

Ballou Maturin Murray

# Aztec Land



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*Aztec Land:*

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*The dust is old upon my sandal-shoon,  
And still I am a pilgrim.*

*N. P. Willis.*

# PREFACE

Having resolved to visit Mexico, the question first to be considered was how to do so in the most advantageous manner. Repairing to the office of Messrs. Raymond & Whitcomb, in Boston, after a brief consultation with those experienced organizers of travel, the author handed the firm a check for the cost of a round trip to Mexico and back. On the following day he took his seat in a Pullman parlor car in Boston, to occupy the same section until his return from an excursion of ten thousand miles. A select party of ladies and gentlemen came together at the same time in the Fitchburg railroad station, most of whom were strangers to each other, but who were united by the same purpose. The traveler lives, eats, and sleeps in the vestibule train, while *en route*, in which he first embarks, until his return to the starting-point, a dining-car, with reading and writing rooms, also forming a part of the train. All care regarding the routes to be followed, as to hotel accommodations while stopping in large cities, side excursions, and the providing of domestic necessities, are dismissed from his mind. He luxuriates in the pleasure of seeing a strange and beautiful land, without a thought as to the *modus operandi*, or the means by which detail is conquered. In short, he dons Fortunatus's cap, and permits events to develop themselves to his intense delight. Such was the author's experience on the occasion concerning which these

wayside views of Mexico were written. It was a holiday journey, but it is hoped that a description of it may impart to the general reader a portion of the pleasure and useful information which the author realized from an excursion into Aztec Land, full of novel and uninterrupted enjoyment.

*M. M. B.*

# CHAPTER I

Locality and Political Divisions of Aztec Land. – Spanish Historians. – Boundaries. – Climate. – Egyptian Resemblances. – Products of the Country. – Antiquities. – Origin of Races. – Early Civilization. – Pictorial Writings. – Aboriginal Money. – Aztec Religious Sacrifices. – A Voluptuous Court. – Mexican Independence. – European Civilization introduced by Cortez. – Civil Wars. – The Maximilian Fiasco. – Revival of Mexican Progress. – A Country facing on Two Oceans. – A Native Writer's Statement. – Divorce of Church and State.

Bordering upon the United States on the extreme southwest, for a distance of more than two thousand miles, is a republic which represents a civilization possibly as old as that of Egypt; a land, notwithstanding its proximity to us, of which the average American knows less than he does of France or Italy, but which rivals them in natural picturesqueness, and nearly equals them in historic interest.

It is a country which is much misunderstood and almost wholly misrepresented. It may be called the land of tradition and romance, whose true story is most poetic and sanguinary. Such is Mexico, with her twenty-seven independent states, a federal district in which is situated the national capital, and the territory of Lower California, – a widespread country, containing

in all a population of between ten and eleven millions. As in the instance of this Union, each state controls its internal affairs so far as it can do so without conflicting with the laws of the national government, which are explicitly defined. The nature of the constitution, adopted in 1857 by the combined states, is that of a republic pure and simple, thoroughly democratic in its provisions. The national power resides in the people, from whom emanates all public authority. The glowing pen of Prescott has rendered us all familiar with the romantic side of Mexican history, but legitimate knowledge of her primitive story is, unfortunately, of the most fragmentary character. Our information concerning the early inhabitants comes almost solely through the writings of irresponsible monks and priests who could neither see nor represent anything relative to an idolatrous people save in accordance with the special interests of their own church; or from Spanish historians who had never set foot upon the territory of which they wrote, and who consequently repeated with heightened color the legends, traditions, and exaggerations of others. "The general opinion may be expressed," says Janvier, in his "Mexican Guide," "in regard to the writings concerning this period that, as a rule, a most gorgeous superstructure of fancy has been raised upon a very meagre foundation of fact. As romance, information of this highly imaginative sort is entertaining, but it is not edifying." One would be glad to get at the other side of the Aztec story, which, we suspect, would place the chivalric invaders in a very different light from that of



their own boastful records, and also enable us to form a more just and truthful opinion of the aborigines themselves. That their numbers, religious sacrifices, and barbaric excesses are generally overdrawn is perfectly manifest. Every fair-minded student of history frankly admits this. It was necessary for Cortez and his followers to paint the character of the Aztecs in darkest hues to palliate and excuse, in a measure, their own wholesale rapine and murder. It was the elder Dumas who said, "Truth is liable to be left-handed in history." As Cortez was a champion of the Roman Catholic Church, that institution did not hesitate to represent his achievements so as to redound to its own glory. "Posterity is too often deceived by the vague hyperboles of poets and rhetoricians," says Macaulay, "who mistake the splendor of a court for the happiness of a people." No one can forget the magnificence of Montezuma's household as represented by the chroniclers, and as magnified by time and distance.

Let us consider for a moment the geographical situation of this great southland, which is separated from us only by a comparatively insignificant stream of water.

The present republic of Mexico is bounded on the north by the United States, from which it is separated in part by the narrow Rio Grande; on the south by Guatemala, Balize, and the Pacific Ocean; on the east by the Gulf of Mexico; and on the west by the Pacific Ocean, extending as far north as the Bay of San Diego, California. Of its nearly six thousand miles of coast line, sixteen hundred are on the Gulf of Mexico and forty-two hundred miles

are on the Pacific. The topographical aspect of the country has been not inappropriately likened to an inverted cornucopia. Its greatest length from northwest to southeast is almost exactly two thousand miles, and its greatest width, which is at the twenty-sixth degree of north latitude, is seven hundred and fifty miles. The minimum width is at the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, where it contracts to a hundred and fifty miles. The area of the entire republic is probably a little less than eight hundred thousand square miles. Trustworthy statistics relating to Mexico are not attainable. Even official reports are scarcely better than estimates. Carlos Butterfield, accredited statistician, makes the area of the republic about thirty-three thousand square miles less than the figures we have given. He also calculates that the density of the population is some ten or eleven to the square mile. Other authorities, however, give the area much nearer to our own figures. A detailed survey which would enable us to get at a satisfactory aggregate has never been made, so that a careful estimate is all we have to depend upon.

The climate of the country is divided by common acceptance into three zones, each of which is well defined: it being hot in the *tierra caliente*, or hot lands, of the coast; temperate in the *tierra templada*, or region between three thousand and six thousand feet above the level of the sea; and cold in the *tierra fria*, or region at an elevation exceeding six thousand feet. In the first named the extreme heat is 100° Fahr.; in the last the extreme of cold is 20° above zero. In the national capital the mercury

ranges between 65° and 75° Fahr. throughout the year. In fact, every climate known to the traveler may be met with between Vera Cruz and the capital of the republic. In the neighborhood of Orizaba one finds sugar-cane and Indian corn, tobacco and palm-trees, bananas and peaches, growing side by side.

Let us state in brief, for general information, the main products of these three geographical divisions. In the hot region we find cotton, vanilla, hemp, pepper, cocoa, oranges, bananas, indigo, rice, and various other tropical fruits. In the temperate region, tobacco, coffee, sugar, maize, the brown bean, peas, and most of the favorite northern fruits. Here extreme heat and frost are alike unknown. In the cold region, all of the hardy vegetables, such as potatoes, beets, carrots, and the cereals, wheat growing at as high an elevation as eighty-five hundred feet, while two crops annually are grown in various sections of the *tierra templada*. Tobacco is indigenous in Mexico, and derives its name from Tabaco in Yucatan. Indian corn and brown beans, two of the principal sources of the food consumed by the natives, are grown in all the states of the republic.

Mexico is situated in the same degree of latitude in the Western Hemisphere that Egypt occupies in the Eastern, the Tropic of Cancer dividing both countries in the centre. There is a striking resemblance between them, also, in many other respects, such as architecture, vegetation, domestic utensils, mode of cultivating the land, ancient pyramids, and idols, while both afford abundant tokens of a history antedating

all accredited record. Toltec and Aztec antiquities bear a remarkable resemblance to the old Egyptian remains to be found in the museums of Europe and America. Speaking of these evidences of a former and unknown race still to be found in southern Mexico, especially in Yucatan, Wilson the historian says: "In their solidity they strikingly remind us of the best productions of Egyptian art. Nor are they less venerable in appearance than those which excite our admiration in the valley of the Nile. Their points of resemblance, too, are so numerous, they carry to the beholder a conviction that the architects on this side of the ocean were familiar with the models on the other." Doubtless the volcanic soil of Mexico conceals vast remains of the far past, even as Pompeii was covered and continued unsuspected for centuries, until accident led to its being gradually exhumed. Whole cities are known to have disappeared in various parts of Mexico, leaving no more evidence of their existence than may be found in a few broken columns or some half-disintegrated stones. Of this mutability we shall have ample evidence as we progress on our route through the several states. When in various parts of the country we see the native laborers irrigating the land in the style which prevailed thousands of years ago on the banks of the Nile, and behold the dark-hued women slightly clothed in a white cotton fabric with faces half-concealed, while they bear water jars upon their heads, we seem to breathe the very atmosphere of Asia. The rapid introduction of railroads and the modern facilities for travel

are fast rendering us as familiar with the characteristics of this land of the Montezumas as we have long been with that of the Pharaohs; and though it has not the halo of Biblical story to recommend it to us, yet Mexico is not lacking in numberless legends, poetic associations, and the charm of a tragic history quite as picturesque and absorbing as that of any portion of the East. Many intelligent students of history believe that the first inhabitants of this continent probably came from Asia by way of Behring Strait or the Aleutian Islands, which may at some period in past ages have extended across the north Pacific Ocean; the outermost island of this group (Attoo), it will be remembered, is at this time but four hundred miles from the Asiatic coast, whence it is believed to have been originally peopled.

Relative to the early peopling of our continent, Bancroft says: "It is shown pretty conclusively that the American people and the American civilization, if not indigenous to the New World, were introduced from the Old at *a period long preceding any to which we are carried, by the traditional or monumental annals of either continent.* We have found no evidence of any populating or civilizing migration across the ocean from east to west, north or south, within historic times. Nothing approaching identity has been discovered between any two nations separated by the Atlantic or Pacific. No positive record appears even of communication between America and the Old World, – intentionally by commercial, exploring, or warlike expeditions, or accidentally by shipwreck, – previous to the voyages of the

Northmen in the tenth century; yet that such communication did take place, in many instances and at different periods, is extremely probable."

The emigrants of whom we have spoken are supposed to have been nomadic, to have first built cities in the north, — that is, the present United States; it is not improbable that they were the mound-builders of Ohio and the Mississippi valleys, and that they afterward migrated southward into Mexico. These pioneers were called Toltecs, and were settled south of the Rio Grande a thousand years ago, more or less, their capital being what is known to-day as the city of Tula, forty miles northwest of the present capital of Mexico, where many antique and curious remains still interest the traveler. The names of the nine Toltec kings who ruled up to A. D. 1097 are well ascertained. It was the fourth king, if we may believe the chroniclers, who built the city of Teotihuacan, that is, "the habitation of the gods," the only visible remains of which are the two earth pyramids of the sun and the moon. Of these we shall have occasion to treat more at length in a future chapter. In speaking of the most ancient remains at Tula and elsewhere in Mexico, Wilson pronounces them to be clearly Egyptian. It is made plain by authentic writers upon the subject that this people enjoyed a large degree of civilization; the ruins of temples supposed to have been built by them in various parts of the country, especially in Yucatan, also prove this. Humboldt says that in 648 A. D. the Toltecs had a solar year

more perfect than that of the Greeks and Romans. Other-writers tell us that they were a worthy people, averse to war, allied to virtue, to cleanliness, and good manners, detesting falsehood and treachery. They introduced the cultivation of maize and cotton, constructed extensive irrigating ditches, built roads, and were a progressive race. "But where is the country," asks Humboldt, "from which the Toltecs and Mexicans issued?" They were well housed, and even elegantly clothed, maintained public schools, and commemorated passing events by elaborate sculpture and by picture-writing. So complete was their system of hieroglyphics that they wrote upon religion, history, geography, and the arts. These records were nearly all destroyed by the malicious and bigoted iniquity of a Spanish priest named Zumarrage, who made it his business to seek for and burn all tokens, great and small, which related to the history of this extremely interesting people. A few of these curious records, in the form of pictorial writing, yet remain in Mexico, principally in the National Museum at the capital, and some have found their way across the ocean to adorn the shelves of European libraries. One of these documents, still extant, represents the country as having first been settled by a race who came out of a great cave and traveled over the realm on the backs of turtles, founding cities and towns wherever they went. This will show that the traditions of the aborigines are so fabulous as scarcely to deserve mention. Touching the vandal act of the Catholic priest Zumarrage, Prescott says: "We contemplate with indignation the cruelties inflicted by the early

conquerors. But indignation is qualified with contempt when we see them thus ruthlessly trampling out the sparks of knowledge, the common boon and property of all mankind. We may well doubt which has the strongest claim to civilization, the victor or the vanquished." We know that the early inhabitants reared palaces, temples, and pyramids, that they constructed a grand system of aqueducts for irrigating purposes, and for the liberal promotion of agriculture, being in many respects in advance of the Mexicans of to-day in the cultivation of the soil, as well as in some productions of art.

This people, after several centuries of occupation, seem to have been driven away, probably to South America, by the arrival of another race called Aztecs or Mexicans, about the year 1325, – some writers say much earlier, – who finally, under the emperors known as the Montezumas, brought the country to a lofty height of barbaric and extravagant splendor, though they were largely, if not almost entirely, indebted to the discoveries and genius of their intelligent predecessors. The early faith of the Toltecs, it is claimed, was the adoration of the sun, moon, and stars. They offered to their representative gods flowers, fruits, and the life-blood of small animals. The sacrifice of human beings was later engrafted on their simple faith by other tribes.

History tells us that these aboriginal races did not possess stamped coin. They had certain signs of the value of different articles, which took the place of money. One of these, for example, is said to have been cacao beans counted into lots of



eight thousand, or in sacks of twenty-four thousand each. To exchange for articles of daily necessity they used pieces of cotton cloth. Expensive objects were paid for in grains of gold dust, which were carried in quills. For the cheapest articles, copper pieces cut like the letter T were used. After the conquest, the earliest mint was established in Mexico, in 1538, by Don Antonio de Mendoza, who was the first viceroy.

When Cortez came from – in the light of history we should say, ran away from – Cuba to conquer and possess Mexico, in 1519, a hundred years before the Pilgrims lauded on the shore of Massachusetts Bay, he encountered a people who had reached, comparatively speaking, a high degree of civilization, though weighted by an idolatrous worship which was most terrible in its wild and reckless practice of human sacrifice, as represented by Spanish authorities. Their imposing sculptures, curious arms, picture records, and rich, fanciful garments, filled the invaders with surprise and whetted their gross avariciousness. There was much that was strange and startling in their mythology, and even their idol worship and sacrificial rites bore evidence of sincerity. Altogether, this western empire presented a strange and fascinating spectacle to the eyes of the invaders, who flattered themselves that they would be doing God service by subjugating these idolaters, and substituting their own religion for that of the natives. At the time when the Spaniards arrived in the country, Montezuma II. was on the throne, one of the most extravagant of voluptuaries. According to the accounts of

the early Spanish chroniclers, the ornaments worn by him must have been equal in elegance and value to the crown-jewels of any imperial family of Europe. Asiatic pomp and luxury could not go to greater extremes than these writers attribute to the Aztec court and its emperor. Cortez eagerly and unscrupulously possessed himself of these royal gems, and kept them concealed upon his person until his return to Spain. They are represented to have been worth "a nation's ransom," but were lost in the sea, where Cortez had thrown himself in a critical emergency. The broad amphitheatre, in the midst of which the capital of Anahuac – "by the waters" – was built, still remains; but the picturesque lake which beautified it, traversed by causeways and covered with floating gardens laden with trees and flowers, has disappeared. Though the conquered natives, roused at last to a spirit of madness by the unequalled cruelty and extortion of the victors, rose in a body and expelled them from their capital, still the ruthless valor of Cortez and his followers, aided by artful alliance with disaffected native tribes, together with the superiority of the Spanish weapons, finally proved too much for the reigning power, and, after a brave and protracted struggle, the star of the Aztec dynasty set in blood.

Montezuma died a miserable death in the hands of Cortez; while Guatemozin, the last of the Aztec emperors, was ignominiously treated, tortured, and afterwards hanged by the Spanish conqueror.

Three hundred years of Spanish rule, extortion, rapacity,

fraud, and bitter oppression followed, – a period of struggle for supremacy on the part of the Roman Catholic Church, during which it relentlessly crushed every vestige of opposition by means of that hideous monster, the Inquisition. During these three centuries, the same selfish policy actuated the home government towards Mexico as was exercised towards Cuba, namely, to extort from the country and its people the largest possible revenue for the Spanish treasury. Finally came the successful revolution which separated the country from continental Spain and achieved the independence of the nation.

We must not, however, blind ourselves to facts. Hateful as the Spanish rule in Mexico appears to us, we must admit that Cortez introduced European civilization, such as it was, into the country, and it has virtually continued until the present day. We see that under his rule great cities sprang into life, magnificent buildings were erected, national roads, viaducts, bridges, and aqueducts were built, on so grand a scale as to still challenge our admiration. Silver and gold were extracted from the mines, and together with ornamental woods, precious stones, dyes and drugs were shipped in unlimited quantities to Spain, whereby her already richly endowed treasury became full to repletion. True, it was a period of false gods, of high living, and of vice; might made right; morality had not the same signification then as it has in our time. The conventionalities of one century become the vices of the next. Virtue and vice must, in a certain degree, be construed in relation to latitude and longitude. That which is

sacred in Samoa to-day may be considered impious in Boston.

Cortez's expedition, which landed at Vera Cruz, April 21, 1519, was not the first to discover the continent in this neighborhood; he had been preceded nearly two years by a rich merchant of Cuba, who fitted out a couple of small vessels on his own account, mainly for the purpose of trading, and being also in search of that great lure, gold, which it was supposed existed in large quantities among the native tribes of the mainland. This adventurer, Francisco Hernandez de Cordova, landed near the present Cape Catoche, April 8, 1517, having brought with him only about one hundred men. As to the final result of that enterprise we are not informed, except that his landing was opposed by the natives, and a battle was fought in which fifteen or twenty Indians were killed and a number of Spaniards were wounded.

The fighting instinct of the people of Mexico was never exercised to better purpose than during the period between 1810 and 1821, in the gallant and successful war with the home government to establish their freedom. On the 15th day of September, 1810, a solemn declaration of independence was made, and for eleven years, under various patriotic leaders, such as Hidalgo – their Washington – and the truly great Morelos, the trying fortunes of a relentless war were experienced, until August 24, 1821, when Spain was forced to give up the contest and retire humiliated from the field. Not, however, until so late as 1838 did she formally recognize the Mexican republic.

It is natural to pause for a moment in this connection, and contrast the past with the present status of Spain, a country which conquered, possessed, and misruled Mexico for so long a period. In the sixteenth century she threatened to become the mistress of the world. In art she held the foremost position. Murillo, Velasquez, and Ribiera were her honored sons; in literature she was represented by Cervantes, Lope de Vega, and Calderon; while of discoverers and conquerors she sent forth Columbus, Cortez, and Pizarro. The banners of Castile and Aragon floated alike on the Pacific and the Indian Oceans. Her warriors were adventurous and brave; her soldiers inherited the gallantry of the followers of Charles V. She was the court of Europe, the acknowledged leader of chivalry. How rapid has been her decadence! As in the plenitude of her power she was ambitious, cruel, and perfidious, so has the measure which she meted to others been in turn accorded to herself. To-day there are none so humble as to do her honor.

As years progressed, interstate struggles impoverished the land and decimated the number of its ruling spirits. To recall a list of the names of patriot leaders who laid down their lives during this half century and more of civil wars makes one shudder for man's inhumanity to man. Little progress was made. The Romish Church held its parasitic clutch upon state and people, impoverishing and degrading both, until the burden became too great to bear; and, in 1857, the Laws of Reform were enacted and the constitution amended, causing the church to disgorge its

millions of ill-gotten wealth, and also depriving it of its power for further national injury.

A brief but decisive war with the United States ended in the humble submission of Mexico, causing her to lose a large portion of her territory, amounting to more than one half its number of square miles. Probably very few of the readers of these pages could answer correctly, if they were asked what was the real cause of this war between the United States and Mexico. Let us briefly state the facts, since we shall incidentally refer more than once to the matter. In 1835, Texas, then a part of Mexico, rebelled against that government, and succeeded not only in achieving her independence, but also in being recognized as a distinct power by several of the nations of Europe, including England and France, as well as this country. After a lapse of nine or ten years, at the earnest solicitation of the inhabitants, Texas was admitted to the American Union. The Mexican government expressed great dissatisfaction at this, and sent troops to camp all along the Rio Grande, which compelled the President to order a division of our array there to protect the national interests. The Mexican troops crossed over their border and attacked our soldiers on Texan soil, killing sixteen Americans and capturing many prisoners. This was on April 24, 1846, and precipitated hostilities at once. After the battles of Palo Alto, May 8th, and Resaca de la Palma, May 9th, both fought on Texan soil, and both defeats for the Mexicans, General Taylor crossed with his forces into Mexico and occupied Matamoras. The subsequent battles on Taylor's and

Scott's lines resulted in a series of hard-won victories for our troops in every instance; until, finally, the flag of the United States floated triumphantly over the city of Mexico. It was not this country, but Mexico, which was the aggressor, and it was her foolhardiness and outrageous insult which brought about the war. There is not a power in Europe which would not have done precisely as this country did when thus attacked. The author knows very well that it is the fashion to berate our government for the punishment it inflicted upon the aggressive Mexicans, but we are not among those who believe that when nations or individuals are smitten upon one cheek they should turn the other for a like treatment. Mexico got what she deserved, that is, a thorough drubbing, and lost one half of her territorial possessions in return for a long series of aggressions.

Though thus geographically curtailed, she is still of mammoth proportions, exceeding in size Austria and Germany with Sweden, Norway, and the Netherlands combined; or, to make a more familiar comparison, Mexico is sixteen times larger than the State of New York, stretching through seventeen degrees of latitude and thirty degrees of longitude. Finally, there came the ridiculous and abortive attempt of Napoleon the Little to make a foreigner – Archduke Maximilian of Austria – Emperor of Mexico, in which Quixotic purpose he was at first abetted by England and Spain. After a bloody and fruitless struggle, backed by all the subtle influence of the Roman Catholic Church, the French withdrew from the country in utter disgrace, while the

royal interloper, deceived, deserted, and cheated by the weak, scheming mountebank on the French throne, was condemned to death by a Mexican court martial, and with two of his most notable and trusted generals was shot at Queretaro. Ill-advised as was the attempt to establish an empire on American soil, and although it resulted in such a bitter failure, involving the death of its principal actors, and terrible waste of human life, it must be admitted by every candid observer that Mexico made great material advance during the brief period of Maximilian's bastard government. The national capital was especially beautified, and it exhibits to-day the advantages of many grand improvements instituted and completed by Maximilian and "poor" Carlotta, his devoted wife, and daughter of Leopold I., king of the Belgians. The Mexicans will long remember that they owe their magnificent boulevard, the Paseo de la Reforma, to Maximilian, and their charmingly arranged Plaza Mayor to the refined and womanly taste of Carlotta.

At last it would seem as though the energies of this much distracted country, so long the victim of the priesthood, professional brigandage, and civil and foreign wars, have become diverted into channels of productive industry, developing resources of wealth and stability which have heretofore been unrecognized. A country facing upon two oceans, and having seven or eight railroad lines intersecting it in various directions, cannot remain *in statu quo*; it must take its place more or less promptly in the grand line of nations, all of whom are moving



forward under the influence of the progressive ideas of the nineteenth century. It is only since 1876 that Mexico has enjoyed anything like a stable government; and as her constitution is modeled upon our own, let us sincerely hope for the best results. General Porfirio Diaz, President of the republic, is a man whose official and private life commands the respect of the entire people. That his administration has given the country a grand impetus, has largely restored its credit, and insured a continuance of peace, seems to be an undisputed fact. His principal purpose is plainly to modernize Mexico. The twelve years from 1876, when he became president, until 1889, when his third term commenced, has proved to be the progressive age of the republic. He is of native birth, and rose from the ranks of the masses. The only opposition to his government is that of the church party, led by the Archbishop of Mexico, and supported by that great army of non-producers, the useless priests, who fatten upon the poor and superstitious populace. At present this party has no political power or influence, but is working at all times, in secret, silently awaiting an opportunity to sacrifice anything or everything to the sole interests of the Roman Catholic Church. "The political struggle in Mexico," says United States Commissioner William Eleroy Curtis, "since the independence of the republic, has been and will continue to be between antiquated, bigoted, and despotic Romanism, allied with the ancient aristocracy, under whose encouragement Maximilian came, on the one hand, and the spirit of intellectual, industrial, commercial, and social progress on the

other."

Here, as in European countries, where this form of faith prevails, it is the women mostly – we might almost say solely, in Mexico – who give their attendance upon the ceremonies of the church. The male population are seldom seen within its walls, though yielding a sort of tacit acquiescence to the faith. We are speaking of large communities in the cities and among the more intelligent classes. The peons of the rural districts, the ignorant masses who do not think for themselves, but who are yet full of superstitious fears, are easily impressed by church paraphernalia, gorgeous trappings, and gilded images. This class, men and women, are completely under the guidance of the priesthood. "Although the clergy still exercise a powerful influence among the common people," says Commissioner Curtis, "whose superstitious ignorance has not yet been reached by the free schools and compulsory education law, in politics they are powerless." It was in 1857 that Mexico formally divorced the church and state by an amendment to her constitution, thereby granting unrestricted freedom of conscience and religious worship to all persons, sects, and churches. Several denominations in the United States avail themselves of this privilege, and in some of the cities Protestant churches have been established where regular weekly services are held. "With the overthrow of Montezuma's empire in 1520," says that distinguished native Mexican writer, Riveray Rio, "began the rule of the Spaniard, which lasted just three

hundred years. During this time, Rome and Spain, priest and king, held this land and people as a joint possession. The greedy hand was ever reached out to seize alike the product of the mine and soil. The people were enslaved for the aggrandizement and power of a foreign church and state. It was then that the Church of Rome fostered such a vast army of friars, priests, and nuns, acquired those vast landed estates, and erected such an incredible number of stone churches, great convents, inquisitorial buildings, Jesuit colleges, and gathered such vast stores of gold and silver. All this time the poor people were being reduced to the utmost poverty, and every right and opportunity for personal and civil advancement was taken from them. They were left to grope on in intellectual darkness. They could have no commerce with foreign nations. If they made any advance in national wealth, it was drained away for royal and ecclesiastical tribute. Superstition reigned under the false teachings of a corrupt priesthood, while the frightful Inquisition, by its cruel machinery, coerced the people to an abjectness that has scarcely had a parallel in human history. Under such a dispensation of evil rule, Mexico became of less and less importance among the family of nations."

This brief summary brings us to the peaceful and comparatively prosperous condition of the republic to-day, and prepares the canvas upon which to sketch the proposed pen pictures of this interesting country, with which we are so intimately connected, both politically and geographically.

## CHAPTER II

Remarkably Fertile Soil. – Valuable Native Woods. – Mexican Flora. – Coffee and Tobacco. – Mineral Products. – Silver Mines. – Sugar Lands. – Manufactories. – Cortez's Presents to Charles V. – Water Power. – Coal Measures. – Railroads. – Historic Locality. – Social Characteristics. – People divided into Castes. – Peonage. – Radical Progress. – Education and the Priesthood. – A Threshing Machine. – Social Etiquette. – Political Organization of the Government. – Mexico the Synonym of Barbarism. – Production and Business Handicapped by an Excessive Tariff.

Mexico is remarkable for the fertility and peculiar productiveness of her soil, both of a vegetable and mineral character, though the former is very largely dependent upon irrigation, and almost everywhere suffers for want of intelligent treatment. As a striking proof of the fertility of the soil, an able writer upon the subject tells us, among other statistical facts, that while wheat cultivated in France and some other countries averages but six grains for one planted, Mexican soil gives an average product of twenty-two times the amount of seed which is sown. Humboldt was surprised at this when it was reported to him, and took pains to verify the fact, finding the statement to be absolutely correct. Being situated partly in the

tropics and partly in the temperate zone, its vegetable products partake of both regions, and are varied in the extreme. In the hot lands are dense forests of rosewood, mahogany, and ebony, together with dyewoods of great commercial value, while in the temperate and cooler districts the oak and pine are reasonably abundant. It must be admitted, however, that those districts situated near populous neighborhoods have been nearly denuded of their growth during centuries of waste and destruction by the conquering Spaniards. From this scarcity of commercial wood arises the absence of framed houses, and the universal use of stone and clay, or adobe, for building purposes. There is valuable wood enough in certain districts, which is still being wasted. The sleepers of the Monterey and Mexican Gulf railway are nearly all of ebony. Attention having been called to the fact, orders have been issued to save this wood for shipment to our Northern furniture manufacturers. Iron ties and sleepers are being substituted on the trunk lines of the railways as fast as the wooden ones decay, being found so much more durable. Those used on the Vera Cruz line are imported from England; on the Mexican Central, from the United States. There is a low, scrubby growth of wood on the table-lands and mountain sides, which is converted by the peons into charcoal and transported on the backs of the burros (jackasses) long distances for economical use in the cities and villages. All the delicious fruits of the West Indies are abundantly produced in the southern section, and all the substantial favorites of our Northern and Western States

thrive luxuriantly in her middle and northern divisions. Some of the cultivated berries are remarkably developed; the strawberry, for instance, thrives beyond all precedent in central Mexico, and while larger, it is no less delicately flavored than our own choice varieties. The flora throughout Mexico is exceedingly rich and varied, botanists having recognized over ten thousand families of plants indigenous to the soil. It appeared to the writer, however, that while the color of the flowers was intensified above that of our Northern States, their fragrance was not so well defined. Even the soft green mosses threw out a star-like blossom of tiny proportions, which seemed almost as full of expression as human eyes, while they emitted a subdued fragrance. The best-grown coffee of the country is in our estimation equal to the best grades of Mocha or Java, while the tobacco produced in several of the states compares favorably with the much-lauded brands of Cuba. The most fertile regions of Mexico lie on the east and west, where the districts decline abruptly from the great plateau, or table-land, towards the coast.

