Memories of Mexico

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By Helen Martin

Music . . . Monks . . . Markets

The sun greedily drew wiggling heat waves from the long rows of small, adobe houses bordered by a cool fringe of pepper trees.

Three corpulent money-changers, resplendent in shining uniforms, busily exchanged Mexican coins for crisp, crinkly and soiled, wrinkled American greenbacks.

Stopping on the bridge, we gazed down at the murky, sluggish waters of the Rio Grande, in which four naked brown boys splashed a crude imitation of the crawl.

Numerous dirty, ragged Mexican boys running beside us scornfully pointed at our much-worn, scuffed shoes and said, "Shine your shoes for a penny, Mister."

Dirty, crowded streets lined by small shops, all displaying the same perplexing maze of brilliantly-colored articles. Large waxen dolls dressed in richly embroidered and gayly-colored Mexican costumes; cases filled with beautiful hand-carved silver bracelets; dainty necklaces of intricately wrought silver strands; and filmy lace doilies which were priced unbelievably low.

A peppery Mexican tune, badly played on a broken-down piano, assailed our ears, as a drunken native staggered through wildly swinging green latticed saloon doors.

Shabby, heavily-mustached men sprawled beside small glass cases in which various gobs of sticky brown candy, each with a nut on top, were ingeniously exhibited.
Barefoot brown boys slowly waved leafy branches over small ox-carts containing curious assortments of vegetables and shouted, “Nice fresh vegetables from the country.” . . .

A life-size ferocious bull, exhaling gusts of fire from his nostrils, chased a slender, bespangled young man across a billboard that advertised a forthcoming bullfight. . . .

Many peddlers showing rings made from cows’ horns grinningly approached us and said, “Pretty rings—only twenty-five cents American money.” . . .

Hot, tired, and very disillusioned, we were pleasantly surprised when confronted by the white wall of a monastery. Looking through the aged wrought-iron gates, we glimpsed a long stretch of velvety green grass dotted with fountains of gurgling water, and monks walking solemnly about their duties. . . . The delicious feeling of relaxing among the cool leather cushions after the long, scorching walk back to the bus, lingers with me still. . . .

Birdsong
By Naomi Getty

Along the country roadway they
Were walking, where in drifts the gray
And slowly-melting, winter snow
Was lying. Sweet and gently low
From dripping, naked bough
Of fruitless apple tree there came
The music of the cardinal. How
Bright the day as sung by throat
Of flame.