectator in Jerusalem. They were of a mixed blood, which makes, perhaps, the worst race known, viz., the cross of the Indian and African, and called Pardos. Their complexion is a black tinge laid upon copper, and, not satisfied with the bountiful share of ugliness which nature had given them, these worthies had done something for themselves in the way of costume, which was a vile caricature of the common European dress, with some touches of their own elegant fancy. Altogether, I could imagine that they had fitted themselves out with the unclaimed wardrobe of deceased hospital patients. Their horses, being borrowed by the committee of arrangements, with the understanding that if killed they were to be paid for, were spavined, foundered, one-eyed, wretched beasts. They had saddles covered with scarlet cloths, enormous spurs with rowels six inches long, and murderous spears discoloured with old stains of blood. The combination of colours, particularly the scarlet, was intended to frighten the bull, and all together they were almost enough to frighten el demonio.

The races over, the amateur vaqueros led in the first bull, having two real vaqueros at hand for cases of emergency. The toreadores charged upon him with spears brandished, and presenting a vivid picture of the infernals let loose; after which they dis-

mounted and attacked him on foot. The bull was brought to bay directly under our box, and twice I saw the iron pass between his horns, enter the back of his neck with a dull, grating sound, and come out bloody, leaving a ghastly wound. At the third blow the bull staggered, struggled to sustain himself on his feet, but fell back on his haunches, and, with a feeble bellow, rolled over on his side; blood streamed from his mouth, his tongue hung out on the ground covered with dust, and in a few moments he was dead. The amateurs tied his hind legs, ropes were fastened to the saddles of two horsemen, others took hold, and as the carcass was dragged across the ring, a fair and gentle-voiced neighbour said, in a tone of surprise, "Dos caballos y seis Christianos!" "Two horses and six Christians!"

I omit the rest. From the bull-fight we again went to the ball, which, in the evening, was the *báyle del etiquette*, no gentleman being admitted without pantaloons. Society in Yucatan stands upon an aristocratic footing. It is divided into two great classes: those who wear pantaloons, and those who do not; the latter, and by far the most numerous body, going in *calconillos*, or drawers. The high-handed regulation of the ball of etiquette was aimed at them, and excluded many of our friends of the morning; but it did not seem to give any offence, the excluded quietly taking their places at the outside of the railing. *El matador de cochinos*, or the pig butcher, was admitted in drawers, but as as-

sistant to the servants, handing refreshments to the ladies he had danced with in the morning. The whole aspect of things was changed; the vaqueros were in dress suits, or such undress as was not unbecoming at a village ball. The señoritas had thrown aside their simple Mestiza dresses, and appeared in tunicas, or frocks, made to fit the figure, or, rather, to cut the figure in two. The Indian dances had disappeared, and quadrilles and contradances, waltzes and gallopades, supplied their place. It wanted the piquancy of the báyle de las Mestizas; the young ladies were not so pretty in their more fashionable costume. Still there was the same gentleness of expression, the dances were slow, the music low and soft, and, in the quiet and decorum of all, it was difficult to recognise the gay and tumultuous party of the morning, and yet more difficult to believe that these gentle and, in some cases, lovely faces, had been but a few hours before lighted up with the barbarous excitement of the bull-ring.

At ten the next day there was another bull-fight; then a horse-race from the plaza down the principal street to the house of Don Philippe Peon; and in the afternoon yet another bull-fight, which opened for me under pleasant circumstances. I did not intend to go, had not secured a seat, and took my place in a box so full that I was obliged to stand up by the door. In front was one of the prettiest of the Mestizas of the ball; on her right was a vacant seat, and next to this sat a padre, who had just