The Monterey and Mexican Gulf railway has lately opened access to most excellent land, suitable for sugar plantations, equal to the best in Louisiana devoted to this purpose, and which can be bought for a mere song, as the saying is. These lands are better adapted to sugar raising than those of the State just named, because frost is here unknown. In the opening of these tropical districts by railroad, connected with our Southern system, we have offered us the opportunity to secure all the products which

we now get from Cuba. These staples are equal in quality, and can be landed at our principal commercial centres at a much less cost than is paid for shipments from that island. Such is the arbitrary rule of Spain in Cuba, and the miserable political condition of her people, that all business transacted in her ports is handicapped by regulations calculated to drive commerce away from her shores. The fact should also be recalled that while Mexico produces every article which we import from Cuba, she has over five times the population to consume our manufactures and products, rendering her commercial intercourse with us just so much more important. At present, or rather heretofore, she has sought to exchange her native products almost wholly with Europe, through the port of Vera Cruz; but on account of the excellent facilities afforded by the Mexican Central Railroad the volume of trade has already begun to set towards the United States. While upon the subject it may be mentioned incidentally that the way business of this railroad has exceeded all calculations, and yet it is but partially developed, the rolling stock being quite inadequate to the demand for freight transportation.

In minerals it would seem as though the list of products was unequalled. At present the silver mines are undoubtedly the greatest source of wealth to the country, though under proper conditions the agricultural capacity of the land would doubtless exceed all other interests in pecuniary value, as indeed is the case in most other gold and silver producing countries. The principal mineral products of Mexico are iron, tin, cinnabar, silver, gold,

alum, sulphur, and lead. In the state of Durango, large masses of the best magnetic iron ore are found, which at some future day will supply the material for a great and useful industry. Other iron mines exist, and some have been utilized to a limited extent. Coal is found in abundance, notably in the states of Oaxaca, Sonora, Nuevo Leon, and Coahuila. These coal measures are particularly valuable in a country many parts of which are treeless and without economical fuel. The total coinage of silver ore in the mints of Mexico to this date, we were intelligently informed, amount to the enormous aggregate of three thousand millions of dollars, to which may be added, in arriving at the total product of the mines, the amount exported in bars and the total value consumed in manufactures. This last item amounts to a much larger figure than one who has not given the subject careful thought would be prepared to admit.

Mexico can hardly be spoken of as a manufacturing country, in the usual acceptation of the term, though the Spaniards found that cotton cloth had been made here long before their advent. It is also a fact that such domestic goods as the masses of her population absolutely require she produces within her own limits by native industry, such as cotton cloth, blankets, woollen cloth, cotton shawls, leather goods, saddlery, boots, shoes, hats, and other articles of personal wear. There are over twenty large woollen mills in the country, several for the production of carpeting, and many cotton mills, the product of the latter being almost wholly the unbleached article, which



is universally worn by the masses. The cotton mills are many of them large, and worthy of special commendation for the healthful and beneficent system adopted in them, as well as for the excellence of their output. The number of factories of all sorts in the country is estimated at about one hundred. There is nearly enough sugar produced on the plantations to satisfy the home demand, an industry which might be indefinitely extended. Climate, soil, and the rate of wages all favor such an idea. The Sandwich Islands, which have been so largely resorted to for the establishment of sugar plantations, cannot show one half the advantages which lie unimproved on the new lines of the Mexican railways. If a capitalist were considering the purpose of establishing a large sugar plantation, the fact of cheap and easy transportation to market being here close at hand should alone settle the question as between the islands referred to and this locality. Hardware and cutlery, of excellent quality and in large quantities, are manufactured. The paper, household furniture, pottery, crockery, and even glass generally in use, are of home production, which will give the reader an idea of the present native resources of the country, developed not by fortuitous aid, but under the most depressing circumstances.

It will be remembered that Cortez, soon after he landed in Mexico, sent to Charles V. specimens of native cotton fabrics, so that probably cotton was not only grown but manufactured here as early as in any other country. The historians tell us that the Aztecs made as large and as delicate webs as those of Holland.

Besides working in textile fabrics, this ancient people wrought metals, hewed stone, and manufactured pottery of delicate forms and artistic finish. The misfortune of one country is the gain of another. The paucity of fuel wherewith to obtain steam power, and the lack of rivers capable of giving water power, must always prevent Mexico from being a competing country, as to manufactures, with the United States, where these essentials abound. She has, however, only to turn her attention to the export of fruits, and other products which are indigenous to her sunny land, to acquire ample means wherewith to purchase from this country whatever she may desire in the line of luxuries or necessities.

That a portion of Mexico is utterly sterile and unavailable is just as much a fact as that we have such regions in the western part of the United States. There are large sections here which suffer from annual droughts, but which might be redeemed by irrigation, the facilities for which in most cases are near enough at hand, only requiring to be properly engineered. It is not correct to paint everything of rose-color in the republic; it has its serious drawbacks, like all other lands under the sun. The want of water is the prevailing trouble, but, like Australia, this country has enough of the precious liquid if properly conserved and adapted. The Rio Grande produces more water in a twelvemonth than the great Murray River of Australia, which is flooded at certain seasons and is a "dry run" at others. As we have intimated, the absence of available wood and coal will prevent

the growth of manufactures in Mexico, at least, until the coal deposits are opened up by railroads. The coal measures are not yet fully surveyed, or developed, but sufficient has been shown to demonstrate their great extent and valuable qualities. When these coal deposits shall be brought by means of railroads, already projected or in course of construction, within the reach of the business centres, and deliverable to consumers at reasonable prices, a great impetus to manufactures will be realized through this article of prime necessity. A company has lately been formed in England to explore and develop these coal fields, for which purpose a liberal concession has been obtained from the Mexican government. This is only one more evidence of the fact that foreign capital and foreign enterprise are flowing towards the country. It will be observed also that these new companies are mostly English; some are German; but there are comparatively few Americans engaged in these enterprises. We have seen it in print that Mexico was fast becoming Americanized, but this is a mistake; there are many more Europeans than Americans in Mexico, as we use the word Americans, that is, people of the United States.

Where water power is to be obtained, it is improved to the utmost, as at Queretaro, where a small river is made to turn the largest overshot wheel which has ever been constructed, furnishing power in the famous Hercules Cotton Factory of that city, which gives regular employment to many hundred native men and women.

An improved and stable system of government and increased railroad facilities are doing wonders for our neighbors across the Rio Grande. The iron horse and steel rail are great promoters of civilization. It would be impossible to overestimate the importance of this branch of progress in the interests of both Mexico and the United States, by which means we are constantly becoming more and more intimately united. The Mexican Central Railroad has lately completed its connection with Tampico on the Gulf by a branch road running almost due east from its main trunk, starting near or at Aguas Calientes; another, running about due west towards the port of San Blas on the Pacific, has already been completed as far as Guadalajara, starting from the main trunk at Irapuato. The former city being the present terminus of the road, is considered the second in importance in Mexico. When the narrow space still remaining is opened by rail, the continent will be crossed by railway trains between the Atlantic and Pacific at a narrow and most available point. The increase of way passengers and freight upon this road during the past two years is a source of surprise and of gratification to the company. The rolling stock is being monthly increased, having proved to be inadequate to the business.

The Tampico branch of this road passes through scenery which experienced travelers pronounce to be equal in grandeur to any on this continent. Indeed, had the appalling engineering difficulties to be encountered been fully realized before the road was begun, it is doubtful if it would have been built. The cost

has slightly exceeded ten million dollars. That which seemed easy enough, as designed upon paper, proved to be a herculean task in the consummation. It was a portion of the original plan, when the Mexican Central Railroad was surveyed, to build this branch, and six years after the completion of the main trunk the Tampico road was duly opened. The distance from this harbor on the Gulf of Mexico to Aguas Calientes is a trifle over four hundred miles. With the improvements already under way, it will be rendered the best seaport on the Gulf, infinitely superior, especially in point of safe anchorage, to the open roadstead of Vera Cruz. Every ton of freight is now landed at the latter port by lighters, and must continue to be so from the nature of the coast; while in a couple of years at farthest Tampico will have a most excellent harbor, perfectly sheltered, where the largest steamships can lie at the wharf and discharge their cargoes. We are sorry to say that San Blas, on the Pacific side, does not promise to make so desirable a port. It is even suggested that Mazatalan, further north, should be made the terminus of this branch road. American enterprise and progressive ideas are peacefully but surely revolutionizing a country where all previous change has been accomplished by the sword, and all advance has been from scaffold to scaffold. It would seem as though political convulsions formed one of the conditions of national progress. In our own instance, through what seas of blood had we to wade in abolishing that long standing curse of this land, negro slavery. The Czar of Russia freed the millions of serfs in his empire by a

bold and manly ukase; but the nobility, who counted their wealth by the number of human beings whom they held in thralldom, have not yet forgiven the Czar for doing so. Revenge for that philanthropic act is still the motive of the conspiracies which occasionally come to the surface in that country. "Every age has its problem," says Heinrich Heine, "by solving which humanity is helped forward."

The federal capital of Mexico is in the centre of a country of surpassing richness and beauty, but from the day of its foundation, between seven and eight hundred years ago, it has been the theatre of constant revolutions and bitter warfare, where hecatombs of human beings have been sacrificed upon idolatrous altars, where a foreign religion has been established at the spear's point, through torture by fire and the rack, and where rivers of blood have been ruthlessly spilled in battle, sometimes in repelling a foreign foe, but only too often in still more cruel civil wars. Some idea of the chronic political upheavals of the country may be had from the brief statement that there have been fifty-four presidents, one regency, and one emperor in the last sixty-two years, and nearly every change of government has been effected by violence. Between 1821 and 1868, the form of government was changed ten times.

Politeness and courtesy are as a rule characteristics of the intelligent and middle classes of the people of Mexico, and are also observable in intercourse with the humbler ranks of the masses. They have heretofore looked upon Americans as being

hardly more than semi-civilized. Those with whom they have been most brought in contact have been reckless and adventurous frontiersmen, drovers, Texans, cow boys, often individuals who have left their homes in the Northern or Middle States with the stigma of crime upon them. The inference they have drawn from contact with such representatives of our population has been but natural. If Mexicans travel abroad, they generally do so in Europe, sailing from Vera Cruz, and they know comparatively little of us socially. It is equally true that we have been in the habit of regarding the Mexicans in much the same light. This mutual feeling is born of ignorance, and the nearer relation into which the two countries are now brought by means of the excellent system of railroads is rapidly dispelling the misconception on both sides of the Rio Grande. The masses, especially the peons, are far more illiterate than in this country, and are easily led by the higher intelligence of the few; nor have the Mexicans yet shown much real progress in the purpose of promoting general education, though incipient steps have been taken in that direction in most of their cities, affording substantial proof of the progressive tendencies of the nation. We heard in the city of Mexico of free night schools being organized, designed for the improvement of adults.

A division of the populace into castes rules here almost as imperiously as it does in India, and it will require generations of close contact with a more cultured and democratic people before these servile ideas can be obliterated. Though we hear

little or nothing said about this matter, yet to an observant eye it has daily and hourly demonstration. The native Indians of Mexico are of a different race from their employers. Originally conquered and enslaved by the Spaniards, though they have since been emancipated by law, they are still kept in a quasi condition of peonage by superior wit and finesse. The proprietor of a large hacienda, who owns land, say ten miles square, manages, by advancing money to them, to keep the neighboring people in his debt. They are compelled by necessity to purchase their domestic articles of consumption from the nearest available supply, which is the storehouse of the hacienda. Here they must pay the price which is demanded, let it be never so unreasonable. This arrangement is all against the peon, and all in favor of the employer. The lesser party to such a system is pretty sure to be cheated right and left, especially as the estate is nearly always administered by an agent and not by the owner himself. There are some notable exceptions to this, but these only prove the rule. So long as the employés owe the proprietor money, they are bound by law to remain in his service. Wages are so low – say from twenty-five to thirty-five cents per day – that were the natives of a thrifty, ambitious, and provident disposition, which is by no means the case, they could not save a dollar towards their pecuniary emancipation. The laboring classes seem to have no idea of economy or of providing for the morrow. Food, coarse food, and amusement for the present hour, that is all they desire, and is all about which they seriously concern themselves. The



next score of years, while they will probably do much for the country as regards commercial and intellectual improvement, will prove fatal in a degree to the picturesqueness which now renders Mexico so attractive. Radical progress in one direction must needs be destructive in another, and while some of the allurements of her strong individuality will disappear, her moral and physical status will be greatly improved. Her ragged, half-naked people will don proper attire, sacrificing the gaudy colors which now make every out-door scene kaleidoscopic; a modern grain thresher will take the place of weary animals plodding in a circle, treading out the grain; half-clad women at the fountains will disappear, and iron pipes will convey water for domestic use to the place of consumption. The awkward branch of crooked wood now used to turn the soil will be replaced by the modern plough, and reaping machines will relieve the weary backs of men, women, and children, who slowly grub beneath a burning sun through the broad grain fields. Irrigating streams will be made to flow by their own gravitation, while the wooden bucket and well-sweep will become idle and useless. Still, we are not among those who see only a bright side for the future of the republic, nor do we believe so confidently as some writers in her great natural resources. They are abundant, but not so very exceptional as enthusiasts would have us believe. Aside from the production of silver, which all must admit to be inexhaustible, she has very little to boast of. It is doubtful if any other equal area in the world possesses larger deposits of the precious metals, or

has already yielded to man more bountifully of them. We have seen it asserted by careful and experienced writers, that one half of all the silver now in use among the nations originally came from Mexico. Her real and permanent progress is inevitable; but it will be very gradual, coming not through her rich mines of gold and silver, but by the growth of her agricultural and manufacturing interests; and if in a score of years she can assume a position of respect and importance in the line of nations, it is all that can reasonably be expected. If Mexico can but advance in progressive ideas as rapidly during the next ten years as she has done during the decade just past, the period we have named will be abbreviated, and her condition will amount to a moral revolution.

Our sister republic has yet to accomplish two special and important objects: first, the suppression of the secret and malign influence of the Roman Catholic priesthood; and, secondly, the promotion of education among the masses. Since the separation of church and state, in 1857, education has made slow but steady advances. Most of the states have adopted the system of compulsory education, penalties being affixed to non-compliance with the law, and rewards decreed for those who voluntarily observe the same. Though shorn of so large a degree of its temporal powers, the church is still secretly active in its machinations for evil. The vast army of non-producing, indolent priests is active in one direction, namely, that for the suppression of all intelligent progress, and the complete

subjugation of the common people through superstition and ignorance. A realization of the condition of affairs may be had from the following circumstance related to us by a responsible American resident. It must be remembered that the wheat, which in some well-irrigated districts is the principal product, is threshed by means of piling it up on the hard clay soil, and driving goats, sheep, and burros over it. These animals trudge round and round, with weary limbs, knee deep in the straw, for hours together, urged forward by whips in the hands of men and boys, and thus the grain is separated from the stalks. Of course the product threshed out in this manner is contaminated with animal filth of all sorts. An enterprising American witnessed this primitive process not long since, and on returning to his northern home resolved to take back with him to Mexico a modern threshing machine; and being more desirous to introduce it for the benefit of the people than to make any money out of the operation, he offered the machine at cost price. A native farmer was induced to put one on trial, when it was at once found that it not only took the place of a dozen men and boys, but also of twice that number of animals. This was not all; the machine performed the work in less than one quarter of the time required to do the same amount of work by the old method, besides rendering the grain in a perfectly clear condition. This would seem to be entirely satisfactory, and was so until it got to the ears of the priests. They came upon the ground to see the machine work, and were amazed. This would not answer,

according to their ideas; from their standpoint it was a dangerous innovation. What might it not lead to! They therefore declared that the devil was in the machine, and absolutely forbade the peons to work with it! Their threats and warnings frightened their ignorant, servile parishioners out of their wits. The machine was accordingly shipped north of the Rio Grande, whence it came, to prevent the natives from destroying it, and cattle still tread out the grain, which they render dirty and unfit for food, except in the most populous centres, where modern machinery is being gradually introduced.

"The clogging influence of the Romish Church," says Hon. John H. Rice, "upon civilization and progress are seen in its opposition to the education and elevation of the common people; in its intolerant warfare against freedom of conscience, and all other forms of religious worship, frequently displayed in persecutions, and sometimes in personal injuries; and in its stolid opposition to the onward march of development and improvement, unless directed to its own advantage."

The stranger who comes to Mexico with the expectation of enjoying his visit must bring with him a liberal and tolerant spirit. He must be prepared to encounter a marked difference of race, of social and business life, together with the absence of many of such domestic comforts as habit has rendered almost necessities. The exercise of a little philosophy will reconcile him to the exigencies of the case, and render endurable here what would be inadmissible at home. A coarse, ill-cooked

dinner, untidy service, and an unappeased appetite must be compensated by active interest in grand and peculiar scenery; a hard bed and a sleepless night, by the intelligent enjoyment of famous places clothed with historic interest; foul smells and rank odors, by the charming study of a unique people, extraordinarily interesting in their wretched squalor and nakedness. Though the stranger is brought but little in contact therewith, owing to the briefness of his visit to the country, quite enough is casually seen and experienced to show that there is no lack of culture and refinement, no absence of warmth of heart and gracious hospitality, among the more favored classes of Mexico, both in the northern and southern sections of the country. Underneath the exaggerated expressions so common to Spanish etiquette, there is yet a real cordiality which the discriminating visitor will not fail to recognize. If, on a first introduction and visit, he is told that the house and all it contains is his own, and that the proprietor is entirely at his service, he will neither take this literally nor as a burlesque, but will receive the assurance for what it really signifies, that is, as conveying a spirit of cordiality. These expressions are as purely conventional as though the host asked simply and pleasantly after his guest's health, and mean no more.

If progress is and has been slow in Mexico, it must be remembered that every advance has been consummated under most discouraging circumstances, and yet that the charitable, educational, artistic, and technological institutions already firmly established, are quietly revolutionizing the people through the

most peaceful but effective agencies.

As to government organization, the several states are represented in congress by two senators each, with one representative to the lower house from each section comprising a population of forty thousand. The federal district is under the exclusive jurisdiction of congress. The division of power as accorded to the several states is almost precisely like that of our own government. The federal authority is administered by a president, aided by six cabinet ministers at the head of the several departments of state, such as the minister of foreign affairs, of the treasury, secretary of war, and so on. Thus it will be seen that the republic of Mexico has adopted our own constitution as her model throughout.

As long as heavy and almost prohibitory duties exist in Mexico, and are exacted on nearly everything except the production of the precious metals, the development of her other resources must be circumscribed. With a rich soil and plenty of cheap labor, she ought to be able to export many staples which would command our markets, especially as regards coffee, cotton, and wool. If the custom-houses on each side of the boundary between this country and Mexico could be abolished, both would reap an immense pecuniary benefit, while the sister republic would realize an impetus in every desirable respect which nothing else could so quickly bring about. Wealth and population would rapidly flow into this southern land, whose agriculture would thrive as it has never yet done, and its

manufactories would double in number as well as in pecuniary gain. It requires no argument to show that our neighbors could not be thus largely benefited without our own country also reaping an equivalent advantage.

The very name of Mexico has been for years the synonym of barbarism; but the traveled and reading public have gradually come to realize that it is a country embracing many large and populous cities, where the amenities of modern civilization abound, where elegance and culture are freely manifested, and where great wealth has been accumulated in the pursuit of legitimate business by the leading citizens. The national capital will ere-long contain a population of half a million, while the many new and costly edifices now erecting in the immediate environs are of a spacious and elegant character, adapted, of course, to the climate, but yet combining many European and American elements of advanced domestic architecture.

## CHAPTER III

The Route to Mexico. – Via the Mammoth Cave. – Across the Rio Grande. – A Large River. – Piedras Negras. – Characteristic Scene. – A Barren Prairie Land. – Castaño, a Native Village. – Adobe Cabins. – Indian Irrigation. – Sparsely Populated Country. – Interior Haciendas. – Immigration. – City of Saltillo. – Battle of Buena Vista. – City of Monterey. – The Cacti and Yucca-Palm. – Capture by General Taylor. – Mexican Central Railroad. – Jack-Rabbits. – A Dreary Region. – The Mesquite Bushes. – Lonely Graves.

Although it is of Mexico exclusively that we propose to treat in these pages, still the reader may naturally feel some interest to know the route by which the Rio Grande was reached, and thus follow our course somewhat consecutively from Boston through the Middle and Southern States to the borders of the sister republic. The road which was chosen took us first westward, through the Hoosac Tunnel, to Niagara Falls, – a view of which one cannot too often enjoy; thence southward via Detroit to Cincinnati, Ohio. The next point of special interest was Louisville, Ky. That great national marvel, the Mammoth Cave, was visited, which, next to Niagara, the wonderland of the Yellowstone Park, and the grand scenic beauty of the Yosemite Valley, is the greatest curiosity of this country. The vast interior,



with its domes, abysses, grottoes, rivers, and cataracts profitably entertain the visitor for hours. It is said that one might travel a hundred miles underground if all of the turnings were followed to their terminations. Echo River alone may be traversed for three quarters of a mile by boat in a straight course. Much might be written about the cave, but our objective point is Mexico.

Resuming our journey, and keeping still southward, Nashville, Tenn., Montgomery, Ala., Mobile, and New Orleans were reached respectively, and on schedule time. The Crescent City is the greatest cotton mart in the world, and is situated about a hundred miles from the Gulf of Mexico, within a great bend of the Mississippi River, and hence its title of the "Crescent City." It has over a quarter of a million of inhabitants. Its peculiar situation makes it liable to floods each recurring spring. Following what is known as the "Sunset Route" westward, we passed through Texas by way of Houston, Galveston, and San Antonio.

A few hours were devoted to the latter place, in order to see the famous Alamo, the old fort which, in 1836, the Texans so gallantly defended while fighting for their independence. There were less than one hundred and fifty men in the Alamo when it was besieged by four thousand Mexican troops under Santa Anna. The Mexicans had artillery, the Texans had none. They were summoned to surrender, but knowing what Mexican "mercy" meant, they refused, and resolved to defend themselves to the very end. The siege lasted for thirteen days, during

which Santa Anna's soldiers threw over two hundred shells into the Alamo, injuring no one. In the mean time, the Texan sharpshooters picked off a great number of the Mexicans. No shots were thrown away. If a gun was fired from the Alamo, one of the besiegers was sure to fall. Santa Anna made several assaults, but was driven back each time with great loss, until, it is represented, he become frenzied by his want of success. At last, on the 6th of May, a final and successful assault was made. When the fort was captured, every Texan fell, fighting to the last. To be exact, there were just one hundred and forty-four men inside the fort at the beginning of the siege, and this handful of men either killed or wounded about one half of the besieging force. It is said that over fifteen hundred Mexicans were killed! This was about seven weeks before the battle of San Jacinto, on which occasion General Houston captured, with a much inferior force, the entire Mexican army, including Santa Anna himself, who was running away in the disguise of a common infantry soldier. It was with difficulty that his life was saved from the just fury of the Texan soldiers. This decisive battle ended the war, and made Texas independent of Mexico. It was a large slice to cut off the territory of Mexico, as it would make, so far as size goes, over thirty States as large as Massachusetts. It contains at this writing about two million inhabitants, and the value of its taxable property is nearly or quite eight hundred millions of dollars.

Finally we reached Eagle Pass, which is the American town on the north bank of the Rio Grande, Piedras Negras being

its Mexican neighbor on the other side of the shallow river. Previous to the opening of the Mexican Central Railroad, which was completed March 8, 1884, nine tenths of the travelers who visited the country entered it from the south, at the port of Vera Cruz, journeying northward to the city of Mexico by way of Orizaba and Puebla, and returning by the same route; but the completion and perfection of the railroad system between the north and the south has changed this. Since 1888, when the International Branch Railroad was opened, the favorite plan is to cross the border from the north, say at Eagle Pass; and on the homeward route, after visiting the central and southern portions of the republic, to recross the dividing river at Paso del Norte. This was the route followed by the author, the Rio Grande being crossed at the international bridge, and Mexican territory entered at the town of Piedras Negras in the State of Coahuila, a thriving place of some four thousand inhabitants.

One pauses thoughtfully for a moment to contrast the present means of crossing the dividing river with the primitive rope ferry which answered the purpose here not long since. A little flutter of anticipation also moves us when it is realized that the territory of another country is reached, that we are actually on a foreign soil, where a strange tongue is spoken, where a new emblem floats from the flagstuffs, and where another race possesses the land. The Rio Grande, which we cross at this point, is not a navigable stream; in fact, river navigation is practically unknown in Mexico, though some of the watercourses are of considerable

size. The Rio Grande has a total length of fifteen hundred miles, rising in Colorado and emptying into the Gulf of Mexico. In the rainy season, and when the snow melts in the mountains, the Rio Grande is flooded to its full capacity, often overflowing its banks in marshy regions. The first bridge built by the railway company at this point was of wood, which was swept away like chaff by the next flood of the river. The present substantial iron structure bids fair to last for many years. The river, such as it is, belongs to the two nations, the boundary agreed upon being the middle of the stream.

As we drew up at the railroad station, a lazy, listless, bareheaded, dark-skinned crowd of men, women, and children welcomed us with staring eyes to Mexican soil. The first idea which strikes one is that soap and fine-tooth combs are not yet in use on the south side of the Rio Grande.

Piedras Negras boasts a spacious stone hotel, two stories in height, which is quite American in appearance. The town is spread over so broad an area as to have the effect of being sparsely peopled, but it is thrifty in aspect and growing rapidly. From the manner in which scores of men wrapped in scarlet blankets and mounted on little wiry Mexican horses dashed hither and thither, one would think some startling event was to transpire; but this was not the case – all was peaceful and quiet in Piedras Negras.

The section of country through which the route first takes us is perhaps one of the least interesting and most unproductive in the

republic, with an occasional mud hut here and there, and a few half-naked peons. What a dreary region it is! What emptiness! How bare the serrated mountains, how inhospitable the scenery, how brown, baked, and dusty! At the International Bridge we are about seven hundred feet above the sea. Here we take the International Railway, and from this point to Jaral, a distance of two hundred and fifty miles almost due south, the cars are constantly climbing an up-grade until the great Mexican plateau is finally reached. It should be remembered, however, that this vast table-land, covering nearly three quarters of the republic, is by no means level, but is interspersed with hills, valleys, gulches, canyons, and mountains of the loftiest character, in many places duplicating our Rocky Mountain scenery both in height and grandeur.

A stop of a few hours was made at the quaint little adobe-built town – cabins formed of sun-dried bricks – known by the name of Castaño, situated on the trunk line of the Mexican Central road, near the city of Monclova, which is a considerable mining centre. This small native village is the first typical object of the sort which greets the traveler who enters the country from the north. It lies in a nearly level valley between the two spurs of the Sierra Madre, where beautiful green fields delight the eye, where fruit trees are in gorgeous bloom, and where wild flowers add a charm in the very midst of cheerless, arid surroundings. This inviting and thrifty aspect is produced entirely by the hoe in the hands of the simple, industrious natives, with no other

aid than that of water. The peons are most efficient though unconscious engineers, diverting a supply of water from the distant mountain streams with marvelous ingenuity and success. No practical operator, with every modern appliance and the most delicate instruments, could strike more correct levels than do these natives with the eye and the hoe alone. Upon entering one of the adobe cabins at the ever-open door, – there are no windows, – we found the flat roof to be slightly slanted to throw off the rain, having four or five wooden beams upon which a few boards and rough sticks were nailed. On the top of these a foot or more of earth is deposited. This primitive covering Nature enamels with moss and dainty wild flowers. But this represents the better class of cabin, the majority having only a thatched covering supported by small branches of trees trimmed for the purpose, over which are placed dried banana and maguey leaves. Some of the floors had stone tiles, but most of them consisted of the uncovered earth. These last must be wretchedly unwholesome in the brief rainy season. Swarthy, unclad children were as numerous and active as young chickens. In more than one of the cabins, dark-hued native women, wearing only a cotton cloth wound around the lower part of their bodies from the middle, and a short cotton waist over the shoulders without sleeves, knelt upon the ground kneading tortillas between a flat, inclined stone and a long, narrow one, just as their ancestors had done for centuries. Indeed, all through Mexico one is surprised to see how little change has probably taken place in

the features of the people, their manner of living, their dress and customs, since the days of the Montezumas. The traveler is struck with the strong resemblance of Castaño to an Egyptian village. One sees its counterpart almost anywhere between Cairo and the first cataract on the Nile. Clouds of black, long-tailed jackdaws flew over our heads and settled abruptly here and there. Goats and donkeys dispute the dusty roadway with the curious stranger, while women, with babies hanging upon their backs, half concealed their dark-brown faces in red or light blue rebosas, and peered at us with eyes of wonderful blackness and fire. The rebose, the universal garment of the common class of women in Mexico, is utilized as a carry-all for baby or bundles. It is worn over the head and shoulders in the daytime, when not otherwise in use, and at night is the one blanket or covering while the owner is asleep. The donkey, or burro, as it is called, is to be seen everywhere in this country. Poor, overburdened, beaten, patient animal! How so small a creature can possibly carry such heavy loads is a constant puzzle. When its full strength would seem to be taxed, the lazy owner often adds his own weight by bestriding the animal, sitting far back upon its hips. Before the coming of the Spaniards there were no beasts of burden in Mexico; everything that required transportation was moved by human muscles. It was not until the eighteenth century that the jackass was introduced; cattle, sheep, horses, and hogs long preceded them.

Rain falls at Castaño only for three weeks, or so, during the

year, about the early part of May; the dust is consequently very deep and fills the air at the slightest atmospheric movement. The general view is broken now and again by the Spanish bayonet tree, ten or twelve feet in height, and by broad clusters of grotesque cactus plants, which thrive so wonderfully in spite of drought, hanging like vines along the base of the adobe cabins and creeping up their low sides, the leaves edged here and there by a dainty ruffle of scentless yellow flowers. Beside a very lowly mud cabin was a tall oleander, branches and leaves hidden in gorgeous bloom, imparting a cheerful, joyous aspect even amid all this squalor and poverty. Close at hand upon the adobe wall hung a willow cage imprisoning a tropical bird of gaudy plumage; but the feathered beauty did not seem to have any spare notes with which to greet us. From another cabin came the pleasant sound of a guitar, accompanied by a human voice. So this people love birds, flowers, and music. The half-effaced image of God must be still upon their hearts! The little town has four or five broad, unpaved streets, and is as primitive as nature herself in all its domestic surroundings.

