

properties used were few and simple and were brought on and handed to the actors in full view of the audience. In the paucity of accessories, the actors resorted to pantomime to supply the deficiency, and a lively imagination only enabled us to understand whether an actor working his arms vigorously was rowing a boat or putting out a week's washing. The costumes of some of them were of the finest silk, velvet and broadcloth, but the colors were wonderfully and fearfully mixed. As we turned our attention to the stage, it was occupied by a coy maiden who was singing or reciting in an expressionless falsetto voice something which seemed to be highly pleasing to the audience. A man with a flowing robe of blue silk flapping about his limbs, and a long beard of yellow horse hair depending from his chin, entered with a stately stride and began making love to the maiden, apparently without making a favorable impression upon her. They soon retired, and a lusty fellow with his whitened face seamed and crossed with streaks of black, bounded in and pranced across the stage as though his shoes were swarming with red ants. He was evidently the "bad man" of the play. He disappeared, and the coy maiden again glided into view, this time accompanied by a comely youth whose amatory advances were evidently more pleasing than those of her more aged lover. Matters apparently soon came to a focus, for immediately after making their exit, they rushed upon the stage again, hotly pursued by the rejected suitor and the "bad man," the latter waving aloft a long paper sword whose flimsy blade flapped from side to side as it clove the air. Both parties disappeared and soon the fugitives made a breathless entrance at the other door, having apparently gained half a mile in the twenty seconds of their absence. In the center of the stage they stopped suddenly and started back with horror, having evidently almost fallen over the brink of a chasm which was visible only to the eye of the imagination. They began to construct a bridge, and with the aid of some assistants, two tables were placed about four feet apart, across which a plank was laid, and a chair set at either end for steps. While the bridge was being constructed the chasm obligingly disappeared so they could cross back and forth freely; but when all was ready the chasm was again in full force and effect. The fugitives then crept cautiously across the impromptu bridge and ran joyfully away. Then appeared in hot haste the "long beard" and "bad man," who also "viewed with alarm" the imaginary chasm and seemed greatly perplexed by the situation until they espied the bridge, against which they had been leaning while discussing the problem. They also crossed timorously and rushed away. As the plot thickened and the face of the moon was more and more tinged with gore, the writer became deeply interested. He suggested the propriety of remaining to see the end, and was plunged into confusion by the scornful laugh which broke from the lips of the entire party. The manager then explained that a Chinese play is built on the broad gauge plan, like a continued story, running day and night for many days,

and that the one we were now looking at began the week before and might possibly be concluded in another fortnight.

The obliging manager then conducted us through the audience and across the stage to the room in the rear, passing unscathed through a bloodless conflict between a parcel of gorgeously-appareled gods and a batch of hideously-painted devils, who were hacking each other with paper swords to the merciless clash of the orchestra. The one long room at the rear of the stage served for dressing, property and waiting room, and was crowded with actors and assistants. The first thing we noticed was that the coy maiden was no coy maiden at all, but only a horrid man, as were several other supposititious females, and we were informed that there are no women actors among the Chinese, all female characters being taken by men, who are considered the leaders of the "profesh." We found the actors to be socially inclined, especially the "bad man," who shook hands all round and smiled as benignly as his black streaks would permit. After watching for a time their "go as you please" manner of dressing and making their entrances and exits, and after examining and duly admiring their multitude of costumes and trappings, we descended a ladder into the dark space beneath the stage, which is not devoted to the purposes of the play, as in other theaters, but is cut up into numerous small apartments where the actors sleep. Between the stage and the ground we found three separate floors, none with the ceilings more than seven feet high, and one of them so low that we had to stoop in going from one side to the other. We glanced at the kitchen, which was an apartment against the interior brick wall, about ten feet long and four feet wide, and filled with a smell ample for a large hotel. Declining an invitation to partake of something the exact nature of which was involved in mystery, we murmured our thanks and groped our way along a narrow passage leading to a side door, issuing out upon the street, glad to fill our lungs with the fresh night air and give our olfactories a well-earned vacation.

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THE expenses of railroading in Mexico are great. Wooden ties have but a short life, cracking in the dry season, and rotting during the rainy months; bridge timbers and piles also wear out rapidly. Freight cars must be painted frequently to prevent drying and cracking, and even the substantial Pullman cars shrivel under this exposure. Fuel constitutes a large item of outlay. Mesquit roots are burned on the Central road; pine cut along its route is used on the Inter-oceanic; and the Vera Cruz Company feed their engines coal blocks that are brought from Wales as ballast. The decay of ties will in time necessitate a serious outlay on the Central road, for wooden sleepers cost \$1.00 each. It is evident that iron ties are a necessity in Mexico, and they are just coming into use. The climate tends to preserve the rails and iron bridges.—*Springfield Republican*.