arrived at the village. I was curious to know who could be the proprietor of the vacant seat, when the gentleman himself (an acquaintance) entered, and asked me to take it. I did not require much urging, and, in taking it, turned first to the padre to acknowledge my good fortune in obtaining it, which communication I thought he did not receive quite as graciously as he might have done. The corrida opened bravely; bulls were speared, blood flowed, and men were tumbled over. I had never taken so much pleasure in the opening scenes; but a storm was gathering; the heavens put on black; clouds whirled through the air; the men stood up, seeming anxious and vexed, and the ladies were uneasy about their mantillas and headdresses. Darkness increased, but man and beast went on fighting in the ring, and it had a wild and strange effect, with the black clouds scudding above us, to look from the fierce struggle up to the sea of anxious faces on the other side of the scaffold, and beyond, over the top, to the brilliant arch of a rainbow illuminating with a single line the blackness of the sky. I pointed out the rainbow to the lady as an indication that there would be no rain; but the sign disappeared, a furious gust of wind swept over the frail scaffold, the scalloped papers fluttered, shawls and handkerchiefs flew, a few drops of rain fell, and in three minutes the Plaza de Toros was empty. I had no umbrella to offer the lady; some ill-natured person carried her off; and the matador de cochinos extended his

poncha over my head, and escorted me to a house, where I made a great discovery, which everybody in the village knew except myself. The lady, whom I had supposed to be a *señorita*, was a *comprometida*, or compromised, or, to speak precisely, she was the *compagnera* of the padre who sat on the other side of me.

I have omitted to mention that a great change, or, as it is sometimes called in the country, a new reformation, is now going on in Yucatan, not like the reformations got up by disorganizing laymen, which have, at times, convulsed the whole Christian world, but peculiar and local, and touching only the domestic relations of the padres. It may be known to many of my readers that in the early ages of the Catholic Church priests were not forbidden to marry. In process of time the pope, to wean them from wordly ties, enjoined celibacy, and separation where marriage had already taken place. The priests resisted, and the struggle threatened to undermine the whole fabric of church government; but the pope prevailed, and for eight centuries, throughout those countries in which the spiritual domination of Rome is acknowledged, no priest has been allowed to marry. But in Yucatan this burden was found too heavy to be borne. Very early, from the necessity growing out of local position, some special indulgences had been granted to the people of this country, among which was a dispensation for eating meat on fast days; and, under the

liberal spirit of this bull, or of some other that I am not aware of, the good padres have relaxed considerably the tightness of the cord that binds them to celibacy.

I am about making a delicate and curious communication. It may be considered an ill-natured attack upon the Catholic Church; but as I feel innocent of any such intention, this does not trouble me. But another consideration does. I have a strong liking to padres. I have received from them nothing but kindness, and wherever I have met with them I have found friends. I mean barely to mention the subject and pass on, though I am afraid that by this preface I am only calling more particular attention to it. I would omit it altogether, but it forms so striking a feature in the state of society in that country, that no picture can be complete without it. Without farther preface, then, I mention, but only for the private ear of the reader, that, except at Merida and Campeachy, where they are more immediately under the eyes of the bishop, the padres throughout Yucatan, to relieve the tedium of convent life, have *compagneras*, or, as they are sometimes called, *hermanas politicas*, or sisters-in-law; or, to speak with the precision I particularly aim at, the proportion of those who have to those who have not is about as the proportion in a well-regulated community of married to unmarried men.

I have now told the worst; the greatest enemy of the padres cannot say more. I do not express any

opinion of my own upon this matter, but I may remark that with the people of the country it is no impeachment of a padre's character, and does not impair his usefulness. Some look upon this arrangement as a little irregular, but in general it is regarded only as an amiable weakness, and I am safe in saying that it is considered a recommendation to a village padre, as it is supposed to give him settled habits, as marriage does with laymen, and, to give my own honest opinion, which I did not intend to do, it is less injurious to good morals than the by no means uncommon consequences of celibacy which are found in some other Catholic countries. The padre in Yucatan stands in the position of a married man, and performs all the duties pertaining to the head of a family. Persons of what is considered respectable standing in a village do not shun left-hand marriage with a padre. Still it was to us always a matter of regret to meet with individuals of worth, and whom we could not help esteeming, standing in what could not but be considered a false position. To return to the case with which I set out: the padre in question was universally spoken of as a man of good conduct, a sort of pattern padre for correct, steady habits; sedate, grave, and middle-aged, and apparently the last man to have had an eye for such a pretty compagnera. The only comment I ever heard made was upon his good fortune, and on that point he knows my opinion.

The next day Mr. Catherwood and Doctor Ca-

bot arrived. Both had had a recurrence of fever, and were still very weak. In the evening was the carnival ball, but before the company had all arrived we were again scattered by the rain. All the next day it was more abundant than we had seen it in the country, and completely destroyed all the proposed gayeties of the carnival.