Except on the immediate line of the railways, one may travel thirty or forty miles in almost any part of Mexico without seeing a dwelling-house. The people live mostly in towns and cities, and are very little dispersed over the country, that is, compared with our own land. Occasional haciendas or large farmhouses, built of adobe and stone, are seen; but isolated dwellings are not common. On these estates there is usually less farming or



raising of cereals carried on than there is of stock raising, which seems to pay better. Large droves of cattle are seen grazing, sheep, burros, and mules roam at large, and all seem to be getting food from most unpromising land, such as produces in its normal condition cactus only. It is the true climate and soil for this species of vegetation, of which there are hundreds of varieties, flat, ribbed, and cylindrical. No matter how dry and arid the region, the cacti thrive, and are themselves full of moisture. Even these haciendas, rectangular structures forming the headquarters of large landed estates, are semi-fortifications, capable of a stout defense against roving banditti, who have long been the dread and curse of the country and are not yet obliterated. These structures are sometimes surrounded by a moat, the angles being protected by turrets pierced for musketry. As in continental Spain, the population live mostly in villages for mutual protection, being compelled to walk long distances to work in the fields at seed time and harvest. The owners of the large haciendas, we were told, seldom live upon them. Like the landlords of Ireland, they are a body of absentees, mostly wealthy men who make their homes with their families in the city of Mexico, some even living in Europe, entrusting the management of their large estates to well-paid superintendents. There are not a few Americans thus employed by Mexican owners, who are prompt to recognize good executive ability in such a position, and value their estates only for the amount of income they can realize from them. A hacienda ten or fifteen miles square is not considered extraordinary as

to size, and there are many twice as large. The proprietorship of these haciendas dates back to the old Spanish times when Mexico was under the viceroys. Little can be hoped for as to improvement in the condition of the poor peons of the country, until these immense estates are broken up and divided into small available farms, which may be owned and operated by them for their sole benefit. No lesson is more clearly or forcibly taught us by the light of experience than that the ownership of the soil by its cultivator is the only way to insure successful and profitable agriculture. There is nothing to induce emigration to Mexico now. Foreigners prefer to seek a country where they can purchase the land cheaply, and, when they have improved it, be certain that their title is good and secure. At present there is virtually no immigration at all into the republic, though the climate in many places is perhaps the most desirable known to man. The Mexican government not long since made an effort to encourage immigration, offering a bonus of fifty dollars a head for *bona fide* immigrants, and even partial support until occupation was secured. Many Italians availed themselves of this offer; but it was found that the criminal class was too largely represented in the ranks of these immigrants, and other abuses became so manifest that the government abandoned the purpose.

In passing through the country, one wearies of the long reaches of brown, arid soil which would seem to be beyond the redeeming power even of irrigation. Occasionally the scene is varied by a few yucca palms dotting the prairies at long

intervals. Now and again a small herd of antelope dashed away from our neighborhood, and an occasional flock of wild turkeys were flushed from the low-growing bushes. These were exciting moments for one member of our party, who is a keen sportsman. At long distances from each other small groups of the pear-cactus, full of deep yellow bloom, lighted up the barren waste. Here and there a simple wooden cross indicated a grave, the burial place of some lone traveler who had been murdered and robbed by banditti, and over whose body a Christian hand had reared this unpretentious emblem. As we got further and further southward, the graceful pepper tree, with myriads of red fruit, began to appear, and afterwards became a prominent feature of the scenery.

Saltillo, which lies some seventy miles to the eastward of Jaral, is now the capital of the State of Coahuila. Before the separation of Texas from Mexico it was the capital of that State. It is situated five thousand feet above the sea level, on the northeastern edge of the table-land already spoken of, and has a population of about eighteen thousand. The table-land, as it is termed, declines more or less abruptly on the east towards the Gulf of Mexico, and on the west towards the Pacific Ocean. Saltillo is a manufacturing town, built almost wholly of sun-dried bricks, and is noted for the production of rebosas and serapes. The people living south of this region and on the lower lands make of Saltillo a summer resort. It is humorously said that people never die here; they grow old, dry up, and disappear. The place is certainly very healthy.

It is over three hundred years old, and looks as though it had existed in prehistoric times. It has, like all Mexican cities, its alameda, its bull ring, and its plaza, the latter particularly well-cared for, beautiful in flowers and charming shade trees, together with well-trimmed shrubbery. The Calle Real is the principal thoroughfare, over which the traveler will find his way to the famous battlefield of Buena Vista (pronounced Wana Veesta), about eight miles from the city proper. This was one of the fiercest battles ever fought on Mexican soil. General Taylor had only forty-five hundred men of all arms, while Santa Anna's army numbered twenty-two thousand! The Americans had the most advantageous position, but were at times overwhelmed by numbers. Notwithstanding this, at the end of the second day, February 23, 1847, the American flag waved in triumph over the field, and the Mexicans were utterly routed. It was of this hard-fought battle that Santa Anna said: "We whipped the Americans half a dozen times, and once completely surrounded them; but they would not stay whipped." The battle of Buena Vista was fought at a great altitude, nearly as high above the level of the sea as the summit of Mount Washington in New England.

The baths of San Lorenzo, a league from the city, are worth visiting, being cleanly and enjoyable.

About seventy-five miles to the eastward of Saltillo, and eight hundred miles, more or less, from the national capital, on the line of the Mexican International Railroad, which crosses the Rio Grande at Laredo, is the city of Monterey, – "King

Mountain," – capital of the State of Nuevo Leon. It is eighteen hundred feet above the sea and contains nearly twenty thousand inhabitants. It was founded three hundred years ago, and its history is especially blended with that of the Roman Catholic Church during the intervening period. Here one finds quite a large American colony; but still the place is essentially Mexican in its manners and customs. The city stands upon very uneven ground, in the middle of an extensive plain, with grand mountains rising to view in the distance on all sides. The Rio de Santa Catarina flows through the town. In coming hither from Saltillo we descend thirty-five hundred feet, or about an average of fifty feet to the mile. It is considered to be a healthy locality, and invalids from the Northern States of this country have often resorted to Monterey in winter; but the public accommodations are so poor that one should hesitate about sending an invalid there who must necessarily leave most of the ordinary domestic comforts behind. Mexican hotels may answer for people in vigorous health who have robust stomachs, but not for one in delicate health. In no other part of the country is there a greater variety of the cactus family to be seen, illustrating its prominent peculiarity, namely, that it seems to grow best in the poorest soil. Several of the varieties have within their flowers a mass of edible substance, which the natives gather and bring to market daily. The flowers of the cactus are of various colors, white and yellow being the prevailing hues.

There is a very highly prized and remarkable water supply

afforded the citizens by an inexhaustible spring, situated in the heart of the town, known as the Ojo de Agua. The cathedral is interesting, though it is not nearly so old as the Church of San Francisco. It was converted into a powder magazine during the war with this country. When General Taylor attacked the city, its remarkably thick walls alone saved it from being blown up, as it was repeatedly struck by shot and shell. Monterey is a finer and better built city than Saltillo. No stranger should fail to visit the curious Campo Santo, a burial place lying to the northwest of the city, and reached by the way of the alameda, which latter thoroughfare is hardly worthy of the name. The few notable buildings in the city are the municipal palace, the state government edifice, and the episcopal palace near the cathedral. All are situated about the Plaza Mayor, or Plaza de Zaragoza as it is called by the people here. A graceful fountain with spouting dolphins occupies the centre, supplemented by two lesser fountains, all very appropriate and artistic. Of the two confiscated convents, one is occupied for a jail, the other as a hospital. It will be remembered that General Taylor, with less than seven thousand men, took the city by storm in 1846, after three days of hard fighting, it being gallantly defended by ten thousand Mexicans under command of General Ampudia. General Worth, who on two occasions led desperate storming parties, was pronounced the hero of the occasion. General Grant, then only a lieutenant of infantry, distinguished himself in the taking of what was known as the Bishop's Palace, but which was

in fact a citadel. The Americans carried the citadel by assault, and, planting their guns in position upon its wall, commanded the city, which was forced to surrender. The fighting lasted four days. The Americans lost in killed one hundred and twenty-six, and had three hundred and sixty-three wounded. The Mexicans lost five hundred killed, but the number of wounded was not made public. In recognition of the gallant defense made by the Mexicans, Taylor allowed them to retain their arms and equipments, and when they evacuated the city to salute their own colors.

Resuming our course westward by the way of Jaral, and having arrived at Torreon Junction, a distance of about three hundred and eighty miles from the International Bridge, connection is made with the grand trunk line of the Mexican Central Railroad, which will take us direct to the national capital. This important road extends from Juarez (formerly Paso del Norte), on the Rio Grande, to the city of Mexico, a distance of over twelve hundred miles. It is a standard-gauge road, well built and well equipped, – the growth, in fact, of American enterprise, and really nothing more or less than an extension of the Santa Fé Railroad system. Track-laying began upon this road from both ends of the line in September, 1880, that is, from the city of Mexico and from the Rio Grande at Juarez, and upon the completion of the bridge at La Encarnation, the north and south tracks met, March 8, 1884. The line was formally opened on April 10 following.

From this point southward, towards the mountain city of

Zacatecas, we pass through a most uninviting country, where the mesquite bush and the cactus mostly prevail, a region so bereft of moisture as to seem like the desert of Sahara. Here again the cactus is seen in great abundance. As we have intimated, there are several hundred varieties known to botanists, most of which can be identified on Mexican soil, this being their native climate. No matter how dry the season, they are always juicy. It is said that when cattle can get no water to drink, they will break down the cacti with their horns and chew the thick leaves and stalks to quench their thirst. The variety of shapes assumed by this peculiar growth almost exceeds belief; some seen in Mexico assumed the form of trees from forty to fifty feet in height, while others, vinelike, run along the ground bearing leaves as round as cannon balls. Another variety, closely hugging the earth, twists about like a vegetable serpent. The great marvel relating to this plant has been, how it could keep alive and remain full of sap and moisture when other neighboring vegetation was killed by drought. But this is easily explained. It is protected by a thick epidermis which prevents evaporation, so that the store of moisture which it absorbs during the wet season is retained within its circulation. One sort of the cactus known as the *cereus grandiflorus* blooms only in the night; the frail flower it bears dies at the coming of morning. The cochineal insect of Mexico and Central America is solely nurtured by the native growth of cacti. The yucca palm, fifteen to twenty feet in height, with its large milk-white cluster of blossoms, resembling huge crocuses,



dotted the expanse here and there. Occasional flocks of sheep were seen striving to gain a sufficiency of food from the unwilling soil, while tended by a shepherd clothed in brilliant colored rags, accompanied by a dog. Now and then scores of jack-rabbits put in an appearance among the low-growing mesquite bushes and the thick-leaved cactus. These little animals are called jack-rabbits because their tall, straight ears resemble those of the burros or jackasses. The mesquite bushes, so often seen on the Mexican plains, belong to the acacia family. They yield a sweet edible pulp, used to some extent as food by the poorer classes of natives and by the jack-rabbits. The burros eat the small, tender twigs. Indeed, they will apparently eat anything but stones. We have seen them munching plain straw with infinite relish, in which it seemed impossible there could be any nutrition whatever. This is a far-reaching, dreary region, almost uninhabitable for human beings, and where water is unattainable three-quarters of the year. The broad prairie extends on either side of the railroad as far as the eye can reach, ending at the foothills of the Sierra Madre – "Mother Mountains." Here and there, as already instanced, the burial place of some murdered individual is indicated by a cross, before which the pious peon breathes a prayer and adds a stone to the pile, so that finally quite a mound is raised to mark the murdered man's grave. Towards the twilight hour, while we rejoice that our lot has not been cast in such a dreary place, more than one hawk is seen to swoop from its lofty course and fly away with a young rabbit which it

will eventually drop and thus kill before it begins to devour the carcass. Thus animals, like human beings, constantly prey upon each other. So prolific are these rabbits that they will soon prove to be as great a nuisance as they are in New Zealand, unless some active means are taken to prevent their increase. The wonder is that the half-starved natives do not make a business of trapping and eating them; but the poor, ignorant peons seem to be actually devoid of all ingenuity or enterprise outside of their beaten track.

## CHAPTER IV

Zacatecas. – Sand-Spouts. – Fertile Lands. – A Silver Mining Region. – Alpine Scenery. – Table-Land of Mexico. – An Aged Miner. – Zacatecas Cathedral. – Church and People. – A Mountain Climb. – Ownership of the Mines. – Want of Drainage. – A Battlefield. – Civil War. – Local Market. – Peculiar Scenes. – Native Beauties. – City Tramway Experience. – Town of Guadalupe. – Organized Beggars. – A Noble and Successful Institution. – Market of Guadalupe. – Attractive Señoritas. – Private Gardens.

The first place of special interest on the line of the Mexican Central Railroad after leaving Torreon is Zacatecas, the largest town between the Rio Grande and the city of Mexico, being nearly eight hundred miles south of the river and four hundred and forty north of the capital. Its name is derived from the Indian tribe who inhabited this region long before the coming of the Spaniards. Between Torreon and this city, for a distance of some three hundred miles, as we have described, the country is lonely, prairie-like, and almost uninhabited, forming a broad plain over a hundred miles wide, with ranges of the Sierra Madre on either side. On these dry and sterile plains sand-spouts are frequently seen; indeed, half a dozen were counted at the same time from the car windows. These are created just as water-spouts are

formed on the ocean, and to encounter one is almost equally serious. One must visit either Egypt or Mexico to witness this singular phenomenon. As Zacatecas is approached, large flocks of sheep and herds of mules and horses are grouped in the fields, overlooked by picturesquely draped horsemen. The cultivation of the land and its apparent fertility improve, and many one-handled ploughs, consisting of a crooked stick, sometimes shod with iron, are being used. The marvel is that anything satisfactory can be accomplished with such an awkward instrument, and yet these fields in some instances show grand results.

We expressed surprise to an intelligent citizen at seeing long lines of burros laden with freight beside the railroad, and going in the same direction, remarking to him that the railway ought to be able to compete with the jackasses. "You must take into consideration," said our informant, "that a man who owns a score of these cheap animals can himself drive them all to market or any given point. His time he counts as nothing; his burros feed beside the way, and their sustenance costs him nothing. Wages average throughout the country something less than thirty cents per day, and the cost of living among the peons is proportionately low. A railway is an expensive system to support, and must charge accordingly; consequently the burros, as a means of transportation for a certain class of goods, are quite able to compete with the locomotive and the rail." Of course, as other avenues for remunerative employment are opened to the common people, this antiquated style of transportation will

gradually go out of use, and the locomotive will take the goods which are now carried by these patient and economical animals.

Zacatecas is the capital of the state of the same name, and has a population of nearly fifty thousand. This is one of the oldest and most productive silver mining regions in Mexico. The town seems actually to be built on a huge vein of silver, which has been penetrated in scores of places. Eight or ten miles below the city the cars begin to climb laboriously a grade of one hundred and seventy-five feet to the mile, presenting some of the most abrupt curves we have ever seen in a railway track. Here we are in the midst of Rocky Mountain scenery. One can easily imagine himself on the Northern or Canadian Pacific road, among their giant peaks, hazardous roadbeds, and narrow defiles. The huge engine pants and trembles like an animal, in its struggle to drag the long train up the incline and around the sharp bends, until finally the summit is reached. To mount this remarkable grade a double engine has been specially built, having two sets of driving wheels; but it is often necessary to stop for a few moments to generate sufficient steam to overcome the resistance of the steep grade.

Here we are on the great table-land of the country, about eight thousand feet above the level of the sea, in a narrow valley surrounded by groups of hills all teeming with the precious ore. These rich mines of Zacatecas have been worked with little intermission for over three hundred years, and are considered to be inexhaustible. "There is a native laborer," said an intelligent

superintendent to us, "who is over seventy years old," pointing out a hale and hearty Indian. "He entered the mines at about ten years of age, so he has seen sixty years of mining life, and he may be good for ten years more." These men constantly climb the steep ladders, bearing heavy loads of ore upon their backs, for which hard labor they are paid about thirty-five or forty cents a day. The most productive districts, as relates to mineral products, especially of silver, lie in the northern part of the republic, but metalliferous deposits are found in every state of the confederation.

There are a number of important edifices in the city, among which is the municipal palace, the cathedral, and the mint. The courtyard of the first-named forms a lovely picture, with its garden of fragrant flowers, tropical trees, and delicate columns supporting a veranda half hidden with creeping vines. Both the interior and exterior of the cathedral are extremely interesting and worthy of careful study, though one cannot but remember how much of the wages of the poor populace has been cunningly diverted from their family support to supply this useless ornamentation. For this object indulgences are sold to the rich, and the poor peons are made to believe their future salvation depends upon their liberal contributions to support empty forms and extravagance. In his "Through the Heart of Mexico," lately published, Rev. J. N. McCarty, D. D., says: "If ever any people on earth were stripped of their clothing and starved to array the priesthood in rich and gaudy apparel, and to furnish them the

fat of the land, these poor Mexicans are the people. Where the churches are the richest and most numerous, as a rule the people are the poorest. Their earnings have gone to the church, leaving them only rags, huts, and the cheapest and coarsest of food."

An ancient stone aqueduct supplies the town with excellent water, but it is distributed to consumers by men who make a regular business of this service, and who form picturesque objects with their large earthen jars strapped across their foreheads, one behind and one in front to balance each other. We are struck with the aspect of barrenness caused by the absence of vegetation. The nature of the soil is such as not to afford sustenance to trees, or even sufficient for the hardy cactus. The grounds are honeycombed in all directions with mines; silver is king.

Mines in Mexico are individual property, and do not, as we have seen stated, belong to the government, unless they are abandoned, when they revert to the state, and are very promptly sold for the benefit of the public treasury. In order to keep good the title, a mine must be absolutely worked during four months of the year. If this rule is in any way evaded, the government confiscates the property and at once offers it for sale, so that those on the lookout for such chances often obtain a good title at a merely nominal price. But there are mines and mines in this country, as in our western districts; some will pay to work and some will not. As a rule it depends as much upon the management of such a property as upon the richness of the native

ore, whether it yields a profitable return for the money invested in the enterprise.

In climbing to the level of the city from the plain below, the railroad sometimes doubles upon itself horseshoe fashion, like a huge serpent gathering its body in coils for a forward spring, winding about the hills and among the mines, affording here and there glimpses of grand and attractive scenery embracing the fertile plains of Fresnillo, and in the blue distance the main range of the Sierra Madre. The color of these distant mountain ranges changes constantly, varying with the morning, noon, and twilight hues, producing effects which one does not weary of quietly watching by the hour together.

Vegetables, charcoal, fruit, and market produce generally are brought into the town from various distances on the backs of the natives. These Indians will tire the best horse in the distance they can cover in the same length of time, while carrying a hundred pounds and more upon their backs. Mules and donkeys are also much in use, but the lower classes of both sexes universally carry heavy burdens upon their backs from early youth. Some of the Indian women are seen bearing loads of pottery or jars of water upon their shoulders with seeming ease, under which an ordinary Irish laborer would stagger. Comparatively few wheeled vehicles are in use, and these are of the rudest character, the wheel being composed of three pieces of timber, so secured together as to form a circle, but having no spokes or tire, very like the ancient African and Egyptian models. To such a vehicle



a couple of oxen are attached by a wooden bar reaching across their frontlets and lashed to the roots of the horns by leather thongs. The skins of animals, such as goats, sheep, and swine, are universally employed for transporting and storing liquids, precisely as in Egypt thousands of years ago. The daily supply of pulque is brought to market on the natives' backs in pig-skins, the four legs protruding from the body in a ludicrous manner when the skin is full of liquid. Everything in and about the city is quaint, though the telephone, electric lights, and street tramways all speak of modern civilization. The insufficient water supply is the cause of much inconvenience, not to say suffering, and partly accounts for the untidy condition of the place and the prevalence of offensive smells. The latter are so disgusting as to be almost unbearable by a stranger. No wonder that typhoid fever and kindred diseases prevail, and that the death rate exceeds, as we were told is the case, that of any other district in the republic.

There is an article of pottery manufactured in this vicinity, of a deep red color, hard-baked and glazed inside and out, having rude but effective ornamentation. Almost every large town in Mexico has one or more pottery manufactories, each district producing ware which is so individualized in the shape and finish as to distinctly mark its origin, so that experts can tell exactly whence each specimen has been brought. The manufacture of pottery is most frequently carried on by individuals, each Indian with his primitive tools turning out work from his mud cabin sometimes fit to grace the choicest and most refined homes.

The accuracy of eye and hand gained by long practice produces marvelous results.

Overlooking the city, on a mountain ridge known as the Büfa, is a quaint and curious church, Los Remedios. From this point one obtains a very comprehensive view of the entire valley and the surrounding rugged hills. One of the most bloody battles of the civil wars was fought on the Büfa in 1871, between a revolutionary force under General Trevino and the Juarez army, which resulted in the defeat of the revolutionists. "Both sides fought with unprecedented frenzy," said a resident to us. "From those steep rocks," he continued, pointing to the abrupt declivities, "absolutely ran streams of blood, while dead bodies rolled down into the gulch below by hundreds." We ventured to ask what this quarrel between, fellow countrymen was about that caused such a loss of life and induced such a display of enthusiastic devotion. "That is a question," he replied, "which the rank and file of either army could not have answered, though of course the leaders had their personal schemes to subserve, – schemes of self-aggrandizement." It was Lamartine who said significantly, "Civil wars leave nothing but tombs."

It is the custom for a stranger to descend one or more of the silver mines; indeed, it may be said to be the one thing to do at Zacatecas, but for which only the most awkward means imaginable are supplied, such as ladders formed of a single long, notched pole, quite possible for an acrobat or performer on the trapeze. It is up and down these hazardous poles that the Indian

miners, in night and day gangs, climb, while carrying heavy canvas bags of ore weighing nearly or quite two hundred pounds each. The writer is free to acknowledge that he did not improve the opportunity to explore the bowels of the earth at Zacatecas, having performed his full share of this sort of thing in other parts of the world.

Zacatecas has its plaza; all Spanish and Mexican towns have one. Probably, in laying out a town, the originators first select this important centre, and then all other avenues, streets, and edifices are made to conform to this location. In the middle of this plaza is a large stone fountain, about which groups of native women are constantly busy dipping water and filling their earthen jars, while hard by other women, squatting on their haunches, offer oranges, pineapples, figs, and bananas for sale. How these Mexican markets swarm with people and glow with color, backed by moss-grown walls and ruined archways! Long burro trains block the roadway, and others are seen winding down the zigzag paths of the overhanging declivities. Close at hand within these low adobe hovels, pulque is being retailed at a penny a tumbler. It is the lager-beer of the country. Poverty, great poverty, stares us in the face. No people could be more miserably housed, living and sleeping as they do upon the bare ground, and owning only the few pitiful rags that hang about their bodies. At the doors of these mud cabins women are seen making tortillas with their rude stone implements. These little flat cakes are bread and meat to them. Now and again one observes forms and faces among the

young native women that an artist would travel far to study; but although some few are thus extremely handsome, the majority are very homely, ill-formed, and negligent of person. The best looking among the peons lose their comeliness after a few years, owing to hard labor, childbirth, and deprivations. Few women retain their good looks after twenty-five years or until they are thirty. Another fact was remarked, that these Indian men and women never laugh. The writer was not able to detect even a smile upon the faces of the lower grade of natives; a ceaseless melancholy seems to surround them at all times, by no means in accordance with the gay colors which they so much affect. In contrast to the hovels of the populace, one sees occasionally a small garden inclosed with a high adobe wall, belonging to some rich mine owner, in which the tall pomegranate, full of scarlet bloom, or a stately pepper tree, dominates a score of others of semi-tropical growth.

One practice was observed at Zacatecas which recalled far-away Hong Kong, China. This was the prosecution of various trades in the open air. Thus the shoemaker was at work outside of his dwelling; the tailor, the barber, and the tinker adopted the same practice, quite possible even in the month of March in a land of such intense brightness and sunshine. We wandered hither and thither, charmed by the novelty and strangeness of everything; not an object to remind one of home, but only of the far East. The swarthy natives with sandaled feet, the high colors worn by the common people, the burnous-like serape, the

sober unemotional manners of the peons, the nut-brown women with brilliant eyes and half-covered faces, the attractive fruits, the sharp cries of the venders, the Egyptian-shaped pottery, – surely this might be Damascus or Cairo.

An excursion by tramway was made to the neighboring town of Guadalupe, six or eight miles away, nearly the entire distance being a sharp down grade, over which the cars pass at top speed by their own gravitation; no animals are attached. So steep is the descent that it may be compared to a Canadian toboggan slide. It requires six mules to draw each car back again, the animals being harnessed three abreast like the horses in the Paris and Neapolitan omnibuses. Though this tramway is now admitted to be an indispensable adjunct to the business of the place, when it was first resolved upon by some of the residents more enterprising than their neighbors, it was considered to be a serious innovation, open to great objections, the local priesthood bitterly opposing it. Even the moneyed mine owners and others who instituted the project had no fixed idea how to operate a tramway of this sort, and an American overseer was from the beginning and is to-day in charge. The cars were ordered from Philadelphia, and while they were building, the steel rails, which came from Liverpool by way of Vera Cruz, were laid down from one end of the route to the other. Finally, when the cars arrived from the United States, it was found that they would not run on the track, the fact being that the rails had been laid on a gauge three inches narrower than the cars were designed for. What

was to be done? The Mexicans at first proposed to rebuild the cars, – make the bodies narrower, and cut off the axle-trees to fit the gauge of the rails. In their hopeless ignorance this was the only way they could see out of the difficulty. The present superintendent, a practical American engineer, was at the time in Zacatecas, and took in the position of affairs at a glance, offering for five hundred dollars to show the owners how to get out of the trouble without changing an article upon the cars. The money was paid, and with twenty men and some suitable tools the American took up a few rods of the track, made a proper gauge for the rest, and had the cars running over the short distance in one day. It was the old story of Columbus and the egg, easy enough when one knew how to do it. The managers of the road promptly put the American in charge, and he has filled the position ever since.

Guadalupe is an interesting town of some six thousand inhabitants, not counting the myriads of dogs, which do much abound in every part of Mexico. As a rule these are miserable, mangy-looking, half-starved creatures, with thin bodies and prominent ribs. The poorer the people, the more dogs they keep, a rule which applies not only here, but everywhere, especially among semi-barbarous races. The people seem to be very kind to pet animals, – though they do abuse the burros, – cats especially being of a plump, handsome species, quite at home, always sleeping lazily in the sunshine. If they do purr in Spanish, it is so very like the genuine English article that its purport is quite unmistakable. The persistency of the beggars here attracted

attention, and on inquiry about the matter, a resident American informed us that these beggars were actually organized by the priests, to whom they report daily, and with whom they share their proceeds, thus enriching the plethoric coffers of the church. This seems almost incredible; but it is true. The decencies of life are often ignored, and the open streets present disgusting scenes. Men and women lie down and sleep wherever fatigue overcomes them, upon the hard stones or in the dirt. The town is generally barren of vegetation, though a few dreary cactus trees manage to sustain themselves in the rocky soil, with here and there a yucca palm.

There is a famous orphan asylum in Guadalupe which is designed to accommodate a thousand inmates at a time, and there is also a well-endowed college. The former of these, the Orfanatorio de Guadalupe, is one of the most important charitable institutions in the republic. The old church of red sandstone, with its somewhat remarkable carvings, as exhibited upon the façade, has two graceful towers and is elaborately finished within. The church contains a half dozen oil paintings by Antonio de Torres, which bear the date 1720. The finest of these is that of "The Last Supper." The very elegant interior of the chapel of the Purisima was not completed until so late as 1886, and is justly considered the finest modern church structure in Mexico. As one passes out into the surrounding squalor and obtrusive poverty, it is impossible not to moralize as to the costly, theatrical, and ostentatious road which seems to lead to

the Roman Catholic heaven.

The little market-place of Guadalupe presents a scene like a country fair, with its booths for the sale of fruits, pottery, vegetables, flowers, bright-hued serapes and rebosas, all combining to form a conglomerate of color which, mingled with the moving figures of the mahogany-hued Indian women, is by no means devoid of picturesqueness. One must step carefully not to tread upon the little mounds and clusters of fruits and vegetables spread upon the ground for sale. The careless, happy laugh of a light-hearted group of señoritas rang musically upon the ear as we watched the market scene. Their uncovered, purple-black hair glistened in the warm sunlight, while their roguish glances, from "soul-deep eyes of darkest night," were like sparks of electricity. Was it their normal mood, or did the presence of a curious stranger, himself on the *qui vive* to see everything, move them to just a bit of coquetry?



# CHAPTER V

A Mexican Watering Place. – Delightful Climate. – Aguas Calientes. – Young Señoritas. – Local City Scenes. – Convicts. – Churches. – A Mummified Monk. – Punishment is Swift and Sure. – Hot Springs. – Bathing in Public. – Caged Songsters. – "Antiquities." – Delicious Fruits. – Market Scenes. – San Luis Potosi. – The Public Buildings. – City of Leon. – A Beautiful Plaza. – Local Manufactories. – Home Industries of Leon. – The City of Silao. – Defective Agriculture. – Objection to Machinery. – Fierce Sand Storm.

