



# The Magic Lantern: Having a Ball and Christmas Eve (Library of Latin America)

*Jose Tomas de Cuellar*

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José Tomas de Cuéllar (1830-1894) was a Mexican writer noted for his sharp sense of humor and gift for caricature. *Having a Ball* and *Christmas Eve* are two novellas written in the *costumbrista* style, made popular in the mid-nineteenth century by the periodical press in which these sketches of contemporary manners were first published. The stories are a sensitive reflection of the effects of modernization brought by an authoritarian regime dedicated to order and progress.

*Having a Ball* depicts women and their dedication to fashion. It is through them that Cuellar examines a society susceptible to foreign values, the importation of which radically altered the face of Mexico and its traditional customs. *Christmas Eve* describes a volatile middle class in which people pursue pleasure and entertainment without regard to morality.

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