We had one clear day, which we devoted to taking Daguerreotype likenesses of the cura and two of the Mestizas; and, besides the great business of balls, bull-fights, Daguerreotyping, and superintending the morals of the padres, I had some light reading in a manuscript entitled, "Antigua Chronologia Yucateca," "Ancient Chronology of Yucatan; or, a simple Exposition of the Method used by the Indians to compute Time." This essay was presented to me by the author, Don Pio Perez, whom I had the satisfaction of meeting at this place. I had been advised that this gentleman was the best Maya scholar in Yucatan, and that he was distinguished in the same degree for the investigation and study of all matters tending to elucidate the history of the ancient Indians. His attention was turned in this direction by the circumstance of holding an office in the department of state, in which old documents in the Maya language were constantly passing under his eyes. Fortunately for the interests of science and his own studious tastes, on account of some political disgust he withdrew from public life, and, during two years of retirement, devoted him-

self to the study of the ancient chronology of Yucatan. It is a work which no ordinary man would have ventured to undertake ; and, if general reputation be any proof, there was no man in the country so competent, or who could bring to it so much learning and research. It adds to the merit of his labours that, in prosecuting them, Don Pio stood alone, had none to sympathize with him, knew that the attainment of the most important results would not be appreciated, and had not even that hope of honourable distinction which, in the absence of all other prospects of reward, cheers the student in the solitary labours of his closet.

The essay explains at large the principles imbodyed in the calendar of the ancient Indians. It has been submitted for examination (with other interesting papers furnished me by Don Pio, which will be referred to hereafter) to a distinguished gentleman, known by his researches into Indian languages and antiquities, and I am authorized to say that it furnishes a basis for some interesting comparisons and deductions, and is regarded as a valuable contribution to the cause of science.

The essay of Don Pio contains calculations and details which would not be interesting to the general reader ; to some, however, even these cannot fail to be so, and the whole is published in the Appendix.* I shall refer in this place only to the result. From the examination and analysis made by the distinguished gentleman before referred to, I am ena-

* See Appendix to vol. i.

bled to state the interesting fact, that the calendar of Yucatan, though differing in some particulars, was substantially the same with that of the Mexicans. It had a similar solar year of three hundred and sixty-five days, divided in the same manner, first, into eighteen months of twenty days each, with five supplementary days ; and, secondly, into twenty-eight weeks of thirteen days each, with an additional day. It had the same method of distinguishing the days of the year by a combination of those two series, and the same cycle of fifty-two years, in which the years, as in Mexico, are distinguished by a combination of the same series of thirteen, with another of four names or hieroglyphics ; but Don Pio acknowledges that in Yucatan there is no certain evidence of the intercalation (similar to our leap year, or to the Mexican secular addition of thirteen days) necessary to correct the error resulting from counting the year as equal to three hundred and sixty-five days only.

It will be seen, by reference to the essay, that, besides the cycle of fifty-two years common to the Yucatecans and Mexicans, and, as Don Pio Perez asserts (on the authority of Veytia), to the Indians of Chiapas, Oaxaca, and Soconusco, those of Yucatan had another age of two hundred and sixty, or of three hundred and twelve years, equal to five or six cycles of fifty-two years, each of which ages consisted of thirteen periods (called Ajau or Ajau Kattun) of twenty years each, according to many au-

thorities, but, in Don Pio's opinion, of twenty-four years.

The fact that though the inhabitants of Yucatan and Mexico speak different languages, their calendar is substantially the same, I regard as extremely interesting and important, for this is not like a similarity of habits, which may grow out of natural instincts or identity of position. A calendar is a work of science, founded upon calculations, arbitrary signs, and symbols, and the similarity shows that both nations acknowledged the same starting points, attached the same meaning to the same phenomena and objects, which meaning was sometimes arbitrary, and not such as would suggest itself to the untutored. It shows common sources of knowledge and processes of reasoning, similarity of worship and religious institutions, and, in short, it is a link in a chain of evidence tending to show a common origin in the aboriginal inhabitants of Yucatan and Mexico. For this discovery we are indebted to Don Pio Perez.