Aguas Calientes (hot waters) is the capital of a small state of the same name, and is a very strongly individualized city, containing something less than twenty-five thousand inhabitants. The town is handsomely laid out with great regularity, having a number of fine stone buildings, luxuriant gardens, and beautiful public squares. It is situated seventy-five miles south of Zacatecas, on the trunk line of the Mexican Central Railroad. This route brings us down to the plain through rugged steeps and sharp grades, near to the famous salt and soda lakes, where the Rio Brazos Santiago is crossed. Though we say that Aguas Calientes is on a plain, yet the town is over six thousand feet above sea level, and is well situated for business growth in a fertile region where three main thoroughfares already centre. It

is just three hundred and sixty-four miles northwest of the city of Mexico. The Plaza des Armas, with its fine monumental column and its refreshing fountain, as well as several other public gardens of the city, are worthy of special mention for their striking floral beauty, their display of graceful palms and various other tropical trees. It seemed as though it must be perpetual spring here, and that every tree and bush was in bloom. The Mexican flora cannot be surpassed for depth of rich coloring. Sweet peas, camellias, poppies, and pansies abound, while oleanders grow to the height of elm trees, and are covered with a profusion of scarlet and white flowers. The day was very soft, sunny, and genial, when we wandered over the ancient place; all the treetops lay asleep, and there was scarcely a breath of air stirring. Every sight and every sound had the charm of novelty. Groups of young señoritas strolled leisurely about the town; their classic profiles, large gazelle-like eyes, rosy lips, delicate hands and feet, together with their shapely forms, indicated their mingled Spanish and Indian origin. The many sonorous bells of the churches kept up a continuous peal at special morning and evening hours. In spite of the half-incongruous notes of these different metallic voices floating together on the atmosphere, there was a sense of harmony in the aggregate of sound, which recalled the more musical chimes one hears on the shores of the Mediterranean. Mexican churches are not supplied with chimes, though each steeple has at least a half dozen, and often as many as a score, of costly bells.

Here and there the town shows unmistakable tokens of age, which is but reasonable, as it was founded in 1520. The variety of colors used upon the façades of the low adobe houses produces a pleasing effect. The love of the Aztec race for warm, bright colors is seen everywhere. The Garden of San Marcos, one of many open public squares, forms a wilderness of foliage and flowers, where the oleanders are thirty feet in height, shading lilies, roses, and pansies, with a low-growing species of mignonette as fragrant as violets, our admiration for which was shared by a score of glittering humming-birds. Here too the jasmine, with its tiny variegated flowers, flourished by the side of hydrangeas full of snow-flake bloom, while orange blossoms made the air heavy with their odorous breath. Close to this garden is the bull ring, opposite to which gangs of convicts are seen sweeping the streets under the supervision of a military guard. Though these men are unchained, they make no attempt to escape, as the guards under such circumstances have a habit of promptly shooting a prisoner dead upon the spot; no one takes the trouble to inquire into the summary proceeding, and it would do no good if he did. There is no sickly sentimentality expended upon highwaymen, garroters, or murderers in Mexico. If a man commits a crime, he is made to pay the penalty for it, no matter what his position may be. There is no pardoning out of prison here, so that the criminal may have a second chance to outrage the rights of the community. If a trusted individual steals the property of widows and orphans and runs away, he must stay away, for if he comes

back he will surely be shot. All things considered, we believe this certainty of punishment is the restraining force with many men of weak principles. Since the order to shoot all highwaymen as soon as taken was promulgated, brigandage has almost entirely disappeared in Mexico, though up to that time it was of daily occurrence in some parts of the country.

There are several churches in Aguas Calientes which are well worth visiting, some of which contain fine old paintings, though they are mostly hung in a very poor light. There is an unmistakable atmosphere of antiquity within these walls, "mellowed by scutcheoned panes in cloisters old." The church facing the Plaza Mayor has a remarkable bell, celebrated for its fine tones; and when this sounded for vespers, Millet's Angelus was instantly recalled, the poor peons, no matter how engaged, piously uncovering their heads and bowing with folded hands while their lips moved in prayer. We were told of the great cost of this bell, which is said to contain half a ton of silver; but this is doubtless an exaggerated story framed to tickle a stranger's ear, since if over a certain moderate percentage of silver is employed in the casting, the true melody of the bell is destroyed. A queer object is shown the visitor for a trifling fee, in the crypt of the church of San Diego, being the remains of a mummified or desiccated monk, sitting among a mass of skulls, rib and thigh bones, once belonging to human beings. The moral of this exhibition seemed a little too far-fetched to be interesting, and our small party hastened away with a sense of disgust.

The hot springs from which the state and city take their name are situated a couple of miles east of the town, at the end of a delightful alameda. A small canal borders this roadway, which is liberally supplied with water from the thermal springs, and scores of the populace may be seen washing clothing on its edge at nearly any hour of the day, as well as bathing therein, men and women together, with a decided heedlessness of the conventionalities. The Maoris of New Zealand could not show more utter disregard for a state of nudity than was exhibited by one group of natives whom we saw. The admirable climate, the hot springs, the beautiful gardens, vineyards, and abundant fruits, render this place thoroughly attractive, notwithstanding that so large a portion consists of adobe houses of only one story in height. These are often made inviting by their neat surroundings and by being frescoed in bright colors inside and out. One or two native birds in gayest colors usually hang beside the open doors, in a home-made cage of dried rushes, singing as gayly as those confined in more costly and gilded prisons. Just opposite the public baths was one of these domesticated pets of the mocking-bird species, who was remarkably accomplished. He was never silent, but was constantly and successfully struggling to imitate every peculiar sound which he heard. He broke down, however, ignominiously in his attempts with the tramway fish-horns. They were too much for him. This bird was of soft ash color, with a long, graceful set of tail-feathers, and kept himself in most presentable order, notwithstanding his narrow quarters

in a home-made cage. It was in vain that we tried to purchase the creature. Either the Indian woman had not the right to sell him, or she prized the bird too highly to part with him at any price. As we came away from the low adobe cabin, the bird was mewling in imitation of another domestic pet which belonged to the same woman.

Comparatively few humble dwellings have glass in the windows, but nearly all have these openings barred with iron in more or less ornamental styles. There are a few central situations where two-story houses prevail. Besides the churches, there are the governor's palace, the casa municipal, and the stores and dwelling-houses which surround the Plaza Mayor, the latter having open arcades, or *portales*, beneath the first story. People come from various parts of Mexico to enjoy the baths of Aguas Calientes, and one sees many strangers about the town. The place has, in fact, been the resort of people from various sections of the country from time immemorial, on account of the presumed advantages to be derived from the hot springs. Mineral waters, hot and cold, abound on the table-land of Mexico.

It is said that by digging almost anywhere in this neighborhood, one can exhume pottery and other articles concerning whose manufacture there is a profound mystery, the shapes and style of finish being quite different from what is now produced. These articles are reputed to antedate the Toltec period, though the natives, finding that the antique shapes are most popular with European and American tourists, imitate them

very closely. When "antiquities" are offered to one in a foreign country, he should be very wary in purchasing, as the artificial manufacture of them is fully up to the demand. The writer once saw an article sold at Cairo as an antique for ten pounds sterling which was afterwards proved, by an unmistakable mark, to have been made in Birmingham, England. So Aztec and Toltec remains are produced to any extent in the city of Mexico; and the enterprising English manufacturer, we were told, has even invaded Yucatan with his "antique" wares.

Fruit is abundant, cheap, and delicious in the market-place of Aguas Calientes. Fifty oranges were offered to us for a quarter of a dollar, or two for a penny. Sunday is the principal market-day, when the country people for miles around bring in fruit, vegetables, flowers, pottery, and home-woven articles for sale. Men and women, sitting on the ground, patiently wait for hours to make trifling sales, the profit on which cannot exceed a few pennies, and often the poor creatures sell little or nothing. The principal market is a permanent building, occupying a whole block, or square. The area about which it is built is open in the centre; that is, without covering. Here a motley group displayed baskets, fruits, flowers, candies, pulque, boots, shoes, and sandals. White onions mingled with red tomatoes and pineapples formed the apex to a pyramid of oranges, bananas, lemons, pomegranates, all arranged so as to present attractive colors and forms, being often decked with flowers. Green sugar-cane, cut in available lengths, was rapidly consumed by

young Mexico, and gay young girls indulged in dulces (sweets). Hundreds of patient donkeys, without harness of any sort, or even a rope about their necks, stood demurely awaiting their hour of service. Beggars are plenty, but few persons were seen really intoxicated, notwithstanding that pulque is cheap and muscal very potent. Red, blue, brown, and striped rebosas flitted before the eyes, worn by the restless crowd, while occasionally one saw a lady of the upper class, attended by her maid in gaudy colors, herself clad in the dark, conventional Spanish style, her black hair, covered with a lace veil of the same hue, held in place by a square-topped shell comb.

The public bathhouse, near the railroad depot, is remarkable for spaciousness and for the excellence of the general arrangements. It is built of a conglomerate of cobble-stones, bricks, and mortar, and might be a bit out of the environs of Rome. In the central open area of these baths is a choice garden full of blooming flowers and tropical trees. Oleanders, fleurs-de-lis, flowering geraniums, peach blossoms, scarlet poppies mingling with white, beside beds of pansies and violets, delighted the eye and filled the air with perfume. The surroundings and conveniences were more Oriental than Mexican, inviting the stranger to bathe by the extraordinary facilities offered to him, and captivating the senses by beauty and fragrance. There is a spacious swimming-bath within the walls, beside the single bathrooms, in both of which the water is kept at a delightful temperature. The luxury of these baths, after a long, dusty ride



over Mexican roads, can hardly be imagined by those who have not enjoyed it. In the vicinity of the Plaza Mayor, ice-cream was hawked and sold by itinerant venders. We were told of a mysterious method of producing ice, which is employed here during the night, by means of putting water in the hollowed stalk of the maguey or agave plant, but we do not clearly understand the process. The volatile oil of the century plant is said to evaporate so rapidly as to freeze the water deposited in it. At any rate, the natives have some process by which they produce ice in this tropical clime; but whether it is by aid of the maguey plant, from which comes the pulque, or by some other means, we cannot say authoritatively. In the cities and on the Texan border, ice is largely manufactured by chemical process aided by machinery, a means of supply well known in all countries where natural ice is not formed by continued low temperature.

San Luis Potosi is situated about one hundred miles to the eastward of Aguas Calientes, on the branch road connecting the main trunk of the Mexican Central with Tampico on the Gulf. It is the capital of the State of San Luis Potosi, and has, according to estimate, over forty thousand inhabitants. The city contains many fine buildings, the most notable among them being the state capitol, the business exchange, the state museum, the mint, and the public library. This last-named contains between seventy and eighty thousand volumes. There is here a larger proportion of two-story buildings than is seen in either Saltillo or Monterey. There are also a college, a hospital, and a theatre. It has several

plazas and many churches. The cathedral is quite modern, having been erected within the last forty years; it faces the Plaza Mayor, where there is a bronze statue of the patriot Hidalgo. We are here fully six thousand feet above the sea level, in a wholesome locality, which, it is claimed, possesses the most equable climate in Mexico, the temperature never reaching freezing-point, and rarely being uncomfortably warm. There are several fine old churches in San Luis Potosi, containing some admirable oil paintings by Vallejo, Tresguerras, and others of less fame. The city is three hundred and sixty miles north of the national capital, and is destined, with the opening of the railroad to Tampico, which has so recently taken place, to grow rapidly. Its tramway, or horse-car, service is particularly well managed, and facilitates all sorts of transportation in and about the city. In the Sierra near at hand are the famous silver mines known as Cerro del Potosi, which are so rich in the deposit of argentiferous ore that it is named after the mines of Potosi in Peru. There are valuable salt mines existing in this State of San Luis Potosi, at Peñon Blanco. The city has always been noted as a military centre, and a large number of the regular army are stationed here. When Santa Anna returned from exile, at the beginning of the war with this country, in 1846, it was here that he concentrated his forces. When defeated by General Taylor at Buena Vista, he marched back to San Luis Potosi with the remnant of his thoroughly demoralized army, where he again established his headquarters. On the Sabbath, as in other Mexican cities, the grand market of

the week takes place, when cock-fighting, marketing, praying, and bull-fighting are strangely mixed.

About a hundred miles south of Aguas Calientes we reach the important manufacturing city of Leon, State of Guanajuato, a thrifty, enterprising capital, containing over ninety thousand inhabitants. It is considered the third largest and most important city of the republic. We have now come eight hundred and thirty miles since leaving the International Bridge, by which we entered Mexican territory at Pedras Negras, and find ourselves in the midst of a fertile, well-watered plain, intersected by the small river Turbio, two hundred and sixty miles northwest of the city of Mexico. Rich grazing fields are spread broadcast, many of which exhibit the deep, beautiful green of the alfalfa, or Mexican clover, which is fed in a fresh-cut condition to favored cattle, but not to burros, poor creatures! They feed themselves on what they can pick up by the roadside, on the refuse vegetables thrown away in the city markets, on straw; in short, on almost anything. There is a theory that they will live on empty fruit tins, broken glass bottles, and sardine boxes; but we are not prepared to indorse that. The fields and small domestic gardens hereabouts are often hedged by tall, pole-like cacti of the species called the organ cactus, from its peculiar resemblance to the pipes of an organ. This forms a prevailing picture in the wild landscape of southern Mexico. Leon is nearly six thousand feet above the sea.

As the railroad depot is a mile from the city proper, – a characteristic of transportation facilities which applies to all

Mexican capitals, – we reach the plaza of Leon by tramway. The place has all the usual belongings of a Spanish town, though it contains no buildings of special interest. The plaza, the market-place, and the cathedral are each worthy of note. The first-named has a large, refreshing fountain in its centre, whose music cheers the senses when oppressed by tropical heat. The plaza is also shaded by thick clusters of ornamental trees. There was a grand annual fair held here before the days of railroads in Mexico, which was an occasion attracting people from all the commercial centres of the country. While talking to a local merchant he said to us: "Certain circumscribed interests were at first unfavorably affected by the establishment of the railroad, and people grumbled accordingly; but we have come to see that after all it is for the universal good to have this prompt means of transportation. It was the same," he continued, "as regards the tramway; but we could not do without that convenience now."

On one side of the plaza is the governor's palace, a long, plain, two-story building of composite material, – stone, sun-dried bricks, and mortar, colored white. On the other three sides is a line of two-story buildings, beneath which is a continuous block of *portales*, or arches, crowded with shops and booths; the first story of these houses being thus devoted to trade, the second to dwellings. The general effect of this large business square, with the deep greenery of the plaza in the centre, is extremely attractive. Strolling about it in the intense sunshine are many beggars and grandees; women in bright-colored rebosas;

others in rags which do not half cover their nakedness; fair señoritas with tall, red-heeled boots pointed at the toes, and poor girls with bare limbs and feet; cripples and athletes; beauty and deformity; plethoric priests and cadaverous peons. Now a horseman in theatrical costume, sword and pistol by his side, and huge silver spurs on his heels, seated on a small but beautifully formed Andalusian horse, passes swiftly by, and now a score of charcoal-laden donkeys, driven by an Indian larger than the animal he bestrides. All the men who can afford it wear broad-brimmed sombreros richly ornamented with gold and silver braid; the poorest, though otherwise but half clad, and with bare limbs, have a substitute for the sombrero in straw or some cheap material. The broader the brim and the taller the crown, the more they are admired. It is a busy, ever-shifting scene presented by the Plaza Mayor of Leon, such as one may look upon only south of the Rio Grande.

The paseo is a remarkably fine, tree-embowered avenue, a sort of miniature Champs Elysées, flanked by well-cultivated fields and gardens, forming the beginning of the road which leads to Silao. Besides the Plaza Mayor and the paseo, there are a dozen minor plazas (plazuelas) in Leon, all more or less attractive. On the road leading to Lagos, not far from the city, there are hot mineral springs much esteemed and much used for bathing. One can go anywhere in and about Leon by tramway as easily as in Boston or New York. The specialty of the city is its various manufactories of leather goods, but particularly saddles, boots,

and shoes, together with leather sandals, such as are worn by the common people who do not go barefooted, – though the fact is nine tenths of them do go barefooted. Another special product of Leon is blue and striped rebosas, so universally worn by the women of the humbler class.

It is a peculiarity in Mexico that a certain branch of manufacture is confined in a great measure to one place, other business localities respecting this partial monopoly by devoting themselves to other productions. Thus the industry of Leon is developed in tanning leather, and the making of boots, shoes, saddlery, and rebosas; Salamanca is noted for its buckskin garments and gloves; Irapuato is devoted to raising strawberries, and supplies half the republic with this delicious fruit; Queretaro is famous for the opals it ships from its unique mines; Lerdo enriches itself by the cotton which it sends to market; Celaya, in the valley of the Laja, is known all over Mexico for the production of fine dulces (sweets, or confectionery) made from milk and sugar; from Puebla come the elegant and profitable onyx ornaments so much prized at home and abroad; Aguas Calientes is famous as an agricultural centre, supplying the markets of the country with corn and beans; from Orizaba and Cordova come coffee, sugar, and delicious tropical fruits; Chihuahua raises horses and cattle for the home market and for exportation; Guadalajara is unrivaled for the production of pottery and crockery ware, Zacatecas and Guanajuato for the mining of silver; and so the list might be extended, showing the

native resources of the country and the concentration of special industries.

Many of the dwellings – most of them, indeed – are but one story in height, in the city proper, though often constructed of stone; but in the suburbs they are altogether of one story and built of adobe. Some of the hedges are both striking and effective, consisting of the prickly-pear cactus, which presents an impenetrable barrier to man or beast. The natives prepare a dish of green salad from the tender leaves of the cactus, as we do from dandelions and lettuce, which satisfies a certain appetite, and no doubt contains considerable nourishment. There are several quite ancient churches, a cathedral, and two theatres in Leon. Of the latter, that which attracted us most might have passed for a floral conservatory. It was a stone edifice, with a broad vestibule full of flowers, having a fountain in the centre and a dome covered with glass. The cathedral, under the ascribed patronage of "Our Lady of Light," makes up for its shortcomings in the architecture of its lower portions by a fine dome and two lofty towers, these last of quite modern construction, having been completed so late as 1878. The oldest church in the city is La Soledad, which dates back three hundred and fifty years. Two others, San Juan de Dios and San Felipe Neri, are of more than passing interest to the traveler.

It was observed, in nearly all the dwellings which were entered, that the women as well as the men were engaged with hand-looms, weaving rebosas or serapes. In many instances

children were thus employed, of such tender age that it was surprising to see the excellence of the work which they produced. These humble interiors present notable pictures of respectability, industry, and thrift. In the market-place, flowers, mostly beautiful roses of white and red varieties, were sold by the score for a five-cent piece, and lovely bouquets, containing artistic combinations of color and great variety of species, were offered for ten cents each. The plains in the environs of Leon are beautified by some magnificent groves of trees, and exhibit great fertility of soil.

After passing through miles of dreary territory which produced little save an abnormal growth of cacti of several species, exhibiting great variety in shape and the color of its blossoms, which were sometimes white, but oftener red or yellow, twenty miles southeast of Leon and two hundred and thirty-eight north of the national capital, we reach the small city of Silao, in the State of Guanajuato, which has a population of about fifteen thousand. This is an agricultural district, six thousand feet above the level of the sea, where irrigation is absolutely necessary, and where it is freely applied, but by hand power, the water being raised from the ditches by means of buckets. Under this treatment the soil is so fertile as to yield two crops of wheat and maize annually, besides an abundance of other staples. The eyes of the traveler are delighted, on approaching Silao, by the view of far-reaching fields of waving grain, giving full promise of a rich harvest near at hand. We



were told that these fields were flooded twice during the growing of a crop: first, early in January, when the young plants are two or three inches high, and again soon after the first of March, just before the ear is about to develop itself. Sometimes, as is done in Egypt, the fields are inundated before sowing. Some of the richest soil for wheat-growing in all Mexico lies between San Juan del Rio and Leon. The idea of a rotation of crops, the advantages of which the intelligent American farmer so well understands, does not seem yet to have dawned upon the Mexican cultivator of the soil. He goes on year after year extracting the same chemicals from the earth, without using fertilizers at all, and planting the same seed in the same fields. By no happy accident does he substitute corn for oats, or wheat for either. He never thinks of giving his grain field a breathing spell by planting it with potatoes or any other root crop, and substituting a different style of cultivation. In and about the town are some large and admirably managed gardens of fruits and flowers. One was hardly prepared, before coming hither, to accord to the Spanish character so much of appreciation and such delicacy of taste as are revealed through the almost universal cultivation of flowers in Mexico, wherever circumstances will admit of it. Silao is just fifteen miles from Guanajuato, the capital of the state, with which it is connected by railway.

The rainfall is comparatively very slight on the entire Mexican plateau, limited, in fact, to two or three months in the year, which renders irrigation a universal necessity to insure success

in farming; but the means employed for the purpose, as we have seen, are singularly primitive. The same objection that limited intelligence evinces everywhere to the introduction of labor-saving machinery is exhibited here in Mexico. When the author was at the Lakes of Killarney, a few years since, and saw the hotel employees cutting grass upon the broad lawn with a sickle or reaping-hook, he suggested to the landlord that an American lawn-mower should be used, whereby one man could do the job quicker and in better shape than twenty men could do by this primitive mode. "If I were to introduce an American lawn-mower on to this place," said the landlord, "the laborers would burn my house down at once!" So when the air-brakes were introduced on the National Railroad in Mexico, thus not only adding unquestionably to the safety of the cars, but decreasing the necessity for so many train hands, the laborers cut and destroyed the brakes. Through persistent determination on the part of the officers of the road, the air-brake is now in use by the Mexican Central corporation, from the Rio Grande to the capital; but the National line between the capital and Vera Cruz is not able to make use of this greater safeguard and economical air-brake, because a lot of stupid, ignorant brakemen object!

Silao is of little commercial importance, but it has the overabundance of churches always to be found in Spanish towns of its size, none of which, in this instance, are any way remarkable. But the place is picturesque and interesting; one would not like to have missed it. The church of Santiago has a tall, graceful,

and slender spire, sure to attract an observant eye, recalling the pinnacle of St. Peter and St. Paul in the capital of Russia. We have said Silao is of little commercial importance, but there are six or eight flour-mills, which seem to be the nucleus about which the principal business interests centre. The place was founded more than three centuries ago, and impresses one with an atmosphere of crumbling antiquity which somehow is pretty sure to challenge respect. "Time consecrates," says Schiller, "and what is gray with age becomes religion."

Seeing a number of Indian men and women relieving themselves from heavy burdens brought into the market, we were surprised to note the weight which these trained natives could carry. On inquiry it was found that some of them had come over mountainous roads a distance of twenty miles and more, each bearing upon his or her back a weight in produce of various sorts which must have been near to a hundred and fifty pounds. As profit on all their chickens, eggs, vegetables, pottery, and fruit, they could hardly average more than a dollar to each individual. How simple and circumscribed must be the necessities of a people who can sustain themselves upon such earnings! When on the road, these Indians have a peculiarly rapid gait, a sort of dog-trot, so to speak, which they will keep up for hours at a time while carrying their heavy burdens. Though they all speak Spanish, yet each tribe or section of country seems to have a dialect of its own, which is used exclusively among its people. Scientists tell us that the various languages and dialects spoken by the Indian

race of Mexico in the several parts of the republic number over one hundred; there are sixty which are known to have become extinct.

In contradistinction to the theories of many careful observers, scientists have pointed to the fact that in all of these native tongues not one word can be found which gives indication of Asiatic origin.

While at Silao a Mexican sand-spout, a visitant which is very liable to appear on the open plains during the dry season, struck in our immediate vicinity, followed by a fierce dust-storm, which lasted for about an hour, darkening the atmosphere to a night-hue for miles around, and covering every exposed article or person with a thick layer of fine sand. It was necessary promptly to close all doors and windows. Indeed, a person could more easily face a furious hail-storm, than one of these dry gales; men and animals alike sought shelter from its blinding fierceness. So men, horses, and camels, composing the caravans which cross the desert of Sahara, when struck by a sand-storm, are obliged to throw themselves flat upon the ground, and there remain until it has exhausted its fury. The condition of the soil at Silao may be easily imagined when it is remembered that rain had not fallen here for seven months. It was late in March, but the rainy season does not begin until about the last of May. In this region people do not speak of summer and winter, but of the dry and the rainy seasons, the former being reckoned from November to May, and the latter from June to October. It should not be

understood that it rains constantly in the wet season. The rain falls generally in pleasant showers, afternoons and nights, leaving the mornings and forenoons bright, clear, and comfortable. It is really the pleasantest season of the year on the Mexican plateau.

## CHAPTER VI

Guanajuato. – An Ex-President. – Richest Silver Mine in Mexico. – Reducing the Ores. – Plenty of Silver. – Open Sewers. – A Venal Priesthood. – A Big Prison. – The Catholic Church. – Getting Rid of a Prisoner. – The Frog-Rock. – Idolaters. – A Strawberry Festival at Irapuato. – Salamanca. – City of Queretaro. – A Fine Old Capital. – Maximilian and His Fate. – A Charming Plaza. – Mammoth Cotton Factory. – The Maguey Plant. – Pulque and Other Stimulants. – Beautiful Opals. – Honey Water. – Ancient Tula. – A Freak of Tropical Weather.

The quaint old city of Guanajuato, capital of the state bearing the same name, – pronounced Wan-a-wato, – is situated nearly a thousand feet higher than Silao, two hundred and fifty miles north of the city of Mexico, and fifteen miles from the main trunk of the Mexican Central Railroad, with which it is connected by a branch road. It contains between fifty and sixty thousand inhabitants, and has been a successful mining centre for over three hundred years. Manuel Gonzales, ex-president of Mexico, is the governor of the state. This man was the Tweed of Mexico, and one of the most venal officials ever trusted by the people. He succeeded, on retiring from the presidency, in taking with him of his ill-gotten wealth several millions of dollars. The astonishing corruption that reigned under his fostering care

was notorious. In enriching himself and his ring of adherents, he brought the treasury of the country to the very verge of bankruptcy. It may be mentioned that this State of Guanajuato is the most densely populated in the Mexican republic. It has an area of a trifle over twelve thousand square miles, or it is about the size of Massachusetts and Connecticut united. The town is reached through the suburb of Marfil, along the precipitous sides of whose mountain road large adobe and stone mills are constructed, resembling feudal castles; while beside the roadbed, broken by sharp acclivities, the small, muddy, vile-smelling river Guanajuato flows sluggishly along, bearing silver tailings away from the mills above, and wasting at least twenty-five per cent, of the precious metal contained in the badly manipulated ore. Here and there in the river's bed – the stream being low – scores of natives were seen washing the earth which had been deposited from the mines, working knee-deep in the mud, and striving to make at least day wages, which is here represented by forty cents. Others were producing sun-dried brick out of the clayey substance, after it had been reworked by the independent miners. This river becomes a torrent in the rainy season, and owing to its situation the town is liable to dangerous inundations, one of which occurred so late as 1885, causing great loss of life and property. Creeping slowly upward over the rough road, an abrupt corner of the gulch was finally turned, and we suddenly found ourself in the centre of the active little city, so compactly built that business seemed to be overflowing its proper

limits and utterly blocking the narrow streets. The provision and fruit market was trespassing on every available passageway. Curbstone and sidewalk were unhesitatingly monopolized by the market people with their wares spread out for sale. In Guanajuato is found the richest vein of silver-bearing ore in the country, known as the *Veta Madre*, and though the most primitive modes of mining and milling have always been and still are pursued here, over eight hundred million dollars in the argentiferous metal have been realized from this immediate vicinity since official record has been kept of the amount; and with all this Mexico is still poor!

The ore has now to be raised from a depth of fifteen hundred feet and more. There are between fifty and sixty crushing mills in operation at this writing, reducing the silver-bearing quartz. Two of the mills are operated by Europeans, who use steam power to some extent, but the scarcity of fuel is a serious objection to the employment of steam. We saw scores of mules treading the liquid, muddy mass for amalgamating purposes, driven about in a circle by men who waded knee-deep while following the weary animals. As these huge vats contain quicksilver, vitriol, and other poisonous ingredients, the lives of men and animals thus occupied are of brief duration. The mules live about four years, and the men rarely twice as long if they continue in the business. This result is well known to be inevitable, and yet there are plenty of men who eagerly seek the employment.

Without going into detail we may describe the process of



obtaining the silver from the rocky mass in a few words. The ore is first crushed, and by adding water is made into a thin paste. Many tons of this are placed in a huge vat, at least a hundred feet square, and into it are thrown, in certain quantities, sulphate of copper, common salt, and quicksilver. Driving the animals through this mass, ten hours a day for three or four days, causes the various ingredients to become thoroughly mingled. The quicksilver finally gets hold of and concentrates the coveted metal. The quicksilver is afterwards extracted and reserved for continued use, performing the same function over and over again. There is, of course, a large percentage of quicksilver lost in the operation, and its employment in such quantities forms one of the heavy expenses of milling.

The mills are semi-fortresses, having often been compelled to resist the attacks of banditti, who have ever been ready to organize a descent upon any place where portable treasure is accumulated. We were told, on good authority, that every ton of raw material handled here yields on an average thirty-three dollars. This figure our informant qualified by the remark that it was the average under ordinary circumstances. Sometimes the miners strike what is called a bonanza, and for a while ore is raised from the bowels of the earth which will produce five times this amount to the ton; but after a short time the yield will return to its normal condition. Occasionally, but this is rare, nuggets of pure or nearly pure silver are found weighing from fifteen to twenty pounds each. The process of milling here is

slow, tedious, and wasteful. The scientific knowledge brought to bear upon the business in the United States is not heeded in Mexico, and yet these people obtain remarkably favorable results. The fact is, the precious metal is so very abundant, and the profits so satisfactory, that the managers and owners grow careless, having little incentive to spur them on to adopt more economical and productive methods. An intelligent overseer of a mine at Guanajuato said to us in reply to a question relating to the usual process of milling in Mexico: "We get probably sixty per cent. of the silver contained in the raw ore which we handle, and that is about all we can expect." On being asked if the men whom we saw working in the open bed of the river, far below the mills, did not obtain good results, the superintendent replied, "They succeed best in getting part of the quicksilver which has been carried away in the process, which they sell to us again." These men, we observed, worked mostly with shovels and earthen pans, or with their hands and a flat, shingle-like piece of wood.

Guanajuato is built on the sides of a deep, broad gorge, surrounded by rolling hills, the ravine, the mouth of which commences at Marfil, being terraced on either side to make room for adobe dwellings. Here and there a patch of green is to be seen, a graceful pepper tree, an orange, or stately cypress relieving the cheerless, arid scene. The narrow, irregular streets are roughly paved; but the clouds of dust which one encounters in the dry season are almost suffocating. Now and then a few potted flowers in front of a low cabin, a bird cage with its chirping occupant, a

noisy parrot on an exposed perch, a dozing cat before the door, all afford glimpses of domesticity; but, on the whole, this mining town, rich in native silver, gave us in its humbler portions the impression of being mostly composed of people half clothed and seemingly but half fed.

The city has an alameda and a plaza. The latter, in the centre of the town, is decorated with bright-colored flowers, tall palm trees, and has a music pagoda in its centre. This plaza has an elevation of over six thousand eight hundred feet above the level of the sea. What a queer old city it is, with its steep, narrow, twisted streets! It might be a bit abstracted from Moorish Tangier, or from the narrow thoroughfares of Granada, close by the banks of the turbulent Darro.

The occupation of three fourths of the people is naturally connected with the mines, and it may be said to be an industrious community. The pulque shops are many, far too many; but there was no intoxication noticed on the streets. The open sewers render the death rate unusually high in Guanajuato, where typhoid fever and pneumonia were particularly prevalent during our visit. Indeed, the place is notoriously unhealthy. There are many excellent oil paintings hung in the churches and chapels, representing, of course, scriptural subjects, including one of the much-abused St. Sebastian. There are two or three primary and advanced schools supported by the municipality; but these, we were told, were bitterly opposed by the priests. We speak often and earnestly concerning the malign influence of the priesthood,

because no one can travel in Mexico without having the fact constantly forced upon him, at every turn, that its members and their church are, and have been for nearly four centuries, the visible curse of the country. The most interesting of the many churches is the *Compañía*, which has a choice group of bells in its cupola, and an unusually excellent collection of paintings, among them a series illustrating the life of the Virgin, by an unknown artist, besides two fine canvases by Cabrera. But one grows fastidious in visiting so many of these churches as he approaches the capital, and becomes satisfied with examining the cathedral in each new city. The whole country is strewn with these costly and comparatively useless temples, many of which are gradually crumbling to dust, and nearly all of which are dirty beyond description. Immediately after the Spanish conquest a rage possessed the victors to build churches, without regard to the necessary population for their support, perhaps hoping thereby to propitiate heaven for their rapaciousness and outrageous oppression of the native race. The criminal extortion exercised by the priesthood and their followers forms a dark blot upon the escutcheon of both the church and the state. O Christianity, as Madame Roland said of Liberty, "what atrocities have been committed in thy name!"

Charles Lemprière, D. C. L., an able writer upon Mexico, says: "The Mexican church, as a church, fills no mission of virtue, no mission of morality, no mission of mercy, no mission of charity. Virtue cannot exist in its pestiferous atmosphere. The

cause of morality does not come within its practice. It knows no mercy, and no emotion of charity ever nerves the stony heart of the priesthood, which, with an avarice that knows no limit, filches the last penny from the diseased and dying beggar, plunders the widow and orphans of their substance as well as their virtue, and casts such a horoscope of horrors around the deathbed of the dying millionaire, that the poor, superstitious wretch is glad to purchase a chance for the safety of his soul in making the church the heir of his treasures."

Many of the better class of houses in the upper portion of Guanajuato, some of which are extremely attractive, are built from a peculiar sandstone quarried in the neighborhood, which is of many colors, giving the fronts an odd, but not unpleasant appearance. The balconies of these dwellings are rendered lovely by a great variety of creeping vines and flowers in blossom. Among these the honeysuckle prevailed, often shading pleasant family groups, and forming tableaux in strong contrast with the more humble and populous portions of the town. In this part of the city, where the gorge widens, a large reservoir has been constructed which gets its supply of water from the mountain streams, and affords the necessary article in the dry season. Along either side of these reservoirs, for there is a succession of them, are situated the pleasantest residences. These are so charmingly adapted to the locality, and depart so far from the conventional Mexican style, as to cause one to think some American or English architect had been exercising his skill and

taste in the neighborhood. They recalled some of the lovely villas one sees near Sorrento and along the shores of the Bay of Amalfi, in southern Italy.

The spacious and ancient structure known as the Alhondiga de Granaditas, situated on elevated ground, dominates the whole city. It was erected a century and more ago, and designed for a commercial exchange, but it has since been greatly altered, and served as a fortification in the civil wars. It is to-day occupied for the purposes of a prison, where convicts are judiciously taught various mechanical trades. The view from the summit of this rude old building takes in the town, the long, narrow gulch, the gray and rugged hills which reach upward towards the deep blue sky, dotted here and there by the yellow dome of some ancient church, and an occasional cypress or graceful palm striving to redeem the surrounding barrenness. In the prison yard, where the convicts seem to be permitted to roam at their own pleasure, hens, chickens, and turkeys were seen dodging in and out among the feet of the prisoners, with whom they were apparently on the best of terms.

One could not but think that a large number of these prisoners were probably better off as to creature comforts than when at liberty and following their own behests. They eat, sleep, and work together at light occupations, and no attempt is made to keep them from communicating with each other. They have good air, light, and better food on the average than they have been accustomed to when providing for themselves, and they are

allowed to keep a part of their own earnings. They are permitted good bathing facilities, and to play checkers or any other small games during their off hours, as they term the portions of the day in which discipline requires no regular service of them. We became interested in the case of an intelligent American who was held as a prisoner here. He had been confined for nearly two years without a trial, for which he was earnestly begging. The charge against him was that he had been connected with some Mexicans in the robbery of a railroad train, but of which he declared himself entirely innocent. Whether innocent or guilty, he was entitled to a fair trial. Our party took the matter in hand, supplied the man with proper pecuniary means, interested our local consul in his behalf, and brought the matter to the attention of the American minister to Mexico, finally obtaining assurance that justice should be obtained for the prisoner.

Though these places of confinement are conducted with apparent looseness, still the escape of an inmate rarely takes place unless it is connived at by the officials. The bullet is very swift in Mexico, as already instanced, and a man who attempts to escape from legal restraint is instantly shot without the least hesitation on the part of the guard, no matter for what he may be confined, even though held only for a witness. In well-authenticated cases, where it was considered desirable to get rid of an inmate without the form of a trial, which perhaps might compromise some favored individual, opportunity was afforded the prisoner to escape; the temptation was too strong, he could

not resist it; but scarcely had he broken the bounds before the fatal lead laid him low in death. The place was pointed out to us on these prison walls where the head of the Indian patriot Hidalgo was exposed upon a spear point by the Spanish governor of the place, until it crumbled to dust by the action of the elements.

Quite a pretentious theatre of stone is in course of erection just opposite the little Plaza de Mejia Mora. The dozen large stone pillars of the façade were already in place, and there are other evidences that when finished it will be a spacious and elegant structure. We say when finished, but that will not be this year, or next, probably; building, like everything else in this country, is slow of progress. The significant Spanish word *mañana* is on everybody's lips, and expresses a ruling principle, nothing being done to-day which can possibly be put off until to-morrow.

The somewhat singular name of the city is from *guanashuato*, an Indian word in the Tarrascan tongue, which signifies "hill of the frogs," a name given to the place by the aborigines because of a huge rocky mound which resembles a frog, and forms a prominent object in the immediate environs. With their idolatrous instinct the early natives made this peculiar rock an object of worship, and, it is said, offered human sacrifices at its base. No doubt these tribes were sincere, and positive in proportion to their ignorance, – the idol is but the type of the worshiper's intelligence. In visiting the Temple of Hanan, at Canton, we find to-day, a number of "sacred" hogs wallowing in dirt. The Parsee still worships fire; the uneducated



Japanese bows before snakes and foxes; the Hindoo deifies cows and monkeys. Why should we wonder, then, that the Toltecs worshiped idols a thousand years ago?

While looking upon the strange stone images, large and small, in the museum of the national capital, which the ancient people who possessed this land erected and worshiped, one cannot avoid forming a very low estimate of such a race. Their deities were not only hideous, but were made in the crudest possible manner, without one correct line of anatomy or physiognomy, and represented utterly impossible beings in equally impossible attitudes. They are, however, of growing interest, and invaluable as mementoes of a vanished race.

After returning to Silao, we resume our journey southward on the main line of the Mexican Central Railroad, crossing the State of Guanajuato through a fertile and well-cultivated region, in strong contrast to much of the country left behind. At Irapuato, an unimportant, dingy, dilapidated little town, nineteen miles from Silao, is the junction of the trunk line and a branch road to Guadalajara, which city we shall visit on our return trip northward. Irapuato is pleasantly remembered by all travelers in Mexico, being noted for the fact that fresh ripe strawberries are sold on the railway trains by the inhabitants every day in the year. Strangers never pass this point without enjoying a strawberry picnic, as it may be called, every one purchasing more or less. Even the train-hands would rebel were they not permitted to tarry long enough to enjoy the one luxury of the place. The

delicious berries are supplied by native men and women with wild-looking, swarthy faces, who hand them to the travelers in neat, plain baskets which hold nearly two quarts each. Basket and strawberries together are sold for twenty-five cents. The top layer of the fruit is carefully selected, and most tempting to look upon, the berries being shrewdly "deaconed," – a fact of which the purchaser becomes aware when he has consumed the first portion. However, all are eatable and most grateful to the taste. Human nature is very much the same in trade, whether exhibited in Faneuil Hall Market, Boston, or at Irapuato in Mexico. The deaconing process is not unknown in Massachusetts. Nice, marketable strawberries could be forwarded from Irapuato to Chicago and all intermediate cities, so as to be sold in our markets in good condition every day in the year, by means of the present complete railway connections. The industry of producing them would be stimulated by an organized effort to its best performance, and all concerned would be benefited.

About a dozen miles beyond the junction, we arrive at Salamanca, a small but thriving city. Here, in the Church of San Augustin, are some elaborate wooden altars of such beautiful workmanship as to have a national reputation. These carvings are by native workmen, and evince an artistic taste and facility which one would hardly expect to find among a people so uncultured as the laboring class of Mexico. There is genius enough lying dormant in the country; it only lacks development. The principal industry of the town is the manufacture of

buckskin garments and gloves. Twenty miles further southward is the thriving city of Celaya, in the charming valley of the Laja, with about twenty thousand population. The town is situated nearly two miles from the river, in the State of Guanajuato, and contains extensive cotton and woolen mills, with the usual abundance of Roman Catholic churches. There are quite a number of buildings in Celaya, both public and private, which evince notable architectural beauty. These were erected after the design of a local Michael Angelo, – a native architect, sculptor, and painter named Tresguerras. Finally we arrive at Queretaro (pronounced Ka-ret-a-ro), the capital of the state of the same name, situated a little over one hundred and fifty miles northwest of the city of Mexico, and having a population of about fifty thousand. This is generally admitted to be the most attractive city, in its general effect upon the stranger, of any in the republic outside of the valley of Mexico, though we unhesitatingly place Puebla before it. It was here, in 1848, that the Mexican Congress ratified the treaty of peace with the United States. Perhaps some of the readers of these pages will remember with what distinguished honors Mr. Seward was received in this city during his visit to Mexico in 1869.

Queretaro was founded by the Aztecs about four hundred years ago, and was captured by the Spaniards in 1531. It contains numerous fine stone buildings, mostly of a religious character, and has some very spacious public squares. A grand stone aqueduct over five miles long brings a bountiful supply of good

water from the neighboring mountains. The lofty, substantial masonry of the aqueduct reminds one of similar works which cross the Campagna at Rome, and those in the environs of Cairo. This work must have been originally a tremendous undertaking, many of the arches, where ravines and natural undulations are crossed, being nearly a hundred feet in height. The cost of the aqueduct is said to have been borne by a single individual, to whose memory the citizens have erected a statue on one of the plazas. The water-supply thus brought into the town feeds a dozen or more large, bright, crystal fountains in different sections, around which picturesque groups of water-carriers of both sexes are constantly seen filling their jars for domestic uses. To an American eye there is a sort of Rip-Van-Winkle look about the grass-grown streets of Queretaro. We are here some six thousand feet above the sea, but the place enjoys a most equable and temperate climate. It was in the suburbs of this city that Maximilian and his two trusted generals, Mejia and Miramon, the latter ex-president of the republic, were shot by order of a Mexican court-martial, notwithstanding the appeal for mercy in their behalf by more than one European power, in which the United States government also joined. The Princess Salm-Salm rode across country on horseback a distance of over one hundred miles, to implore Juarez to spare the life of Maximilian; but it was in vain. Juarez was obliged to look at the matter in a political light, whatever his own inclination towards clemency may have been, and therefore refused to annul the sentence of

death. Putting all sentimentality aside, it seems to the author that Maximilian justly merited the fate which he so systematically provoked. The measure which he meted to others was in turn accorded to himself. He issued a decree that every officer taken in arms against his self-assumed authority should be promptly shot without trial. This is considered admissible in the case of professed highwaymen and banditti, but such an order issued against a large body of organized natives who sincerely believed themselves fighting for national liberty was unprecedented and uncalled for. This order was enforced in the instance of some noted patriot leaders. The Mexican generals Arteaga and Salazar, with Villagomez and Felix Diaz, who were ignorant of the existence of any such order or determination, were all shot at Uruapam, October 21, 1865. When Maximilian was himself taken prisoner, the like summary punishment became his just award. In the state legislative palace of Queretaro we were shown the table on which the death sentence was signed by the members of the court-martial, the coffin in which Maximilian's body was brought from the place of execution, and a fine oil painting representing the late would-be emperor.

All strangers who visit the city are taken out to the grounds where the execution took place. One naturally regards the spot with considerable interest. It is marked by three rude stones within an iron-railed inclosure, each stone bearing the name of one of the victims, in the order in which they stood before the firing party on the Cerro de los Campañas, two miles from the

city proper. It seemed serene and peaceful enough as we looked upon the locality, surrounded by highly cultivated fields, dotted here and there by sheep and cattle quietly grazing in the calm, genial sunshine.

The whole of the Archduke's Mexican purpose and career was a great and absurd political blunder. Personally he was a pure and honest man, though a very weak one. He never possessed mental power equal to that of his wife, who won from the Mexicans unbounded and deserved praise by her devotion to her husband and to the public good. Carlotta freely expended her private fortune for the relief of the poor of the national capital, and in the founding of a much needed and grand free hospital for women. When Maximilian received notice that Napoleon III. was about to desert him and his cause, he was absolutely discouraged, and would have resigned at once and returned to Europe; but his courageous wife dissuaded him. She started the very next day for Vera Cruz, on her way to induce the French emperor to keep his word and hold sacred the treaty of Miramar. In vain did she plead with Napoleon, being only insulted for her trouble; nor was she received much better by the Pope, Pius IX. Disappointment met her everywhere. The physical and mental strain proved too much for Carlotta. Brain fever ensued, and upon her partial recovery it was found that she was bereft of reason. More than twenty years have passed since the faithful wife was thus stricken, nor has reason yet dawned upon her benighted brain.

After three years of ceaseless struggle, Maximilian had grown

desperately weary, in a vain effort to reconcile the various political factions of the country, so that to one in his condition of broken health and disappointment, death must have been a relief from mental and physical suffering. His body rests at last in the burial place of the Hapsburgs, thousands of miles from the spot where he fell, while those of Mejia and Miramon lie in the Campo Santo of San Fernando in the city of Mexico. The broad view from this "Hill of the Bells" is very beautiful, and it lives vividly in the memory, taking in the green valley in every direction, spread with fields of undulating grain ready for the reapers, ornamented with umbrageous trees, the city with its mass of towers, domes, and stone dwellings forming the background. A score of ancient churches, convents, and chapels may be counted from the hill-top. The alameda lies on one side of the town, consisting of some fifty or sixty acres nearly square, about which a broad driveway is arranged, the whole charmingly laid out, with greensward and noble shade trees. The Church of the Cross is on slightly elevated ground, and forms a conspicuous architectural feature in the general view. It was in this structure that Maximilian made his headquarters, which he partially fortified, and where, after a protracted siege, he was betrayed into the hands of his enemies; from this place he marched to execution on the 19th of June, 1867.

The Plaza Mayor of Queretaro is a beauty and a joy forever, with its musical fountain uttering ceaseless and refreshing notes, its tropical verdure, its tufted palms and flowering shrubs, its

fruitful banana trees, pomegranates, and fragrant roses. Here Maximilian was accustomed to pass an hour daily, and here, we were told, he took his evening recreation, his favorite seat being upon the curbstone of the capacious fountain. The besiegers discovered the fact, directing shot and shell accordingly at this special point, and though the emperor was unharmed by the missiles, a monumental statue situated within a few feet of him was shattered to pieces. In the sunny afternoons the pretty señoritas come to the plaza with their heads and necks lightly shrouded in Spanish veils, and otherwise clothed in diaphanous garments, short enough to show their shapely ankles in white hose, and their small feet in high-heeled, pointed slippers. He must be indeed calloused who can withstand, unmoved, the battery of their witching eyes.

There is a large cotton factory about two miles from the city, known as "The Hercules Mills," having over twenty thousand spindles, and nearly a thousand looms. The machinery was imported from this country. A colossal marble statue of Hercules is seen presiding over one of the large fountains, in the midst of ornamental trees and flowers. This statue cost fourteen thousand dollars before it left Italy. The mill gives employment to some twelve or fourteen hundred natives, mostly women and girls. One of the young sons of the house of Rubio, the family name of those who own this property, went to England years ago, and learned the trade of cotton spinning. This industry as now carried on was established by him, and is still conducted by the same manager,



Don Cayetano Rubio. The excellent system of the establishment would do credit to a Lowell or Lawrence factory; indeed, almost any similar establishment might take a favorable lesson from this at Queretaro. The immediate surroundings form a well-arranged and fragrant flower garden, ornamented with fountains and statuary, with fruit trees, where the employees are all welcome, and the sweet fragrance of which they can enjoy even during the working hours. Wages, to be sure, are insignificant, being only about forty cents a day for each competent operative, and the hours are long, twelve out of each twenty-four being devoted to work; but as wages go in Mexico this is considered to be a fair rate, with which all are content. We were told that a portion of the cotton used in the mill comes from Vera Cruz, that is, the short staple; the long comes mostly from the Pacific coast; while fully half of the raw material is imported from the United States. The fibre of the Mexican cotton is longer, and not so soft as the American product; but the cotton raised in some parts of the republic has this remarkable property, that for several consecutive seasons the plant continues to bear profitable crops, while in our Southern States the soil must not only be fertilized, but the seed must also be renewed annually. The cotton plant is indigenous to Mexico, and is more prolific in its yield than it is with our Southern planters. It is the same with cotton as with wool; though quite able to do so, Mexico does not at present grow enough of either staple to supply her own mills, or produce enough of the manufactured article to furnish the home market.

Both water and steam power are employed as motors in the Hercules Mill. The overshot wheel used in the former connection is a monster in size, being forty-six feet in diameter. Such has heretofore been the disturbed condition of the country that it has been found necessary to organize and maintain a regular company of soldiers, with ample barracks inside the walls, to defend the property of the mill; and it has three times repulsed formidable attacks made upon the well-fortified walls and gates which surround it.

Catholic churches and priests form, as usual in all Spanish towns, a prominent feature of the neighborhood; and we are sorry to say that beggars are very importuning and numerous. It is the same in Spain and in Italy as it is in Mexico, – where the priests abound, beggars do much more abound.

In the environs of Queretaro one sees immense plantations devoted to the growth of the maguey plant, from which the national beverage is manufactured. Pulque is to the Mexican what claret is to the Frenchman, or beer to the German, being simply the fermented juice of the aloe. It is said that it was first discovered here, though its advent is attributed to many other towns in Mexico; but it is certain that either the process of manufacture here is superior to that of most other localities, or the plant grown here possesses peculiar properties, as it commands the market. When we consider the matter, it is surprising to recall the number of uses to which the maguey plant is put. Paper is made from the fibre of the leaves, as well as

twine and rope; its thorns answer for native pins and needles; the roots are used by the Indians in place of soap; the young sprouts are eaten after being slightly roasted; while in the dried form the leaves are used both for fuel and for thatching the native cabins. The maguey plant has been called the miracle of nature, on account of the large number of articles which are made from it and the variety of uses to which it is adapted. It may be added that of all these properties of the agave the early Toltecs were fully aware, and improved them for their own benefit. We have measured specimens of the well developed plant, the leaves of which were eight feet in length, a foot in width, and eight inches in thickness. When the maguey is about seven or eight years old it is at its best for the production of the desired liquor, and is tapped for the milk-like sap, of which it yields from two quarts to a gallon daily for three or four months. This natural liquor is then called *agua miel*, or honey water, but when it has gone through the process of fermentation it becomes *pulque*. If the plant is left to itself, at about ten years of age there springs up from the centre of the leaves a tall stem, twelve or fifteen feet in height, which bears upon its apex clusters of rich yellow flowers, and then the whole withers and dies, – it never blooms but once. The maguey plant constituted the real vineyards of the Aztecs, as well as the tribes preceding them, its product being the drink of the people of the country long before the days of the Montezumas. At this writing, over eighty thousand gallons of pulque are consumed daily in the national capital. It is to be regretted, as we have

seen it announced, that an American company propose to go into the business of pulque making by the use of improved facilities, claiming that it can be produced by the use of this machinery at one half the present cost, the plants being also made to yield more copiously. Of course it will be adulterated, every intoxicant is, except pulque as at present made from the maguey by the Indians.

The Mexicans have two other forms of spirituous liquors, namely *mescal*, which is also prepared from another species of the maguey, by pressing the leaves in a mill, the juice thus extracted being distilled; and *aguardiente*, or rum, made from sugar-cane juice. Both of these are powerful intoxicants. A very valuable and harmless article is thus sacrificed to make a liquid poison. So in our Middle and Western States we pervert both barley and rye from their legitimate purposes, and turn them into whiskey, – liquefied ruin.

Wherever we go among civilized or savage races, in islands or upon continents, in the frigid North or the melting South, we find man resorting to some stimulant other than natural food and drink. It is an instinctive craving, apparently, exhibited and satisfied as surely in the wilds of Africa, or the South Sea Islands, as by the opium-eating Chinese, or the brandy-drinking Anglo-Saxons. Every people have sought some article with which to stimulate the human system. Oftenest this is a fermented liquor; but various articles have been found to serve the purpose. The Aztecs, and the Toltecs before them, had the fermented juice of the maguey plant. The Chinese get their

spirituous drink from rice. People living under the equator distill the saccharine product of the sugar-cane for aguardiente. The German combines his malt and hops to produce beer. The Frenchman depends upon the juice of the grape in various forms, from light claret to fierce Bordeaux brandy. The Puritans of Massachusetts distilled New England rum from molasses. The faithful Mohammedan, who drinks neither wine nor spirits, makes up for his abstinence by free indulgence in coffee. In the islands of the Indian Ocean the natives stimulate themselves by chewing the betel nut; and in the Malacca Straits Settlements, Penang, Singapore, and other islands, the people obtain their spirit from the fermented sap of the toddy-palm. In Japan the natives get mildly stimulated by immoderate drinking of tea many times each day; and all of the civilized and barbaric world is addicted, more or less, to the use of tobacco.

One of the staple commodities produced here is that classic, beautiful, and precious gem, the opal. It is found imbedded in a certain kind of rock, in the neighboring mountains, sometimes in cubes, but oftener in very irregular forms. It will be remembered that Nonius, who possessed a large and brilliant specimen of the opal, preferred exile to surrendering it to Marc Antony. Whether he was opal-mad or not, it is clear that persons who visit this place are very apt to become monomaniacs upon the subject of this beautiful gem. Our party expended considerable sums for these precious stones, cut and uncut, during the brief period of our visit. The choicest of these specimens is the true fire-opal,

which in brilliancy and iridescence excels all others. Nearly every person one meets in Queretaro seems to have more or less of these lovely stones to sell; nine tenths of them are of a very cheap quality, really fine ones, being the exception, are valued accordingly. The pretty flower-girl, who first offers you her more fragrant wares, presently becomes confidential, and, drawing nearer, brings out from some mysterious fold of her dress half a dozen sparkling stones which she is anxious to dispose of. Even the water carrier, with his huge red earthen jar strapped to his head and back, if he sees a favorable opportunity, will importune the stranger regarding these fiery little stones. These irresponsible itinerants have some ingenious way of filling up the cracks in an opal successfully for the time being; but, after a few days, the defect will again appear.

The finest specimens of the opal come from Hungary. They are harder in texture than those found in other parts of the world. Those brought from Australia are nearly equal in hardness and brilliancy, while, so far as our own experience goes, the Mexican often excel either in variety of color and brilliancy; but it is not quite so hard as those from the other two sources. This quality of hardness is one criterion of value in precious stones, the diamond coming first, the ruby following it, and so on. The author has seen an opal in Pesth weighing fourteen carats, for which five thousand dollars were refused. They can be purchased at Queretaro at from ten dollars to ten hundred; for the latter price a really splendid gem may be had, emitting a grand

display of prismatic tints, and all aglow with fire. The natives, notwithstanding the seeming abundance of the stones, hold very tenaciously to the valuation which they first place upon them. Of course, really choice specimens are always rare, and quickly disposed of. While the ancients considered the opal a harbinger of good fortune to the possessor, it has been deemed in our day to be exactly the reverse; and many lovers of the gem have denied themselves the pleasure of wearing it from a secret superstition as to its unlucky attributes. This fancy has been gradually dispelled, and fashion now indorses the opal as being both beautiful and desirable.

Mexico also produces many other precious stones, among which are the ruby, amethyst, topaz, garnet, pearl, agate, turquoise, and chalcedony, besides onyx and many sorts of choice marbles.

On our route to the national capital we pass through a number of small cities and towns, while we ascend and descend many varying grades. Native women, here and there, bring *agua miel*, or fresh pulque, to us, of which the passengers partake freely. It is a pleasant beverage when first drawn from the plant, very much like new cider, and has no intoxicating effect until fermentation takes place. As we progress southward, occasional wayside shrines with a cross and a picture of the Virgin are seen, before which a native woman is sometimes kneeling, but never a man. Among other interesting places we come to Tula, which was the capital city of the Toltecs more than twelve centuries

ago. The cathedral was erected by the invaders in 1553. The baptismal font in the church is a piece of Toltec work. There is to be seen the yellow, crumbling walls of a crude Spanish chapel, even older than the cathedral, now fast returning to its native dust. There are other extremely interesting ruins here, notably a portion of a prehistoric column, and the lower half of a very large statue situated in the plaza. Mr. Ruskin said in his pedantic way that he could not be induced to travel in America because there were no ruins. There *are* ruins here and in Yucatan which antedate by centuries anything of recorded history relating to the British Isles. Across the Tula River and up the Cerro del Tesoro are some other ancient ruins which have greatly interested antiquarians, embracing carved stones and what must once have been part of a group of dwellings, built of stone laid in mud and covered with cement. The valley shows a rich array of foliage and flowers, forming bits of delightful scenery. There are some fifteen hundred inhabitants in Tula; but it must once have been a large city; indeed, the name indicates that, meaning "the place of many people." The locality of the ancient capital is now mostly overgrown and hidden from sight. We are fifty miles from the city of Mexico at Tula, and about seven hundred feet below it. The records of the Spanish conquest tell us that the natives of this ancient capital were among the first, as a whole community, to embrace the Christian religion; and it seems that its people ever remained staunch allies of Cortez in extending his conquests.

Here we experienced one of those freaks of tropical weather,



a furious summer hail-storm. The thermometer had ranged about 80° in the early day, when suddenly heavy clouds seemed to gather from several points of the sky at the same time. The thermometer dropped quickly some 30°. It was a couple of hours past noon when the clouds began to empty their contents upon the earth; down came the hailstones like buckshot, only twice as large, covering as with a white sheet the parched ground, which had not been wet by a drop of rain for months. This unusual storm prevailed for nearly an hour before it exhausted its angry force. "Exceptional?" repeated the station-master on the line of the Mexican Central Railroad, in reply to a query as to the weather. "I have been here ten years, and this is the first time I have seen snow or hail at any season. I should rather say it was exceptional." By and by, after stampeding all the exposed cattle, and driving everybody to the nearest shelter and keeping them there, the inky clouds dispersed almost as suddenly as they had gathered, and the thermometer gradually crept back to a figure nearly as high as at noon. The fury of the storm was followed by a sunset of rarest loveliness, eliciting ejaculations of delight at the varied and vivid combinations of prismatic colors. One does not soon forget such a scene as was presented at the close of this day. The sun set in a blaze of orange and scarlet, seen across the long level of the cactus-covered prairie, while soft twilight shadows gathered about the crumbling, vine-screened walls of the old Spanish church in the environs of Tula. Soon the stars came into view, one by one, while the moon rode high and serene among

the lesser lights of the still blue sky.

## CHAPTER VII

City of Mexico. – Private Dwellings. – Thieves. – Old Mexico. – Climate. – Tramways. – The Plaza Mayor. – City Streets. – The Grand Paseo. – Public Statues. – Scenes upon the Paseo. – The Paseo de la Viga. – Out-of-door Concerts. – A Mexican Caballero. – Lottery Ticket Venders. – High Noon. – Mexican Soldiers. – Musicians. – Criminals as Soldiers. – The Grand Cathedral. – The Ancient Aztec Temple. – Magnificent View from the Towers of the Cathedral. – Cost of the Edifice. – Valley of Anahuac.

As Paris is said to be France, so is the national capital of this country equally representative, it being indisputable that the main business and the social interests of the country all centre here. The city derives its name from the Aztec war-god Mexitli, and is a large and handsome metropolis, containing considerably over three hundred thousand inhabitants, who embrace a large diversity of nationalities. In 1519, when Cortez first saw it, the city is represented to have been nine miles in circumference, and to have contained half a million of inhabitants, – a statement which, we doubt not, is greatly exaggerated, as were nearly all of his representations and those of his followers. This capital originally bore the name of Tenochtitlan, and was completely destroyed by the invaders, who established a new city upon

the same site. Cortez officially announced, three or four years afterwards, that the population was thirty thousand. "For a century," says Charles Lemprière, an able writer on Mexico, "the city continued to increase in numbers, wealth, and power, so that when Captain John Smith and his followers were looking for gold mines in Virginia and the Pilgrims were planting corn in Massachusetts, an empire had been founded and built up on the same continent by the Spaniards, and the most stupendous system of plunder the world ever saw was then and there in vigorous operation."

The streets of the city as we see them to-day are generally broad and straight, lined with two-story houses, and there are also several elegant boulevards and spacious avenues. The better class of houses are built of stone, covered with stucco, the windows opening upon cosy little balconies handsomely ornamented and shaded by linen awnings, often in high colors. The interior construction of the dwellings follows the usual Spanish style, as seen on the continent of Europe, in the island of Cuba, and elsewhere, often displaying touches of exquisite Moorish effect, whose highest expression one sees in the Alhambra at Granada. Here and there are seen horseshoe arches supported at the abutments by light and graceful columns, inclosing marble-paved courts. The open areas about which the houses are built often present most pleasing effects by a display of fountains, flowers, and statuary tastefully arranged. On the main thoroughfare leading from the Plaza Mayor to the alameda are several grand

private residences, having the most beautiful courts, or patios, as they are called, that the imagination can conceive, lovely with tropical trees and flowers in vivid colors, and rendered musical by the singing of caged birds. Upon these areas, which are open to the sky, the inner doors and windows of the dwellings open, the second story being furnished with a walk and balustrade running round the patio. Heavy, nail-studded doors shut off this domestic area from the street at night. It is not safe to leave anything outside the house after dark that a man can lift. It is sure to be stolen, if so exposed. The lower classes all over the country are inveterate thieves. The bolts that fastened the ties to the rails of the National Railway were stolen nightly by the people, until they were finally riveted on. But then there are thieves everywhere; we chain our out-door mats to iron fastenings in Boston, Chicago, and New York, and dealers in "improved burglar alarms" do a thriving business in all our Northern cities.

The houses in this capital are very substantially built, the walls being composed of stuccoed bricks of great thickness. Fires are of rare occurrence, and, indeed, it would be nearly impossible to burn up one of these dwellings. If a fire does occur, it is almost always confined not only to the building in which it originates, but even to the room where it first makes its appearance. The roofs are nearly all flat and without chimneys; there is no provision made for producing artificial heat in the dwelling-houses. This is quite endurable even to foreigners in a climate where the temperature seldom falls below 60° Fahr.,

and averages the year round nearly ten degrees higher. It is always warm in the middle of the day, and cool only early in the mornings and at night. The climate may be said to be temperate and the atmosphere is extremely dry. Travelers are liable to suffer considerably from thirst, and the lips are prone to chap, owing to this extreme and peculiar dryness. The warmest months of the year are April and May. It was somewhat of a surprise to the author to learn that the death-rate of the city of Mexico averages nearly double that of Boston. As to elevation, it is over seven thousand feet higher than the city of Washington, D. C., or more than a thousand feet higher than the summit of Mount Washington, N. H.

Regarding the fine residences on San Francisco Street, there is a peculiarity observable as to their location. This is almost wholly a business street, and therefore to select it for an elegant home seems incongruous. The choicest residence we can remember on this thoroughfare stands between a large railroad-ticket office and a showy cigar store. This house has a most striking façade finished in Moorish style with enameled tiles, and is on the opposite side of the street from the Iturbide Hotel.

Numerous large squares, beside the grand plaza and the spacious alameda, ornament the capital. Several of the main thoroughfares enter and depart from the Plaza Mayor, as in the city of Madrid, where the Puerto del Sol – "Gate of the Sun" – forms a centre from which radiate so many of the principal streets. Some are broad, some are narrow, but all are

paved, cleanly, and straight. The street-car system is excellent. If any fault is to be found with the management, it is with the rapid manner in which the mules attached to the cars are driven through the highways amid a crowded population; and yet, we were told, accidents rarely if ever happen. They are generally run double, having a first and second class car, both of which are seemingly well filled at all hours of the day. Funerals are conducted by turning one of the street cars, made for the purpose, into a catafalque, or hearse, another being reserved for the pall-bearers and mourners. Sometimes one sees a long string of these cars occupied for this purpose gliding into the suburbs where the grave-yards are located. The use of cow-horns by the driver to warn the people who obstruct the way appeared to be a little primitive, to say the least of it, in a city so large as this capital. It seems very effective, however. The fact that all of the tramway cars start from and return to the Plaza Mayor in front of the cathedral makes it easy for a stranger to find his way to any desired point of the city or its environs, and safely to return to the starting point when he desires to do so. The Plaza Mayor in every Mexican city is not only the central park, but also the central idea. There could no more be a full-fledged Spanish city without a plaza than a cathedral without a bishop.

Statistics show that there are nearly, or quite, five hundred miles of streets in the Mexican capital. These, intersecting each other at right angles, are so strangely alike as to be not a little puzzling to the uninitiated. It is also somewhat awkward at first

to find one continuous avenue bearing many names, each block being individualized by a fresh appellation. This subdivision of the large avenues, we were told, is gradually to be discarded. The admirable boulevard called the Paseo de la Reforma, leads out of the city to the castle of Chapultepec, and is over two miles in length, with a uniform width of two hundred feet, forming the fashionable afternoon drive and promenade of the town. It has double avenues of shade trees to the right and left, with stone sidewalks and convenient seats for those who desire them. On either side of this grand boulevard are seen an occasional chateau with handsome gardens. At certain intervals the avenue widens into a *glorieta*, or circle, four hundred feet in diameter. The first of these contains Cordier's Columbus, one of the most admirable and artistic modern statues which we remember to have seen, though there appeared to be some confusion in the extraordinary amount of detail which is crowded upon the base. Other appropriate monuments ornament the several circles, including an equestrian statue of Charles IV. of colossal size; thirty tons of metal was used in the casting, and, if not the largest, it is the second largest that has ever been cast. Still another represents Guatemozin, the last of the Indian emperors. It is a little singular that Montezuma II. is not remembered in this connection, he whose life was so intimately interwoven with the history of the Aztec race in the time of Cortez. Humboldt is said to have declared that the statue of Charles IV. had but one superior, namely, that of Marcus Aurelius. There are six of these



*glorietas*, which beautify the long line of perspective ending in the elevated palace-castle of Chapultepec, with its snow-white, picturesque walls clearly defined against the blue sky. When Maximilian planned and completed this charming driveway, he named it the Boulevarde Imperiale; but on the establishment of the republic the more appropriate title which it now bears was adopted. Some people persist in calling it the Empress's Drive, in honor of Carlotta.

One never wearies of sitting upon the well-arranged benches of the paseo in the afternoon, and watching the motley throng of people driving, riding on horseback, or promenading: the ladies with piercing black eyes and glossy dark hair shrouded by lace mantillas; the dashing equestrians exhibiting all the gay paraphernalia of a Mexican horseman; stately vehicles drawn by two snow-white mules; tally-ho coaches conveying merry parties of American or English people; youthful aristocrats bestriding Lilliputian horses, followed by liveried servants; while here and there a mounted policeman in fancy uniform moves slowly by. In the line of pedestrians are well-dressed gentlemen in black broadcloth suits, wearing silk hats and sporting button-hole bouquets, mingled with whom are a more common class of the people in picturesque national costumes. The women of the middle class add gayety of color by their red and blue rebosas, sometimes partly covering the head, at others thrown carelessly over the shoulders, or tied across the chest securing an infant to the back. The general effect of the constantly moving throng

is kaleidoscopic, while the mingled groupings are delightfully entertaining. Nothing more peculiar and striking in its line is to be seen this side of the Maidan, Calcutta. Here, as in that Asiatic Champs Elysées, now and again one sees a light American trotting wagon or a heavy-wheeled English dog cart, with a dude at the reins and a liveried flunky behind holding a flaring bouquet!

The carriages go out towards Chapultepec on one side and return on the other, during the popular hours for driving, leaving the central portion of the roadway exclusively for equestrians. Every man who can afford it owns a saddle horse in this city, and the men are universally good riders. The horses are broken to a certain easy gait called the *passo*, a sort of half run, very easy for the rider, scarcely moving him in the seat. These horses average about fifteen hands in height, and are taught to stop, or turn back, at the least touch of the bit. They are both fast and enduring, with plenty of spirit, and yet are perfectly tractable. The enormous spurs worn by the riders, with rowels an inch long, are more for show than for use. Mexican or Spanish ladies are hardly ever seen on horseback, though both English and American ladies are often met in the saddle, dashing gallantly through the throng upon the paseo at the fashionable hour. Something of oriental exclusiveness and privacy is observed by Mexican ladies of the upper class, who drive on the paseo even in close carriages, not in open barouches, like those of European cities. In shopping excursions they do not enter the stores; but the goods are brought

to the door of the vehicle, in which they retain their seat while examining the articles which are offered. It is a Sunday scene which we are describing; but it is all the gayer for that reason. The pulque shops drive a lucrative business; the billiard saloons are all open. Children ride hither and thither in little fancy carriages drawn by goats; donkeys covered with glittering ornaments are ridden by small boys, and led by their owners; clouds of highly-colored toy balloons float in the air, tied to the wrists of itinerant vendors; gambling stands do much abound; while candy-sellers, with long white aprons and snow-white paper caps, offer candy and preserved fruits on all sides. The class of women whom we meet as pedestrians are quite Parisian in the free use of rouge for lips and cheeks, not forgetting indigo-blue with which to shade about their dreamy-looking eyes. Ladies belonging to the aristocratic class are rarely, if ever, seen walking in the streets. They only drive in the paseo. For a couple of hours in the closing part of the day, the paseo is a bright, giddy, alluring scene. A military band performs on Sundays, adding life and spirit to the surroundings. The wholesome influence of these out-of-door concerts upon the masses of the people is doubtless fully realized by the government. A love of music is natural to all classes here. Groups of half-clothed men and women, bareheaded and barefooted, always take places modestly in some corner and quietly listen during the performance of the bands, never speaking while the music lasts. To such these out-door concerts are a real boon. To the higher classes they are simply

an addition to a long list of other pleasures. Another boulevard, known as the Paseo de la Viga, runs along the banks of the canal of the same name, and leads out to the Lake Xachimilco; but, since the new paseo was completed this has ceased to be the favorite resort for driving. It is situated in the southern suburb of the city, and seems to be rather deserted, though as we view it there passes a typical horseman, a description of whom shall be literal.

The horse is of Arabian descent. His sire must have been imported from continental Spain, and being crossed upon native stock has produced a medium-sized, high-spirited, handsome animal, with a broad chest expanded by the air of this altitude, the nostrils being widespread, the ears small, and the eyes full of intelligence. The horse's saddle, bridle, and trappings are gorgeous with silver ornaments, without the least regard to usefulness, twenty-four inches square of leather fancifully worked and shaped being attached to each stirrup. His rider appears in a short leather jacket, bedizened with silver buttons, tight pantaloons of the same material, also heavy with silver buttons, being partially opened at the side and flaring at the bottom. He does not wear a waistcoat, but has a mountain of frills on the linen bosom of his shirt, set off by a red scarf tied about the waist. The spurs upon his heels are of silver, weighing at least half a pound each, while the rowels are an inch long. On his head is a sombrero of yellow or brown felt, the brim of which is twelve to fifteen inches broad, and the crown measuring the same in

height. The sombrero is covered with gilt cord formed into a sort of rope where it makes the band. The wearer's monogram, in gold or silver letters from two to four inches long, on the side of the crown, completes the whole. Every article is of the finest material, and therein, principally, he differs from a Western cowboy or a dandified Buffalo Bill.

During the period of Lent, owing to some caprice of fashion, the Paseo de la Viga becomes the popular afternoon resort for vehicles and equestrians.

While we are making these notes, sitting upon the curbstone of a fountain of the paseo, we are personally reminded that the lottery ticket vender is ubiquitous. Sometimes it is a man who importunes you to purchase, sometimes a young girl, and at others even a child of eleven or twelve years belonging to either sex. The pretty girl of course finds the most customers, offering to "kiss the ticket for good luck," and on the sly, perhaps the purchaser also. This must be a Spanish idea, as it is practiced both in Madrid and Cuba. The Mexican government realizes fully a million dollars per annum from the licenses granted to protect this gross swindle upon the public. It is a regular thing for prominent business houses to make their monthly purchases of these lottery tickets; rich and poor, prince and beggar, alike invest, differing only in the amount; while most strangers, smothering their conscientious scruples, purchase a ticket, thus adding their mite to the general folly. We were told in Havana that one satisfaction in buying tickets in the national

lottery there was, that like the Louisiana Lottery it was honestly conducted. Our incredulity upon the subject was laughed to scorn, but since then the Havana Lottery has been detected in a series of the most barefaced swindlings that can be imagined. As to that of Louisiana, we never for a moment have believed in there being anything "honest" about it. A concern which can afford to offer the State government of Louisiana over a million dollars per annum for the privilege of running a gambling institution there, must carry on a more reckless swindling game upon the public at large than its worst enemies have suspected.

Just at high noon, on our return from the Paseo de la Viga, the Plaza Mayor was reached on the great square fronting the cathedral, where a simultaneous movement was observed among the people who filled the large area. As the cathedral and church bells throughout the city chimed the hour of twelve, every Mexican in sight uncovered his head and bowed devoutly. It was difficult to analyze this spirit of reverence, for which no one could assign any satisfactory reason except that it was the custom.

The swarthy soldiers of the republic are often seen paraded opposite the plaza, and though they are sure to recall the French Zouaves, yet they lack their admirable discipline and perfection of company movements. Indeed, to speak plainly, the author has never seen a more slatternly, knock-kneed, uncouth body of soldiers than the rank and file of the Mexican army. The white gaiters of the French Zouaves moving all together have a fine effect when a body of them are marching through a Parisian

boulevard; but the Mexican soldiers have neither stockings nor gaiters, besides which they do not pretend to keep step at all when marching. They move at will, while the bottoms of their feet only are covered with the crudest sort of sandals, laced about the ankles with leather thongs. Every soldier in the Mexican service is his own shoemaker. An intelligent officer, in reply to a question regarding the sandal for army use, said: "They are far more comfortable for a soldier on the march than any shoe that can be made. They are cool, cheap, and do not irritate the feet. They can be renewed anywhere in this country, and a sandal that will fit one man will do for any other in the regiment. In a warm climate nothing is so suitable for the feet of a soldier." It is well known that so painful will close shoes often become to the foot soldier, that he will take them off and throw them away in despair when making a forced march, preferring to walk barefooted rather than endure the suffering caused by swollen feet and tight shoes, which cannot occur when the sandal is used. The feet have always perfect freedom in them, and the sole and toes are protected. Neither men nor women of the common class wear stockings, and in fact nine out of ten of the population of the country go barefooted all the year round.

It puzzles a stranger to see a good military band – and they are excellent musicians here – play upon their instruments in perfect harmony, and at the same time march out of step or cadence with the music. It would seem almost impossible for one possessing a true musical ear to perform such a trick. With any

European or American band, both feet and instruments would get out of accord constantly, or fall into it naturally. Like the king's guard in Hawaii, the troops here parade in white linen or cotton uniforms, stout and unbleached, with a plenty of silvered buttons, the cap being white and of the same material as the rest of the simple costume. At times they appear in a plain uniform of dark blue, but this is on special occasions only, as it is considered to be full dress. The officers are nearly all graduates of the military school at Chapultepec, where the best of foreign teachers are employed in the various departments, so that in future it is confidently expected that the army will be found in a more efficient condition than ever before. The common soldiers, we were told, are composed of rather questionable material. A large percentage of them are criminals released from prison on condition of their enlisting and serving for a certain length of time in the ranks of the regular army. On the caps of those serving out a term of imprisonment in this manner are certain marks indicating the same, as well as showing the length of the prescribed service. Punishment is ever prompt in this country, and despotic methods prevail. Any one attempting to evade his term of service, or breaking army regulations, is very apt to have his business settled by a bullet at once, without even the form of a trial. The department of the cavalry seemed to a casual observer to be much more efficient than that of the infantry. The fact is, the average Mexican is an admirable horseman, and appears better in that capacity than in any other. The national or standing



army numbers about forty-five thousand of all arms, besides which each state has a regular militia force, but of a poorly organized character, in most instances, as we were informed, being neither uniformed, nor drilled at regular periods. President Diaz is opposed to the employment of criminals, such as we have described, thinking with good reason that it has a tendency to bring disrepute upon the service. This would seem to be such an unquestionable fact as to admit of no argument.

As, in the case of the first Spanish invasion, Cortez with his handful of followers could not have conquered and possessed Mexico but for the dissensions existing among the several native tribes, so, as regards the French invasion and attempt to seat Maximilian on the throne of a new American empire, these invaders could not have met with even the partial success which they achieved had the Mexican people presented an unbroken front in opposition. The American invasion was also more or less favorably affected by partisan divisions among the Mexicans. The present organization of the army is upon a basis so national, and is governed by a spirit so faithful to the whole union of the states, that in case of another war Mexico could put a large and effective army into the field. In other words, she is better prepared to-day than ever before to successfully maintain her national integrity by force of arms.

The famous cathedral of Mexico, with its tall twin towers and graceful dome, is built of unhewn stone, and fronts upon the Plaza Mayor, forming the main architectural feature of the city.

Ninety years did not suffice to complete it, and several millions of dollars were expended in the original construction. Among the sixty churches of the capital it is preeminent for its vast proportions and elaborate architectural finish. The edifice stands upon the spot, or very near it, which, was once occupied by the great Aztec temple dedicated to the war god of the nation, which the Spaniards promptly destroyed after subjugating the natives and taking full possession of the place. The first church on this site after the destruction of the idolatrous temple was founded by Charles V. His successor ordered it to be pulled down, and the present edifice erected in its place. We are told that the great Aztec temple was surrounded by walls having four gates fronting the four cardinal points, and that within the enclosure were five hundred dwellings accommodating the priests and priestesses, and others who were devoted to religious dances and devotional ceremonies connected with the worship and service of the idols. Five thousand priests chanted night and day before the altars. Consecrated fountains and gardens of holy flowers were there, mingling barbaric fanaticism with natural beauty. In describing these matters the old priests and monks gave free scope to their imaginations.

The ancient temple was pyramidal, the summit being about one hundred and fifty feet above the ground, and accessible by numerous broad stone steps. On the platform at the top, according to Spanish authorities, human sacrifices took place not only daily but hourly; wars were made with neighboring

tribes to supply victims for the altar, and when there was a revolt among the native tribes, it was subdued by the strong arm, while the offending district was compelled to supply a certain number of their people to die on the sacrificial stone. It is represented that the number of lives thus disposed of was reckoned by tens of thousands. David A. Wells, in his able and comprehensive work entitled, "A Study of Mexico," says of these Spanish chroniclers that their representations are the merest romance, no more worthy of credence than the stories of "Sindbad the Sailor," though from this source alone Prescott drew the data for his popular "Conquest of Mexico." One of these chroniclers, who gives his name as Bernal Diaz, not only repeats these stories of the multitudinous sacrifice of human beings at the rate of thousands monthly, but charges the Cholulans with "fattening men and women to use for food, keeping them in pens as animals are fatted!" Wilson pronounces this to be intolerable nonsense, and though Diaz pretends to have been one of Cortez's soldiers, always with him throughout his remarkable invasion, Wilson proves clearly that he was never in the country at all. His obvious and constant blunders as to geography and other matters would alone convict him of being a pretender and not a true witness. Besides which, he contradicts both himself and Cortez's account in many important particulars. We believe, with Wilson, that this name of Bernal Diaz is a pure fabrication, gotten up as a priestly scheme to further their own purposes, and cover up the insufferable wickedness of the Roman Church in Mexico, as well

as to screen the bloodthirsty career of its agent Cortez. Las Casas declared all these Spanish histories of the conquest to be wicked and false. He wrote a history himself, from personal observation, but as it would have exposed the falsehoods and schemes of the priestly chroniclers, it was promptly suppressed by the all-powerful Inquisition.

In destroying and leveling the great sacrificial mound which formed the pyramid supporting the Aztec temple, together with the debris of the dismantled dwellings and temples generally belonging to the native race, the Spanish conquerers must have found ample material wherewith to fill up the many canals and small lakes which made of this ancient Aztec capital another Venice. Every vestige of aboriginal architecture has disappeared from the surface of the city. Three hundred and sixty odd years have served to turn the probably frail dwellings of the people completely to dust. So, also, have the earliest structures of the Spaniards disappeared. There are few of their churches which have not been rebuilt. The causeways which connected the ancient city with the mainland are still considerably higher than the general level of the plain, and are thus distinctly marked, besides being bordered with venerable umbrageous trees, tall and graceful, producing a fine effect, particularly when seen from a distance, forming divisional lines in the broad and varied landscape.

The façade of the present grand cathedral, at each side of which rises a massive tower crowned by a bell-shaped dome, is

divided by buttresses into three parts, and though there is some confusion of orders, Doric and Ionic prevailing, still as a whole the front is majestic and imposing. The towers are each over two hundred feet in height, and are also of mingled orders. In the western tower is the great bell, *nineteen feet* high, named Santa Maria de Guadalupe. We know of nothing of the sort exceeding it in size and weight except the great Russian bell to be seen in the square of the Kremlin at Moscow. The basso-relievos, statues, friezes, and capitals of the façade of the great edifice are of white marble, which time has rendered harmonious with the gray stone. Though millions of dollars have been lavishly expended upon the interior, – the cost of the bare walls was over two millions, – it will strike an artistic eye as incongruous. Like the grand and costly interiors of the churches at Toledo, Burgos, and Cordova, in Spain, the general effect is seriously marred by placing the choir in the middle of the nave. It is like breaking midway some otherwise grand perspective. The cathedral is over four hundred feet in length and two hundred in width. Quadruple pillars, each thirty-five feet in circumference, support its roof, which is a hundred and seventy-five feet from the floor. The high altar – there are six altars in all – was once the richest in the world, and though the church has been many times plundered, it still retains much of its magnificence. The solid gold candlesticks, heavier than a single pair of arms could lift, the statue of the Assumption, which was also composed of solid gold, inlaid with diamonds, rubies, and other precious stones, valued at a million

dollars, besides many other equally extravagant and nearly as costly objects, have from time to time disappeared. But with all of its losses, this cathedral is doubtless decorated in a more costly manner than any other in America. The railing of the choir is a remarkable affair, manufactured in China at great cost, and weighs nearly thirty tons. It is said to be composed of silver, gold, and copper, containing so much gold that an offer has been made to take it down and replace it with one of solid silver in exchange. The original cost of this railing is stated to have been one million and a half dollars! (Spanish authority.) There are a dozen or more side chapels, inclosed in bronze gates, in one of which the Mexican Emperor Iturbide is buried, though he was condemned and executed as a traitor. Two invaluable oil paintings hang upon the walls, a genuine Murillo and an original Michael Angelo. A dim light pervades the interior of the cathedral, tempered by the flare of tall candles, but it lacks the beautiful effect of stained glass windows. The imagination, however, is very active, and easily summons from the dim past ghostly shadows, while an overpowering sense of height and silence prevails.

Here Maximilian and Carlotta were crowned, in 1864, emperor and empress, with great ceremony, little dreaming how briefly their imperial honors would remain to them.

In contemplating this grand architectural development, as well as the hundreds of other similar structures, erected at such enormous expenditures of money and labor, one cannot but be exercised by mingled emotions. We are apt to recall how much

of absolute misery was entailed upon the down-trodden natives, who were compelled to work for barely sufficient food to sustain life. The control of the priesthood was absolute; they levied taxes upon everything and everybody. They were amenable to no civil laws, and recognized none but those of the church. The extent to which they carried their extortion is almost beyond belief, and the amount of wealth which they accumulated is nearly incredible. At the time of the reform, the clergy absolutely owned three fourths of the entire property of the country.

The view from the towers of the cathedral, – in which there are between forty and fifty costly bells, each dedicated to some saint or martyr, – is so remarkable that not even the most casual visitor to the capital should miss it. It presents such a picture as promptly photographs itself on the brain, never to be obliterated. It was from this locality, on the summit of the Aztec temple which stood here four hundred years ago, that Montezuma pointed out to Cortez the beauties of his capital and its fairy-like environs, so soon to be destroyed by the hands of the ruthless invader. At our feet lies the tree-dotted plaza, with its central pleasure-garden and its fine architectural surroundings, including the long, white façade of the national palace, while the entire city is spread out before us with its myriad domes, spires, thoroughfares, and causeways. There are typical scenes and groups everywhere formed by the eddies of busy life. Long lines of heavy-laden burros thread the streets, the natives assume the size of huge insects crawling about in bright colors, the blooming trees are

like button-hole bouquets, and dashing horsemen move about like animated marionettes. Not far away looms against the blue sky the tall castle of Chapultepec, while the clustered towers of Guadalupe, the Mecca of all pious Mexicans, comes still nearer to the vision. The many outlying villages upon the plateau, each with its central spire, recall the lovely plains of Granada. The distant fields of maguey, the verdant patches of alfalfa, luxuriant meadows, groups of grazing cattle, and the two arched stone aqueducts are all prominent features presenting themselves to the eye, together with the gardens and villas of Tacubaya and San Angel. As we gaze at the unequaled panorama, which Humboldt pronounced to be the most beautiful the eye ever rested upon, the thought forced itself upon us that with all its scenic beauty, this valley and plain of Anahuac has for centuries been cursed with crime and barbarism. The whole scene is inclosed by a grand circle of mountains, just far enough away to clothe them in charming purple. The rarefied atmosphere adds distinctness and brilliancy of coloring to everything. Two of these sky-reaching elevations are of world-wide reputation, namely, Mount Popocatepetl ("the smoking mountain"), and Mount Ixtaccihuatl ("the white woman"). The former presents so perfect a conical form, while the summit is rounded into a dome of dazzling whiteness, that it seems to far exceed the height of eighteen thousand feet which is accorded to it; and though it does not rise abruptly from sea level to its giddy height, like Mount Tacoma in the State of Washington, still in shape it much resembles that



noble elevation.

Cortez in 1520 and Scott in 1847 led their conquering hosts over the elevated pass which nature had formed between these mountains. The two summits are connected by a well-wooded ridge, itself some three thousand feet in height, looking from a distance like a deep valley between the grand mountains. While regarding the interesting scene, it was natural to compare the loftiest elevation before us with that of the Valley of Chamounix. Mont Blanc is a little less than sixteen thousand feet at its summit above the sea. Popocatepetl is a little less than eighteen thousand, but the latter rises from the plateau of Mexico, which is over seven thousand feet above the sea, while Mont Blanc at the base, is only thirty-five hundred feet above the ocean. Thus about two thousand feet more of elevation is visible to the eye in the Swiss mountain than the Mexican monarch shows above the plain.

In the rear of the cathedral, and adjoining it, is an interesting chapel known as the Capilla de las Animas, "Chapel of the Souls." It is really a part of the cathedral, though arranged quite separate from it, facing upon the Calle de las Escalerillas. We find no record of its origin, though it is said to have been built in 1748 to replace a similar edifice which was destroyed by fire. The branch of business to which this chapel is devoted, as we were told upon the spot, was to pray to the good God to release souls from purgatory! One Concha, a priest who carried on this lucrative farce until he was eighty-seven years old, died so long ago as 1755, having, as the church record shows, "celebrated"

over forty-five thousand masses in his time; the amount of cash received for the same is not set down. As the priests do nothing on credit, officiating at marriages or funerals, selling indulgences or performing masses for cash only, this good man must have realized for his services, in the aggregate, at the very lowest reasonable estimate, about one million dollars. Undoubtedly high rates were sometimes paid to get a very "hard case" out of purgatory. Sinners who dreaded a future state of punishment, as a just reward for their evil deeds on earth, were accustomed to leave Father Concha a good round sum of money, to pray them out of the uncomfortable quarters to which they expected to be consigned after departing from this life. Like a certain shrewd Irishman, they "accepted" purgatory, fearing they might go further and fare worse.

## CHAPTER VIII

An Extinct Volcano. – Mexican Mountains. – The Public Institutions of the Capital. – The Government Palace. – The Museum. – Maximilian's State Carriage. – A Peculiar Plant. – The Academy of Fine Arts. – Choice Paintings. – Art School. – Picture Writing. – Native Artists. – Exquisite Pottery. – Cortez's Presents to Charles V. – A Special Aztec Art. – The Sacrificial Stone. – Spanish Historical Authorities. – Public Library. – The Plaza. – Flower Market. – A Morning Visit. – Public Market. – Concealed Weapons.

The crater of Popocatepetl – being an extinct volcano – is now a valuable sulphur mine. To obtain this product, it is necessary to descend into the crater by means of a rope, one of great length being required for the purpose; and when a certain quantity is secured, it is packed in mats before being hoisted to the mouth of the crater. The Indians tie these packages together; then, making a cushion of their serapes, they slide down the mountain as far as the snow extends, dragging the mats after them. On the north side of the volcano, near the limit of tree growth, the sulphur is distilled in iron retorts, and is then ready for the market. The crater's mouth is huge in dimensions, being half a mile in diameter, and the amount of native sulphur deposited there is enormous, – practically inexhaustible. This profitable

sulphur mine is owned, or was, a few months since, by General Ochoa, a resident of the capital. It is said that when Cortez had expended his supply of gunpowder, he resorted to the crater of Popocatepetl for sulphur to make a fresh supply, and that the natives had never ascended the mountain until the Spaniards showed them the way. Earthquakes are not uncommon, even to-day, near the base of this monarch mountain; but no eruption has taken place since 1692. Earthquakes have always been more or less common in Mexico, but never very serious in the capital; otherwise, with its insecure foundations, it must have suffered seriously. Smoke is reported to have been seen bursting forth from the crater of Popocatepetl several times at long intervals, but no positive volcanic action has taken place since the date named. Its actual height is given by the best authorities as being but about two hundred feet less than eighteen thousand.

One is apt to speculate mentally, while gazing upon it, as to the possibility of this sleeping volcano one day awaking to destructive action. That it still lives is clearly seen by the smoke and sulphurous breath which it exhales, and the occasional significant earthquakes which occur about its widespread base. There are seventeen or eighteen mountains in the republic which rise more than ten thousand feet above the level of the sea, four of which are over fifteen thousand feet in height, Popocatepetl being the loftiest of them all. Parties ascend on horseback to the snow line, and from thence the distance to the summit is accomplished on foot. Some adventurous people make the

descent into the crater by means of the bucket and windlass used by the sulphur-gatherers, but the most inquisitive can see all that they desire from the northerly edge of the cone. The expeditions for the ascent are made up at Amecameca. The time necessarily occupied is about three days, and the cost is twenty-five dollars for each person. It is a very exhausting excursion, and few persons undertake it.

The city of Mexico is famous for its large numbers of scientific, literary, and charitable institutions, its many schools, primary and advanced, and its several well-appointed hospitals. The national palace covers the whole eastern side of the Plaza Mayor, having a frontage of nearly seven hundred feet, and occupies the site of the royal residence of the Montezumas, if we may credit tradition. The present edifice was erected in 1693, in place of one which Cortez and the Spanish viceroys had occupied until it was destroyed by fire in 1692. Though the palace is only two stories in height, yet the central tower over the main entrance and the finish on each side of it give it all necessary prominence. It contains the President's suite of rooms, and those devoted to the various departments of the state officials. The hall of ambassadors, a very long, narrow apartment, is interesting on account of its life-size portraits of Mexican rulers from the period of independence, a majority of whom either endured exile or public execution! At the extreme end of this hall is a very good full-length portrait of our Washington. Here, also, is a pretentious battle-piece by a native artist, representing the battle

of Puebla, when the French were so completely defeated. The picture is entitled "Cinco de Mayo," the date of the conflict. It is not a fine specimen of art, but it is certainly a very effective picture. This battle of the 5th of May was another Waterloo for the French. An apartment known as Maximilian's room is shown to the visitor, situated in the corner of the palace, having two windows at right angles and thus commanding a view in two directions, one window overlooking the plaza, the other the business streets leading to the market. A room called the hall of Iturbide is hung in rich crimson damask, displaying the eagle and serpent, which form the arms of Mexico. The edifice contains also the General Post-office and the National Museum. In the armory of the palace there was pointed out to us the stand of arms with which the Archduke Maximilian and his two faithful officers were shot at Queretaro. In the grounds which form the patio of the palace, a small botanical garden is maintained, containing many exotics, choice trees and plants, besides a collection of those indigenous to the country. The curiosities in the department of antiquity of the museum are of intense interest. In an historical point of view they are invaluable. A great amount of money and intelligent labor has been expended upon the collection with highly satisfactory results. It is of engaging interest to the merest museum frequenter, but to the archæologist it is valuable beyond expression. Here are also deposited the extensive solid silver table-service imported for his own use by Maximilian, and also the ridiculously gilded and bedizened state

carriage brought hither from Europe, built after the English style of the seventeenth century. The body of the vehicle is painted red, the wheels are gilded, and the interior is lined with white silk brocade, heavily trimmed with silver and gold thread. It surpasses in elegance and cost any royal vehicle to be seen in Europe, not excepting the magnificent carriages in the royal stables of Vienna and St. Petersburg. Among the personal relics seen in the museum is the coat of mail worn by Cortez during his battles from Vera Cruz to the capital, also the silk banner which was borne in all his fights. This small flag bears a remarkably lovely face of the Madonna, which must have been the work of a master hand. The shield of Montezuma is also exhibited, with many arms, jewels, and picture writings, these last relating to historic matters, both Toltec and Aztec. The great sacrificial stone of the aborigines, placed on the ground floor of the museum, is, in all its detail, a study to occupy one for days. It is of basalt, elaborately chiseled, measuring nine feet in diameter and three feet in height. On this stone the lives of thousands of human beings, we are told, were offered up annually. The municipal palace is on the south side of the plaza, nearly opposite to which is a block of buildings resting upon arcades like those of the Rue Rivoli in Paris. Let us not forget to mention that in the garden of the national palace the visitor is shown a remarkable floral curiosity called the hand-tree, covered with bright scarlet flowers, almost exactly in the shape of the human hand. This is the *Cheirostemon platanifolium* of the botanists, an extremely rare plant, three specimens of

which only are known to exist in Mexico.

In the rear of the national palace is the Academy of Fine Arts, generally spoken of as the Academy of San Carlos, – named in honor of Carlos III. of Spain, – which contains three or four well-filled apartments of paintings, with one and, in some instances, two pictures each of such masters as Leonardo da Vinci, Velasquez, Titian, Van Dyck, Rubens, Perugino, and others. There is also a large hall of sculpture attached, which presents casts of many well-known and classic originals. This department, however, does not compare well with the rest of the institution. The art gallery will be sure to greatly interest the stranger, as being the foundation of an institution evidently destined in time to reach a high degree of excellence. Besides possessing several priceless examples by the old masters, there are many admirable pictures, the result of native talent, which are remarkable for their conception and execution. Two large canvases by José Maria Velasco, representing the Valley of Mexico, form fine and striking landscapes which few modern painters can equal. These two paintings were exhibited at the Philadelphia Exposition, and won high encomiums. In our estimation, the gem of the galleries is, unquestionably, the large canvas by Felix Parra, a native artist. It is entitled "Las Casas protecting the Aztecs from slaughter by the Spaniards." This young artist, not yet much over thirty years of age, has given us in this picture an original conception most perfectly carried out, which has already made him famous. It was painted before Parra had ever seen any other country except



Mexico, but it won for him the first prize at the Academy of Rome. The original painting was exhibited at the New Orleans Exposition not long since, eliciting the highest praise from art critics. It is worthy of being placed in the Louvre or the Uffizi. One canvas, entitled "The Dead Monk," attracted us as being singularly effective. The scene represents several monks, with tapers in their hands, surrounding the dead body of a brother of their order. The dim light illumines the scared faces of the group, as it falls upon the calm, white features of the dead. The masterly handling of color in this picture has rarely been excelled.

The Academy of San Carlos contains an art school free to the youth of the city, and is subsidized by government to the amount of thirty-five thousand dollars per annum. As we passed through the galleries, a large class of intelligent-looking boys, whose age might have ranged from twelve to fifteen years, were busily engaged with their pencils and drawing-paper in copying models placed before them, under the supervision of a competent instructor. It was pleasant to see the democratic character of this assemblage of pupils. All classes were represented. The school is as free to the son of a peon as to him with the richest of parents. Prizes are given for meritorious work by the students; one annual prize is especially sought for, namely, an allowance of six hundred dollars a year for six years, to enable the recipient to study art abroad. The institution is in a reasonably flourishing condition, but it lacks the stimulus of an appreciative community to foster its growth and to incite emulation among its pupils.

Strangers visit, admire, and applaud, but native residents exhibit little or no enthusiasm for this nucleus of the fine arts in the national capital. The encouragement offered to artists in any line in Mexico is extremely small. There can hardly be said to be any home demand for their products. There is one other canvas, seen in the galleries, which comes back to memory, and of which it is a pleasure to speak in commendation. The artist's name has escaped us, but the admirable and effective picture represented "Columbus contemplating the Sea."

Art should certainly be at home in Mexico, where it has found expression in various forms for hundreds of years. What were the picture-writings of the aborigines but early examples of art? There are numerous specimens of Aztec paintings illustrative of the early history of Mexico, which were produced long before the arrival of the conquering Spaniards. Some of these on deerskin, and some on a sort of parchment, or papyrus, which the Toltecs and Aztecs made from the leaves of the maguey plant, may be seen in European museums. They show that the arts of metal casting and the manufacture of cotton and of jewelry were derived from the Toltecs by the Aztecs. There are plenty of examples to be seen showing that these aborigines were admirable workers in silver and gold. So eager was Cortez to send large sums of gold to his sovereign, and thus to win royal forgiveness and countenance as regarded his gross insubordination in stealing away from Cuba, and in boldly taking upon himself all the prerogatives of a viceroy, that he not only

extorted every ounce of gold dust he could possibly obtain from the natives of the conquered provinces, but he melted many of their beautiful and precious ornaments into more available shape for his purpose. Some of these he transmitted to Spain, where, in course of time, they also shared the same fate. The aggregate sum thus sent by him to Spain, as given in the records of the period, was so large as to provoke our incredulity. Were specimens of those golden ornaments, the product of Toltec and Aztec art, now extant, they would be worth fifty times their weight in gold, and form tangible links of history connecting the present with the far past. This native art has been handed down from generation to generation; and there is nothing of the sort made in the world superior to Mexican silver filigree work, which recalls the lace-like texture of similar ornaments manufactured at Genoa. Again, illustrative of this natural instinct for art in the aborigines, let us not forget to speak of the colored straw pictures produced by the Indian women, representing natural scenery and prominent buildings, done with wonderful fidelity, even in the matter of perspective. Statuettes or wax figures are also made by them, representing the native laboring classes and street scenes to the very life. This is a sort of specialty in Naples; but we have never seen one of these small Italian figures superior to those which one can buy in the stores on San Francisco Street in Mexico, all of which are the work of untaught native Indians. While we are writing these lines, there stands upon our library table a specimen of Mexican pottery which we brought from Guadalajara. It is

of an antique pattern, made by hand in an Indian mud cabin, beautifully decorated and glazed, combining colors which mingle in perfect harmony. This is not an organized industry here. Each family produces its own ware for sale; and no two pieces can be exactly similar. No people, unless possessed of a high degree of artistic instinct and appreciation, could produce pottery, either in shape or finish, such as the traveler sees at Guadalajara.

We are told that the ancient Aztecs excelled in one branch of art above all others; namely, in the production of scenes and various ornamentations in feather work, the effect of which is similar to Florentine mosaic. The gorgeous plumage of the humming-bird and of parrots was especially devoted to this object. The feathers, glued upon a cotton web, were made into dresses for the wealthy to wear on festal occasions. The gradations and brilliancy of these feather pictures are said to have been marvelous. There is preserved in the museum at the national capital a vestment of this character, said to have been worn by Montezuma II. Antonio de Solis, royal historiographer, speaks of "a quantity of plumes and other curiosities made from feathers," by the Aztecs, "whose beauty and natural variety of colors, found on the native birds of the country, were placed and combined with wonderful art, distributing the several colors and shadowing the light with the dark so exactly, that, without making use of artificial colors or of the pencil, they could draw pictures, and would undertake to imitate nature." One is constantly importuned, in the patio of the Iturbide Hotel,

to purchase figures and small landscapes newly made of these brilliant feathers, offered at a very moderate price. Indeed, their production forms quite an industry among a certain class of Indians. So it seems that this art has been inherited; there being no present market for such elaborate examples as used to be produced, the fine artistic ability of centuries past is neither demanded, nor does it exist. According to one Spanish authority (Clavigero), so abundant were sculptured images that the foundation of the cathedral on the Plaza Mayor is entirely composed of them! Another writer of the same nationality (Gama) says that a new cellar cannot be dug in the capital without turning up some of the mouldering relics of barbaric art. As cellars cannot be dug at all on account of the mere crust of earth existing above the water, this veracious historian could not have written from personal knowledge, or have visited the country. It is these irresponsible writers who have made "history" to suit their own purposes. Father Torquemada surpasses Baron Munchausen when he tells us that, at the dedication of a certain aboriginal temple, a procession of persons two miles long, numbering seventy-two thousand, perished on the sacrificial stone, which is now exhibited in the National Museum of Mexico. This stone, by the way, is to our mind clearly Toltec, not Aztec. Examination shows it to be identical with the stone relics of Tula, the original capital of the Toltecs. The same may be said of the "Calendar Stone," placed in the outer walls of the cathedral.

The National Conservatory of Music, dating from January 25, 1553, is near at hand; so also is the National Library, where the admirable collection of books numbers nearly two hundred thousand. The confiscated convent of Saint Augustine serves as an appropriate building for this library of choice books. We say of choice books, not only because they are many of them unique, but because all books are choice, being sources from which the careful student and historian can cull true history and philosophy. He does not accept each and all of the statements which are here presented, but from the collated mass culls the truthful deductions. These books very largely and very naturally relate to religious subjects, as they are mostly made up from the confiscated convent libraries heretofore existing in Mexico. Valuable modern and secular books have been added to these collections from time to time. Our attention was called to a volume bearing the date of 1472, and to one still older which was printed in two colors. There is here an atlas of England which was printed in Amsterdam in 1659, with steel plates, and in colors which are as bright and fresh as though just from the press. A Spanish and Mexican dictionary, printed in Mexico in 1571, showed how early the printing-press followed the period of the conquest. A book of autographs bearing the names of Cortez's notable soldiers was interesting. This, we understood, was one of the much-coveted prizes which has been sought by foreign collectors. The manuscripts are of great antiquity and interest. One was in the form of a large volume, done with the pen in old

English letters; another, very highly prized, is of painted pictures, which purports to be original dispatches from Montezuma to his allies, and which was captured by Cortez. This last is on a roll of prepared deerskin. The richly-carved front of the library is a profound study in itself, and is the work of a native artist. The fence which incloses the edifice is ornamented with marble busts of famous scientists, orators, and authors, while beautiful flowers grace the small plot in front, the whole made refreshingly cool by the playing of a small fountain. This library contains books in all languages, and bearing dates of four hundred years since. Some of these books are almost priceless in value, very old, and believed to be unique. We were told that an agent of the British Museum, who came thousands of miles for the purpose, had offered a fabulous price for some half a dozen volumes on the shelves of the National Library of Mexico; but he offered the princely sum in vain, – a fact which speaks well for those in authority. The library has no systematic arrangement and no catalogue.

The Plaza Mayor must be fully a thousand feet square. It was laid out and beautified under the personal direction of the youthful, handsome, and would-be empress, Carlotta, who exhibited exquisite taste in such matters, and hesitated at no cost to carry out her imperial will, freely expending from her private fortune for the purpose. In the centre of the plaza is the Zacalo, so called, screened with groups of orange-trees, choice shrubbery, and flowers. Here there is a music stand

and fountain, where frequent out-of-door concerts are given by military bands, especially in the evenings. At the western side of the square, under the shadow of the cathedral, is the flower market, rendering the whole neighborhood fragrant in the early mornings with the perfume it exhales, while it delights the eye with hillocks of bright color. This market is in an iron pavilion covered in part with glass, the lovely goods presided over by nut-brown women and pretty Indian girls. Barbaric as the Aztecs were, they had a true love and tenderness for flowers, using them freely in their religious rites, a taste which three hundred years and more of oppression, together with foreign and civil wars, has not served to extinguish. The most abundant specimens of the floral kingdom one meets with here are red and white roses, very finely developed, pinks of all colors, violets, mignonette, heliotrope, scarlet and white poppies, pansies, and forget-me-nots. Such flowers were artistically mingled in large bouquets, with a delicate backing of maiden-hair fern, and sold for fifteen cents each. There is no fixed tariff of prices, strangers naturally paying much more than the residents, and the sum first demanded being usually double what will be finally received, – a manner of trade which is by no means confined to the Spanish-speaking races. It must be remembered that although, these are cultivated flowers, still they bloom out-of-doors all the year round. The women venders emulate their lovely wares in the colors they assume in their costumes. The dahlia, we are told, first came from the valley of Mexico. The universal love of



flowers finds expression in the houses, not only of the rich, but in those of the very humble poor, all over the town and the environs.

It was interesting to note the special class of customers drawn in the early morning to this flower pagoda. These were the true lovers of Flora, bent upon securing their favorites while damp with dewy sweetness. There was the very humble but appreciative purchaser, who invested only a few centavos, but took away a choice collection of bright colors and of mingled fragrance. Here was an ardent lover, all eagerness, who would write his words of devotion to his idol in the alphabet of angels. Now and then an American tourist was seen to carry away an armful of bouquets to bestow with impartial hand among his lady friends. Looking on at the suggestive scene is a scantily-clad Indian girl, with a curious hungry expression upon her face. Is it flowers or food that she craves? She shall have both. How rich the color of her cheek; how eloquent the expression of her dark eyes; how grateful her hesitating smile, as she receives from the stranger a piece of silver and a cluster of flowers!

On the open space in front of the cathedral a sort of daily fair is held, where a most incongruous trade is carried on amid great confusion; but there are no more male and female slaves offered for sale here, as in the days of the Spanish victors. Slavery existed both under Aztec and Spanish rule; but it was abolished, as an institution, soon after the establishment of Mexican independence. The match boys, lottery-ticket venders, fruit men, ice-cream hawkers, cigar and cigarette dealers, and

country women (each with a baby tied to her back), rend the air with their harsh and varied cries, while the stranger is quickly discovered, and importuned to the verge of endurance. We were told that this army of hawkers and peddlers were allowed just in the shadow of the church by special permit, a percentage of the benefit derived from the sales accruing to the priests, who carry on their profession inside the walls of the grand and beautiful edifice, where a less noisy, but quite as commercial a performance is going on all the while, "indulgences" being bartered and sold to moneyed sinners nearly every hour of the day.

The principal market-place has always been near the plaza, at its southwest end, a single block away; but a new and more spacious one is in course of erection at this writing, progress being made in the usual *mañana* style. Sunday morning is the great market day of the week, the same as in all Mexican cities, when there is here a confusion of tongues that would silence the hubbub of the Paris Bourse. How a legitimate business can be accomplished under such circumstances is a marvel. Each line of trade has its special location, but confusion reigns supreme.

In passing through the Calle de San Francisco, we were struck with the difference of temperature between the sunny and the shady sides of the street. It must have been fully ten degrees. One becomes uncomfortably warm while walking in the sunshine, but upon crossing into the shade he is quickly chilled by the frostiness of the still, dry atmosphere and a realizing sense of

dampness beneath his feet. "Only dogs and Americans walk on the sunny side," say the Mexicans. To this we can only answer by commending the discretion of both men and beasts. In the early evening, as soon as the sun sets, the natives begin to wrap up their throats and faces, even in midsummer. Yet they seem to avoid the sun while it shines in the middle of the day.

In New Zealand and Alaska, when two natives meet each other and desire to express pleasure at the circumstance, they rub their noses together. In Mexico, if two gentlemen meet upon the street or elsewhere after a considerable absence, they embrace cordially and pat each other on the back in the most demonstrative manner, just as two parties fall on each other's neck in a stage embrace. To a cool looker-on this seemed rather a waste of the raw material, taking place between two individuals of the same sex. In Japan, two persons on meeting in public begin bowing their bodies until the forehead nearly touches the ground, repeating this movement a score of times. In China, two gentlemen who meet greet each other by shaking their own left hand in their right. In Norway and Sweden, the greeting is made by taking off and replacing the hat half a dozen times; the greater number of times, the more cordial is the greeting considered; but in Mexico it is nothing more nor less than an embrace with both arms.

The carrying of concealed weapons is prohibited by law in the United States and some other countries, but in Mexico a statute is not permitted to be simply a dead letter. While we were at the Iturbide, the police of the capital were vigorously enforcing

a new law, which forbids the carrying of any sort of deadly weapon except in open sight. The common people were being searched for knives, of which, when found, they were instantly deprived, so that at one of the police stations there was a pile of these articles six feet high and four wide. They were in all manner of shapes, short and long, sharp and dull, daggerlike or otherwise, but all worn for the purpose either of assault or defense. They came from the possession of the humble natives, who could not plead that they kept them for domestic uses or for eating purposes, since they use neither knife nor fork in that process. We were told that this wholesale seizure had been going on for a month or more, the police stopping any person whom they chose in order to search them in the street. Such a thing as resistance is not thought of by a peon; he knows that it is of no sort of use, and will be the cause of sending him to prison immediately. Quarrels at low drinking places are no longer followed by the use of knives. It was the frequency of these assaults which filled the hospitals with victims and caused the passage of a law which meets the exigencies of the case. The fine for carrying concealed weapons is heavy, besides involving the penalty of imprisonment. A certain class of persons coming from out of the city are permitted to carry revolvers, but they must be in a belt and in full sight. Probably no municipal law was ever more thoroughly enforced than this of disarming the common class of this city.

The tramway facilities are so complete in the city of Mexico

that one has very little occasion to employ hackney coaches. Sometimes, however, these will be found, if not absolutely necessary, yet a great convenience. The legal charges are very moderate, and may well be so, for the entire turnout is usually of a most broken-down character, – poor horses, or mules, a stupid driver, and a dirty interior, with such a variety of offensive smells as to cause one to enter into an analysis to decide which predominates. One dollar an hour is the average charge made for these vehicles, the driver expecting, as in similar cases in Paris, Berlin, or elsewhere, a trifle as a *pourboire* at the end of the service for which he is engaged. Where these ruinous structures which pass for public carriages originally came from is a conundrum; but there can be no possible doubt as to their antiquity. Mexican fleas, like those of Naples and continental Spain, are both omnivorous and carnivorous, and these vehicles are apt to be itinerant asylums for this pest of the low latitudes. There are three grades of hackney coaches in the capital, those comparatively decent, another class one degree less desirable, and a third into which one will get when compelled to do so, not otherwise. Each of these grades is designated by a small metal sign in the shape of a flag, of a certain color, and the charges are graduated accordingly. As to the drivers, they are not such outright swindlers as those of their tribe in New York, nor by any means so tidy and intelligent as those of Boston.

## CHAPTER IX

A City of Vistas. – Want of Proper Drainage. – Unfortunate Site. – Insecure Foundations. – A Boom in Building Lots. – Pleasant Suburbs. – Night Watchmen. – The Iturbide Hotel. – A Would-be Emperor. – Domestic Arrangements. – A New Hotel wanted. – Places of Public Entertainment. – The Bull Ring. – Repulsive Performance. – Monte de Piedad. – An English Syndicate purchase it. – The Alameda. – The Inquisition. – Festal Days. – Pulque Shops. – The Church Party. – Gilded Bar-Rooms. – Mexican Marriages. – Mothers and Infants. – A Family Group.

Mexico is a city of vistas. One looks down the long perspective of a thoroughfare north, south, east, or west, and at the end he sees the purple mountains, some far away, some quite near to view, some apparently three miles off, some sixty; but the air is so transparent that even the most distant objects seem to be very near at hand. Beneath the plain which immediately surrounds the city is a dry marsh which was a broad lake in Cortez's day, – indeed, it is a lake still, four or five feet below the surface of the ground, containing the accumulated drainage of centuries. The site of the national capital was formerly an island, only a trifle above the level of Lake Texcoco; hence there are no cellars possible beneath the dwelling-houses of the populace. Herein

lies the secret of the want of drainage, and of the unpleasant and unwholesome odors which are constantly saluting the senses and challenging the remarks of strangers. Were it not for the absence of atmospheric moisture in this high altitude, where perishable articles of food dry up and do not spoil by mould or putrefaction, the capital would be swept by pestilence annually, being underlaid by a soil reeking with pollution. As it is, typhoid fever prevails, and the average duration of life in the city is recorded at a fraction over twenty-six years! Lung and malarial diseases hold a very prominent place among the given causes of mortality. Owing to the proximity of the mountains, the rains sometimes assume the character of floods. A resident friend of the author's told him that he had seen the surrounding streets and the Plaza Mayor covered with two feet of water, extending a quarter of a mile up San Francisco Street after a sharp summer shower, which did not continue much more than an hour. Of course this gradually subsides; but the inconvenience of such an episode in a busy city, not to speak of its unwholesomeness, is a serious matter. The wonder is that Cortez, after destroying the Aztec capital, should have rebuilt it on so undesirable a site, while there was plenty of higher and more inviting ground close at hand. To this blunder is owing the unhealthfulness of a city which might have been rendered one of the most salubrious dwelling-places on the continent, if placed on any of the neighboring elevated lands, with their possibilities for pure air, their location above fogs, and their being so entirely out of the range of

devastating storms. Peter the Great had good and sufficient reason for building his capital at such enormous expense upon marshy ground beside the Neva, but one can see no good reason for Cortez's choice of a site for this capital. History gives us an account of seven disastrous floods which have occurred in this city since 1521, all of which were accompanied with serious loss of life, as well as great destruction of property. If a broad channel could be opened so as to reach the Tula River, some forty miles away, adequate drainage might be obtained for the capital. This is too stupendous an undertaking, however, for Mexican capital or enterprise. Perhaps a foreign company will some day accomplish it; but whether such a scheme would be a safe one, *quien sabe?* It is possible that in attempting to procure perfect drainage, even a worse condition of affairs might be brought about. The city, it will be understood, rests upon a body of water supported by an intervening stratum of earth and accumulated debris. If this buried lake were to be drained, that is, absolutely removed, would not a collapse of some sort necessarily take place? What would support the present frail foundations of the city buildings, which seem to be now sustained by hydraulic pressure? Even as it is, no heavy structure can be found in the limits of the capital which is not more or less out of plumb, in emulation of the leaning tower of Pisa. The thick walls of the Iturbide Hotel are so full of cracks and crevices, caused by the settling here and there of its insecure foundation, as to cause anxiety and constant remark among its guests. There is another consideration worthy of mention. It is



said by persons whose intelligence makes their opinion worthy of consideration, that during the severe earthquake which took place here in 1882, the nearness of the water to the surface of the earth prevented the city from the destruction which was imminent. This certainly may have been a correct deduction.

As the city is in the lowest part of the valley, and all the lakes except that of Texcoco are above its level, there is no positive safety from inundation at any hour. The lake just named is said to be only about two feet below the level of the city plaza. As the valley is entirely closed by a wall of mountains, there is no natural outlet for these extensive waters. Lake Zumpango, with a surface ten miles square, is twenty-nine feet higher than the average level of the city of Mexico. Such drainage as is contemplated must tap and carry away these lakes also, to obviate the danger of their flooding the capital on any extraordinary emergency, else it will be of little avail.

At this writing there is quite a "boom" in land in the neighboring suburbs of San Angel and Tacubaya, which present most desirable building localities, and are free from the prominent objections of the capital itself. The latter suburb already contains nearly ten thousand inhabitants. It is situated on a hillside, sloping towards the northwest. In its present form the town is quite modern, but from the earliest times there has been a village here. After the great inundation of 1629, the project of making this the site of the capital was seriously considered. There is already a small alameda and a miniature plaza in Tacubaya.

San Angel is a couple of miles further away from the city, and is also built on a hillside, amid orchards and gardens. The deserted and ancient Carmelite monastery is a feature of this place. Both Tacubaya and San Angel can be reached almost any hour of the day from Mexico by tramway, the cars starting from the Plaza Mayor. It was noticed that considerable building for domestic purposes was going on in both of these places, but principally at Tacubaya, and it is thought the citizens of Mexico are "hedging," as it were, by providing themselves with pleasant and healthful homes in anticipation of some sort of collapse which must sooner or later befall the business portions of the capital. There is universal complaint regarding the high price of rents in the city for respectable residences, quite a percentage having been added to the rates heretofore charged each succeeding year. Drainage is more and more seriously thought of by cutting an outlet of some sort, as we have suggested, and what result may follow remains to be seen. That there is a steady growth of population and business here is perfectly obvious, stimulated by closer business connections with the United States, which are being constantly added to. People who look in advance see that ten years hence the two suburban towns will practically be part and parcel of the city proper. The new buildings now erecting in Tacubaya are observed to be of stone, and built to last. Wooden structures are almost unknown. Iron is used for many purposes, taking the place of wooden beams, as in this country. We were assured by intelligent persons that all skilled mechanics were

busy, such as masons, iron-workers, plasterers, and carpenters. It is surprising to the writer that more has not been said relative to the extraordinary growth and prosperity of the national capital of Mexico. The most prominent agent in bringing all this about is undoubtedly the Mexican Central Railroad.

One easily becomes acquainted with the topography of the city, each point of the compass leading directly to the mountains, while the town itself forms a perfect level. The chief business street leads from the railroad depot to the Plaza Mayor. The most fashionable shopping street is that known as the Street of the Silversmiths. It is of good width, and nearly a mile long. Calle de San Francisco is another of the main business thoroughfares. As a rule, the many sacred titles given to the streets come from the names of churches or convents which stood or still stand in them. Thus the Street of the Holy Ghost contains the church so designated. Several of the most important avenues, beside the Plaza Mayor and the alameda, are lighted by electricity, other portions of the city proper by gas, and the outlying districts by oil-fed lanterns. One peculiar object, always observable in the city at night, is the bright lantern of the policeman of the immediate beat, placed in the middle of the junction of the streets, with the man himself standing beside it, ready to answer any legitimate call for his services. The police system of the capital is certainly excellent, and in the two weeks which we passed there no such affair as a street brawl of any sort was seen, though we visited all parts of the town, and at all hours of the day and night. There

are few of our own cities where the public peace is so thoroughly preserved, or with so little demonstration, as is the case in the capital of Mexico.

Our hotel, the Iturbide, – pronounced Eater-beady, – situated on the Calle de San Francisco, and called after the emperor of the same name (Don Agustin de Iturbide), is probably the best, as it is the largest in the city; but this is faint praise. Hotel-keeping is one of the arts which, at its best, has not yet been introduced into this country. Iturbide's aspiration led him to assume the imperial crown, in consequence of which he fell. After reigning for a twelvemonth, he was banished from Mexico on parole never to return. This parole he broke, landing from Europe at Vera Cruz in 1824. He was seized, thrown into prison, and was shot by orders of the government, as a traitor, July 19 of the same year. The old flint muskets used for the purpose hang beside the modern arms, in the national armory, with which was performed a like sentence upon Maximilian. Thus the two men who essayed the role of emperor of Mexico ended their career. The Iturbide is spacious and well situated, being within a few rods of the Plaza Mayor, and having once served as the palace of the emperor whose name it bears. It is entered, like the Palace Hotel of San Francisco, and the Grand Hotel of Paris, by an archway leading into a spacious area or court, on whose four sides rises the elaborate structure. Upon this patio the several stories open, each with a line of balcony. This broad area, open to the sky, is paved with marble, and has spacious stairways of the

same material. The windows are of the French, pattern and open down to the floor, so that the occupant of each room steps out upon the balcony by passing through them. The windows are the same on the public street side. The house is fairly well furnished so far as comfort is concerned, and the beds – well, they might possibly be worse, – domestic comfort is not the strong point in the Iturbide, where cleanliness is also one of the lost arts. All the chambermaids here, as in Japan, are men, and very good servants they are, according to their light and the material which is furnished to them. The fact that three fourths of them bear the name of Jesus is, it must be admitted, a little confusing when it is desired to summon any particular one. In the selection of a sleeping apartment the visitor should be sure, if it is possible, to obtain one facing east or south, thus securing an abundance of sunshine. Rooms situated otherwise, in this climate particularly, are liable to be damp and even dangerous to health, especially in a city which rests upon the surface, as it were, of a hidden lake. Such facts may seem to be trifles to the casual reader, but experience will soon teach him their real importance.

The broad, three-story front of the Iturbide Hotel is quite imposing, and exhibits some very elaborate native carving in stone. We were told that it was once occupied by a very rich and eccentric mine owner for the accommodation of himself and family, embracing half a dozen wives and over sixty children! quite after the style of a Turkish harem or the establishment of a Utah magnate. A capacious and well-appointed hotel on

the American plan is something which this city greatly needs. It would be welcomed and well-patronized by the native citizens, and all foreign travelers would gladly seek its accommodations. It seems that a large Mexican hotel designed to cost some two million dollars is already under consideration by an incorporated company of wealthy natives; but this will not, we believe, fill the requirements of the present time. The Mexicans do not know how to keep a hotel, and any money expended in the proposed plan, we suspect, will be next to thrown away. Government has lent its aid to the purpose of establishing a new hotel on a grand scale, by passing an act exempting from import duties all furniture and goods intended for use in the house, to the amount of fifteen per cent, on the entire capital invested in the enterprise of building and properly equipping the establishment. This exemption from custom-house taxes will prove a saving of considerably over two hundred thousand dollars to the hotel company. Now, if this purpose is consummated and the owners will put the whole in charge of an experienced American, something satisfactory may come from it. The best hotels in the world are kept by Americans, – this not in the spirit of boasting, – and next to them in this line of business come the Swiss, who have copied us very closely. The English follow, but rank only third in the line of progress, while the Mexicans are simply nowhere. The Iturbide has no ladies' or gentlemen's parlor, that is to say, it has no public reception-room worthy of the name. The conventionalities here do not absolutely demand

such an arrangement, though it would be appreciated; nor can one obtain any artificial heat in his apartment, however much it may be required. There are no fireplaces or chimneys in the house, while the other domestic accommodations are of the most primitive character. As to food, the Iturbide is kept on the European plan, and one can order according to his fancy. The service, however, is anything but neat or clean. The meal-hours are divided as in France and continental Europe generally: coffee and bread upon first rising, breakfast at noon, and dinner at six o'clock in the evening. The proprietor has lately put into service a very good steam elevator, which was at first deemed to be a serious innovation. We heard of some rather ludicrous experiences which occurred during the first few days of its use; but the people were very soon reconciled to the comfort it afforded, and put aside their prejudices. Even this elevator is so restricted in its running hours as not to afford the guests the accommodation it should supply. As some one has wittily said of the ballet-girl's costume, it begins too late and leaves off too early.

The ice used in the city of Mexico comes from the top of the neighboring range of mountains, but it is rarely seen except in bar-rooms, the retail price being ten cents a pound. In order to obtain a cool temperature for their drinking water, the people keep it in porous earthen jars made by the native Indians. Rapid evaporation from the outside of the vessels renders the water highly refreshing, indeed, cool enough, the dry atmosphere is so

very active an absorbent. The ice is brought to the nearest railway station wrapped in straw, on the backs of the peons, and is thus transported daily, no large quantity being kept on hand.

Opening from the main patio of the Iturbide Hotel upon the level of the street is a large billiard-saloon and bar-room combined. As our bedroom was on the first chamber floor, and opened upon this patio, with a little balcony and a long French window, we had the benefit nightly, as well as daily, of all the ceaseless noises which usually emanate from such a place. Billiard balls kept up their peculiar music until the wee small hours of the morning, and all day on the Sabbath. The Mexicans, like the Cubans, do not drink deep, but they drink often; and though it is seldom that a respectably dressed person is seen intoxicated, either on the streets or elsewhere, still the active bartenders of the Iturbide drinking-saloon did not quit their posts until nearly broad daylight in the morning. So our sleep in that palace hotel was achieved to the accompaniment of clinking billiard-balls, the clatter of drinking-glasses, the shaking up of iced mixtures, and the sharp voices of disputants at the card-tables. However, a thoroughly tired person can sleep under almost any circumstances; and after many hours each day devoted to sight-seeing, the writer did not spend much time in moralizing over the doings in the spacious apartment beneath him.

Regarding places of public entertainment, the city contains several theatres and a permanent circus, but only one of



the theatres seemed to be patronized by the best people; namely, the Teatro Nacional, built so late as 1844, and having seating capacity for three thousand persons. The commencement exercises of the military school of Chapultepec are given annually in this house. Here, at least one good opera company is engaged for a brief season annually; indeed, there is some kind of opera, French, Spanish, or Italian, nearly all the year round. Smoking of cigarettes between the acts is freely indulged in by the audience; and though the ladies do not smoke in public, at least not generally, they are known to be free users of the weed at home. Three other theatres, the Coliseo Viejo, the Arbeu, and the Hidalgo, are respectably good; there are three or four others, minor establishments, all open on Sundays, but they are to be avoided.

There is a spacious bull-ring at the northern end of the paseo, on the left of the roadway as we drive towards Chapultepec, where exhibitions are given to crowded assemblies every Sunday and on festal days. Of all the public sports the bull-fight is the most cruel, being without one redeeming feature to excuse its indulgence, while its evil moral effect upon the people at large is clearly manifest. There is certainly a close affinity between the Spanish language and the Latin, as well as a strong resemblance between the old Roman masses and the modern Spanish people. In the olden days the Roman populace cried, *Panem et circenses* (bread and circuses); so to-day the Spanish people shout, *Pan y toros* (bread and bulls). The bull-fight is a national institution

here, as it is in continental Spain and in Cuba, and is strongly indicative of the character of the people. While we were in the country a bull-fight performance was given on a Sunday in one of the large cities, as a "benefit" towards paying for a new altar-rail to be placed in one of the Romish churches. Only among a semi-barbarous people and in a Roman Catholic country would such horrible cruelty be tolerated, and especially as a Sabbath performance. This is the day when these shameful exhibitions always take place, at Madrid as well as in Mexico, it being also the most popular and fashionable evening of the week for theatrical entertainments.

Some of our party attended one of these exhibitions in the city of Mexico; but they very promptly and emphatically declared that nothing could induce them again to witness anything of the sort, pronouncing it to be only a repulsive butchery. The author had seen both in Spain and in Cuba quite as much as he desired of this wretched national game, and therefore he did not visit it on the occasion referred to above. A distinguished citizen of the national capital, General H — , told us that the better class of ladies did not now attend the bull-fights in Mexico, though there are plenty of women who do so regularly. "I have four grown-up daughters, one of whom is married," said he, "but neither they nor their mother ever witnessed this debasing exhibition. Be assured," he continued, "that the cultured class of our community do not sympathize with these relics of barbarism." This is a sentiment which we are gratified to record, more especially as

at Madrid, the headquarters of the cruel game, it has not only the full sanction of the public officials and of the *élite* of the Spanish capital, but the patronage of royalty itself. The central box of the bull-ring in that city is reserved for the court, and there are no empty seats during the performance. A law was passed a few years since forbidding bull-fights to take place in the Federal District of Mexico; but this law has been repealed in accordance with the clamorous demand of a large majority of the people; besides which the law was virtually inoperative, as these exhibitions were held all the same, only they were removed to a few rods beyond the boundary of the prohibited territory. The thought comes over us that, after all, the bull-fight is but one degree worse than the shameful prize-fights of professional bruisers in England and America.

One of the most admirable and practical charities established in the Mexican capital is known as the Monte de Piedad, which is simply a national pawn-shop. The title signifies, "The Mountain of Mercy." It was originally founded more than a century since by Count Regla, the owner of the famous silver mine of Real del Monte, who gave the sum of three hundred thousand dollars for the purpose, in order that the poor and needy of the population of this city might obtain advances of money on personal property at a low and reasonable rate of interest. Any article deposited for this purpose is valued by two disinterested persons, and about three fourths of its intrinsic worth is promptly advanced. If the owner ceases to pay the interest on the loan, the article in pawn

is kept six months longer, when it is exposed for sale at a marked price. After six months more have expired, if the article is not disposed of, it is sold at public auction, and all that is realized above the sum which was advanced, together with the interest, is placed to the original owner's credit. This sum, if not called for within a given time, reverts to the bank. The capital of the institution has more than doubled since its organization, but the amount of good which it has been the means of accomplishing cannot be estimated. Its first effect was to break up all the private pawn-brokers' establishments which charged usurious interest for money, its own rates being placed at a low figure, intended barely to meet necessary expenses. These exceedingly low rates have always been scrupulously maintained. The average annual loans on pledges amount to a million dollars, distributed among about fifty thousand applicants. The establishment is also a sort of safe deposit. All the goods in its vaults have not been pawned. As the place is a sort of fortress in its way, many valuables are here stored for safe-keeping. One dollar is the smallest sum that is loaned, and ten thousand dollars is the largest. The loans will average from two to three hundred daily. It appears that one third of the merchandise deposited is never redeemed. Among other articles of this class is the diamond snuff-box which was presented to Santa Anna when he was Dictator, and which cost twenty-five thousand dollars. Tourists often call in at the Monte de Piedad, looking for bargains in bricabrac, and sometimes real prizes are secured at very reasonable cost. A gentleman showed

the writer an old, illuminated book, of a religious character, entirely illustrated by the hand of some patriot recluse, which was marked five dollars, and upon which probably four dollars had been loaned to the party who deposited it. The time for its redemption had long since expired, and our friend gladly paid the sum asked for it. He said he should take it to the Astor Library, New York, where he felt confident of receiving his own price for it, namely, one hundred dollars: "Then," said he, "I will give the money to some worthy charity in my native city." The volume had undoubtedly been stolen, and pawned by the thief. Possession is considered to be *bona fide* evidence of ownership, and unless circumstances are very suspicious, money is nearly always advanced to the applicant on his or her deposit.

Speaking of old books, there are three or four second-hand bookstalls and stores under the arcades running along one side of the plaza, where rare and ancient tomes are sold. Volumes, of the value of which the venders seem to have no idea, are gladly parted with for trifling sums. Civil wars and the changes of government have never interfered with the operations of the Monte de Piedad. All parties have respected it and its belongings, with one exception – during the presidency of Gonzales in 1884, when its capital was somewhat impaired and its usefulness circumscribed by a levy of the government in its desperation to sustain the national credit in connection with its foreign loans. A curious collection of personal property is of course to be seen here, including domestic furniture, diamonds, rubies, and other

precious stones, swords, pistols, guns, saddles, canes, watches, clothing, and so on. The large building used for the purpose of carrying on the business stands upon the site once occupied by the private palace which formed the home of Cortez for so many years, a short distance west of the great cathedral. This institution has lately been sold to an English syndicate for the sum of one million dollars. The new owners have a cash capital of twenty-five millions, and will resume the banking department, which was suspended in 1884, and carry on the pawnbroking business as heretofore.

The alameda, a name usually applied to large Spanish parks, is a parallelogram of about thirty or forty acres in extent, situated between the two streets of San Francisco and San Cosme, abounding in eucalyptus trees, poplars, evergreens, orange and lemon trees, together with blooming flowers and refreshing fountains. In olden times this alameda – this forest-garden in the heart of the city – was inclosed by a wall pierced with several gates, which were only opened to certain classes and on certain occasions; but these grounds, greatly enlarged and beautified, are now open on all sides to the public, easily accessible from the surrounding thoroughfares. We were told that the name comes from the fact that the park was originally planted with *álamos*, or poplars. One cannot forget, while standing upon the spot and recalling the early days of the Spanish rule, that it was on a portion of these grounds that the hateful Inquisition burned its victims, because they would not subscribe to the Roman Catholic

faith. According to their own records, forty-eight unbelievers were here burned at the stake at one time. We do not think that the Aztec idolaters ever exceeded in wickedness or cruelty this fiendish act.

The alameda has a number of open circles with fountains in the centre, about which stone benches are placed as seats. These spaces are much frequented by children as playgrounds. An interesting aviary ornaments one of the roomy areas, filled with a variety of native and exotic birds, which attract crowds of curious observers. The inexhaustible spring at Chapultepec supplies these fountains, besides many others in various parts of the city, from whence water-carriers distribute the article for domestic use. The alameda is the largest public garden in the capital, of which there are twelve in all, and is the daily resort of the corpulent priest for exercise; of the ambitious student for thought and study; of the nursery maid with her youthful charge; and of wooing lovers and coquettish señoritas, accompanied by their staid chaperones. On Sunday forenoons a military band gives an out-of-door concert in the central music stand, on which occasion all grades of the populace come hither, rich and poor alike, the half-fed peon in his nakedness and the well-clad citizen. All classes have a passion for music. The cathedral empties itself, as it were, into the alameda just after morning mass. This, be it remembered, is the forenoon. The closing hours of the day are devoted to driving and promenading in the adjoining Paseo de la Reforma. On the evenings of festal days,

the central pavilion, where the band is placed, as well as other parts of the alameda, are illuminated with Chinese lanterns and electric lights disposed among the trees and about the fountains, so that the artificial lamps rival the light of day. On these gala occasions two or three additional bands of musicians are placed at different points to assist in the entertainment. The fountains play streams of liquid silver; the military bands discourse stirring music; the people, full of merriment, indulge in dulces, fruits, ice-cream, and confectionery, crowding every available space in the fairy-like grounds, and Mexico is happy.

There is no noisy demonstration on these occasions. The multitude, we must frankly acknowledge, are better behaved than any such assemblage usually is in Boston or New York. All seem to be quiet, contented, and enjoying themselves placidly. It should be mentioned, in this connection, that all pulque shops in the capital are promptly closed at six o'clock P. M. throughout the year. This is imperative and without exception; consequently, no evening disturbance is to be anticipated from that source. It was found that there are over two thousand *pulquerias* in the capital. The effect of this special stimulant, however, is not to make those who indulge freely in it pugnacious or noisy. It acts more like a powerful narcotic, and puts those who are overcome with it to sleep, having, in fact, many of the properties of opium. The gilded bar-rooms where the upper classes seek refreshment, who, by the way, seem rarely to abuse the privilege, are permitted to remain open until midnight, but into them the common people



have not the wherewithal to procure entrance. A tumbler of pulque which costs them a penny they indulge in, but drinks at fifteen or twenty cents each, and in small portions at that, are quite beyond their means. A somewhat peculiar effect of pulque drinking was also mentioned to us. The people who partake of it freely have an aversion to other stimulants, and prefer it to any and all others without regard to cost. The beer-drinking German is often similarly affected as regards his special tippale. Chemical test shows pulque to contain just about the same percentage of alcohol as common beer; say, five or six per cent.

Besides witnessing the foul deeds of the Inquisition when the priesthood publicly burned and otherwise tortured unbelievers, the alameda has frequently been the scene of fierce struggles, gorgeous church spectacles, and many revolutionary parades. Here scores of treasonable acts have been concocted, and daring robberies committed in the troublous times not long past. To-day it is peaceable enough; so quiet in the summer afternoons, here in the very heart of the busy city, that the drone of the busy humming-birds among the flowers comes soothingly upon the ear of the wakeful dreamer. Quiet now, but awaiting the next upheaval, for such, we are sorry to say, is pretty sure to come, sooner or later; the Roman Catholic Church party is not dead, but sleepeth. A strong, costly, and united effort on its part, stimulated from Rome, to once more gain control of the government of Mexico, has been successfully defeated without an open outbreak since the second term of President Diaz commenced.

The success of the church party would simply throw Mexico back half a century in her march of improvement towards a higher state of civilization. It would check all educational progress, all commercial advance, and smother both political and religious freedom.

The number of infant children, strapped or tied to their mothers' backs, that one sees in the streets of the capital, and indeed all through the country, is something marvelous. The fecundity of the peons is beyond all calculation. Eight women out of ten, belonging to the humbler classes, are sure to be thus encumbered. Marriages take place here at as early an age as in Cuba or South America, namely, at twelve years. Few young girls among the common people remain unmarried after fourteen years of age, or rather there are few of them that do not bear children as early as that. Marriage among the poor is a ceremony not always considered necessary, and, indeed, as a rule, they are too poor to pay the priest the price he charges for performing the ceremony. Speaking of marriage, this relationship among people of position and property is assumed under somewhat peculiar circumstances in Mexico. First, a civil marriage takes place, which makes all children born to the contracting parties legitimate. After this civil rite is duly complied with, perhaps a day and perhaps ten intervening, the usual church ceremony is performed, and then the bride and bridegroom join each other to enjoy their honeymoon, but until the latter ceremony is consummated, the couple are as much separated as at any time

of their lives. Why this delay in consummation takes place is by no means clear to an outsider.

One not infrequently sees a mother carrying two infants at a time wrapped in her rebosa, and tied across her chest; only ten months of age separating the little creatures. Besides these infants the mother carries her burden of vegetables, fruit, baskets, or pottery, to dispose of in the market near the plaza. Like Japanese and Chinese babies, these little ones seldom, if ever, cry, but submit patiently and with apparent indifference to what seems to be a very trying position, as well as to almost total neglect. These children were never in a bed since they were born. They probably sleep at night upon a straw mat spread upon the earthen floor, and we much doubt if they are ever washed. Sometimes the father is seen carrying the baby, but this is very rare; the women take the laboring oar almost always here, as among our Indian tribes, the people of the East, and the South Sea Islanders. This is a characteristic applicable not alone to the national capital, but observable again and again all over the republic. Though so very poor, and doubtless often suffering from hunger, the half naked people are not infrequently seen with a cigarette between the lips. Drunkenness is seldom seen, notwithstanding that pulque is cheap and potent, and it is very rarely the case, as already intimated, that any quarreling is witnessed among the people. They are quiet and orderly, as a rule, yet most of them are homeless and hopeless.

Though begging is chronic with the Spanish race everywhere,

and notoriously prevalent in continental Spain, persistent in Havana and Matanzas, and nearly universal throughout the Mexican republic, still, in the national capital it is far less obtrusive than elsewhere, because the police are instructed to suppress it. So, also, begging is prohibited by law in Paris, London, and Boston, but how constantly the law is disregarded we all know. Sad is the condition of things which, as Thackeray expresses it, gives the purple and fine linen to one set of men, and to the other rags for garments and dogs for comforters.

It is not uncommon to see a family group, mother, father, and one or two children, huddled close together in a street corner, where they have passed the night, sleeping in a half upright position, while leaning against an adobe wall. In an early morning walk towards the Paseo de la Viga, we saw just such a scene, with the addition of a mongrel dog, which had so bestowed himself as to give the shelter of his body as well as its natural warmth to a couple of small children. One thing the reader may be assured of, to wit: the whole family, including the dog, had a hearty and nourishing breakfast that morning at least.

# CHAPTER X

Benito Juarez's Grandest Monument – Hotel del Jardin. – General José Morelos. – Mexican Ex-Convents. – City Restaurants. – Lady Smokers. – Domestic Courtyards. – A Beautiful Bird. – The Grand Cathedral Interior. – A Devout Lottery Ticket Vender. – Porcelain-Ornamented Houses. – Rogues in Church. – Expensive Justice. – Cemetery of San Fernando. – Juarez's Monument. – Coffins to Let. – American and English Cemetery. – A Doleful Street and Trade.

There exists a much grander monument to the memory of Benito Juarez than the fine marble group over his last resting-place in the cemetery of San Fernando, namely, the noble School of Arts and Trades founded by him. Poor native girls are here afforded excellent advantages for acquiring a knowledge of various arts, while they are both clothed and fed free of cost to themselves. The pupils are taught type-setting, book-binding, drawing, music, embroidery, and the like. There is a store attached to the institution in which the articles produced by the inmates are placed for sale at a moderate price. We were told that their industry went a long way towards rendering the institution self-supporting, and so admirably is the work of embroidery executed here that the orders for goods are in advance of the supply. Nearly four hundred girls are at all times reaping the

advantage of this school, which is a grand and practical form of charity worthy of emulation. Individual instances of notable success crowning the career of graduates from this institution were related to us, some of which were of touching interest, and many quite romantic, showing that genius knows no sex, and that opportunity alone is often all that is required to develop possibilities frequently lying dormant about us.

The College of Medicine, near the Plazuela of San Domingo, occupies the old palace of the Inquisition, whose last victim in Mexico, General José Morelos, was executed in December, 1815. For two hundred and fifty years, since 1571, this institution of the church fattened upon the blood of martyrs. We do not wonder at the futile efforts of the Romish church of the nineteenth century to ignore, deny, and cover up these iniquities; but their awful significance is burned too deeply into the pages of history to be obliterated.

While engaged upon a voyage of discovery accompanied by a friend who has long resided in the city of Mexico, we chanced upon the Hotel del Jardin, a cheerful, sunny hostelry, occupying a building which was once a famous convent, leading our companion to remark that "the shameful record of wickedness, licentiousness, and cruelty, practiced in these Mexican institutions before their suppression, could it be made public, would astonish the world." The present Hotel del Jardin nearly surrounds a garden full of tropical verdure, and seemed very inviting. Determining to test its cuisine, dinner was ordered,

the presiding genius being given *carte blanche* to do his best; but, heaven save the mark! – all we have to add is, don't try the experiment of dining at the place referred to. The best and most usual way for transient visitors to this city is to take rooms in comfortable quarters, and to eat their meals at some of the fairly good restaurants in the neighborhood of the plaza. Of course, one cannot expect New York or Boston fare, nor do we come to Mexico for what we can obtain in the way of food and drink.

Among the groups observed sitting on the little balconies of the dwelling-houses, matrons are seen smoking their cigarettes as openly as do their husbands. Señoritas do the same on the sly. No place is exempt from the pungent fumes of tobacco. Pipes seem to be very seldom resorted to, and the chewing of tobacco, we are glad to say, is not indulged in at all, – a disgusting use of the weed almost solely confined to North America and ships' forecastles. Smoking, after all, did not seem to be so universal and incessant as we have seen it in some other countries. Perhaps this arises, in a measure, from want of means to pay for the article among the general population, since they are only half clothed in wretched rags, being mostly bareheaded and barefooted also. The lower class of Mexico could give the lazzaroni of Naples "points," and then outdo them vastly in squalor and nakedness. The idle, indolent, and thriftless outnumber all other classes in the republic, one reason for which is found in the fact common to all tropical countries, that the climate is such that the poor can safely sleep out of doors and without shelter, with nearly as much

comfort as those who have an humble covering in the shape of four adobe walls and a thatched roof. As a rule, these common people, men and women, are ugly in form and feature, except that they have superb black eyes and pearl-white teeth. Physical hardships do not tend to develop comeliness.

Strong contrasts meet the eye, – naturally to be expected in a community which is slowly becoming revolutionized from a state of semi-barbarism, as it were, to the broader civilization of its neighbors. This transition is very obvious as regards the dress of the populace. Silk stove-pipe hats and Derbys are crowding hard upon the cumbersome sombrero; the dainty Parisian bonnet is replacing the black lace mantilla; broadcloth is found to be more acceptable clothing than leather jackets and pantaloons; close-fitting calico and merino goods are driving out the rebosas, while woolen garments render the serapes needless. This, of course, is a city view. Small country communities still adhere to the simpler and cheaper national costume of the past, and will probably continue to do so for years to come.

In strolling about the better part of the city, one sees through the broad, arched entrances to the courtyards of the finest private residences in Mexico, upon the first or street floor, the stable, the kitchen, and the coach house, with hostlers grooming the animals, or washing the harnesses and vehicles, while the family live directly over all these arrangements, up one flight of broad stone steps. This is a Spanish custom, which is observable in Havana and continental Spain, as well as in all the cities of



Mexico. Other patios, whose occupants do not keep private vehicles, adorn these areas with charming plants, small tropical trees, blooming flowers, statuary, and fountains. Here and there hang cages containing bright-colored singing birds, parrots, and paroquets, not forgetting to mention the clear, shrill-voiced mocking-bird, which is a universal favorite. The Mexican macaw is pretty sure to be represented by a fine member of his species in these ornamental patios. He is a gaudy, noisy fellow. The head, breast, and back are of a deep red, the wings yellow, blue, and green. The tail is composed of a dozen feathers, six of which are stout, short, and tapering, while the rest are fourteen inches in length. He passes his time in screaming, and scrambling about with the aid of his claws and hooked beak combined, going as far as the tiny chain which is attached to one foot and fastened to the perch will permit. His favorite attitude seems to be hanging head downward from his perch like an acrobat, often remaining thus a distressingly long time, until one would fain coax him into a normal position with some favorite tidbit of cake, sugar, or fruit.

Officials and merchants often combine their dwellings and places of business, so that here and there a patio will exhibit various samples of merchandise, or the sign of a government official over a room devoted to office purposes. How people able to do otherwise are willing to sleep, eat, and live over a stable certainly seems, to us, very strange. At night these patios are guarded by closing large metal – studded doors, a concierge always sleeping near at hand either to admit any of the family

or to resist the entrance of any unauthorized persons, very much after the practice which is common in France and the cities of Northern Europe.

We used the expression "while strolling about the better part of the city," etc.; but let us not convey a wrong impression thereby, for there are no exclusively aristocratic streets or quarters in the city of Mexico. The houses of both the upper and lower classes are mingled, scattered here and there, often adjoining each other. Some few of the better class of houses, like the domes of some of the churches, are faced with porcelain tiles, giving the effect of mosaic; but this has a tawdry appearance, and is exceptional in the national capital. At Puebla it is much more common, that city being the headquarters of tile-manufacturing.

No matter how many times one may visit the grand cathedral, each fresh view impresses him with some new feature and also with its vastness. As to the harmony of its architectural effect, that element does not enter into the consideration, for there is really no harmony about it. Everything is vague, so to speak, irregular, and a certain appearance of incompleteness is apparent. There is at all times a considerable number of women, and occasionally members of the other sex, to be seen bending before the several chapels; deformed mendicants and professional beggars mingle with the kneeling crowd. Rags flutter beside the most costly laces; youth kneels with crabbled old age; rich and poor meet upon the same level before the sacred altar. Priests by the half dozen, in scarlet, blue, gilt, and yellow

striped robes officiate hourly before tall candles which flicker dimly in the daylight, while boys dressed in long white gowns swing censers of burning incense. The gaudy trappings have the usual theatrical effect, and no doubt serve, together with the deep peals of the organ, the dim light of the interior, the monotone of the priest's voice, in an unknown tongue, profoundly to impress the poor and ignorant masses. The largest number of devotees, nearly all of whom, as intimated, are women, were seen kneeling before the small chapel where rest the remains of Iturbide, first emperor of Mexico, whose tomb bears the simple legend: "The Liberator." None more appropriate could have been devised, for through him virtually was Mexican independence won, though his erratic career finally ended so tragically.

Just outside of the main entrance of the cathedral, a middle-aged woman was seen importuning the passers, and especially strangers, to purchase lottery tickets, her voice being nearly drowned by the loud tongue of the great bell in the western tower. Presently she thrust her budget of tickets into her bosom and entered the cathedral, where she knelt before one of the side altars, repeating incessantly the sign of the cross while she whispered a formula of devotion. A moment later she was to be seen offering her lottery tickets on the open plaza, no doubt believing that her business success in their sale would be promoted by her attendance before the altar. How groveling must be the ignorance which can be thus blinded!

It may not be generally known that these lotteries are operated,

to a considerable extent, by the church, and form one of its never-failing sources of income, proving more profitable even than the sale of indulgences, though the latter is *all* profit, whereas there is some trifling expense attendant upon getting up a lottery scheme. A few prizes must be distributed in order to make the cheat more plausible. As to the validity of indulgences, one cannot actually test that matter on this side of Lethe.

As will be seen, all classes of rogues are represented among the apparently devout worshipers. On the occasion of our second visit to the cathedral, a gentleman who had his pockets picked by an expert kneeling devotee hastened for a policeman, and soon returning, pointed out the culprit, who was promptly arrested; but, much to the disgust of the complainant, he also was compelled to go with the officer and prisoner to the police headquarters, where we heard that he recovered his stolen property, though it cost him three quarters of a day's attendance at some sort of police court, and about half the amount of the sum which the rogue had abstracted.

All observant strangers visit the cemetery of San Fernando, which adjoins the church of the same name. This is the Mount Auburn or Père la Chaise of Mexico, in a very humble sense, however. Here rest the ashes of those most illustrious in the history of the country. One is particularly interested in the tomb and monument of the greatest statesman Mexico has known, her Indian President, Benito Juarez, pronounced Hooarèz. The design of this elaborate tomb is a little confusing at

first, but the general effect is certainly very fine and impressive. The group consists of two figures, life size, wrought in the purest of white marble, showing the late president lying at full length in his shroud, with his head supported by a mourning female figure representing Mexico. The name of the sculptor is Manuel Islas, who has embodied great nobility and touching pathos in the expression of the combined whole. The base of the monument, as we stood before it, was half hidden by freshly contributed wreaths of flowers. A small Grecian temple surrounded by columns incloses this commemorative group, to which the traveler will be very sure to pay a second visit before leaving the capital. Many of the monuments in this city of the dead are of the beautiful native onyx, which has a very grand effect when cut in heavy slabs. The grounds are circumscribed in extent and overcrowded. No name, we believe, is held in higher esteem by the general public than that of Benito Juarez, who died July 18, 1872, after being elected to fill the presidential chair for a third term.

Juarez was a Zapotec Indian, a hill tribe which had never been fully under Spanish control. He was thoroughly educated, and followed the law as a profession. Being fully alive to its character, he always opposed the machinations of the Catholic Church. His dream and ambition was to establish a Mexican republic, and the present constitution, which bears date of 1857, was virtually his gift to the people. He has been very properly called the prophet and architect of the republic.

In the cemetery of San Fernando were also seen the tombs of Mejia and Miramon, the two generals who, together with Maximilian, were shot at Queretaro. Here also are the tombs of Guerrero, Zaragoza, Comonfort, and others of note in Mexican history. The cemetery as a whole is very poorly arranged and quite unworthy of such a capital. The bodies of most persons buried here are placed in coffins which are deposited in the walls, and even graves are built upon the surface of the ground, because of the fact that at a few feet below one comes to the great swamp or lake which underlies all this part of the valley. There is another Mexican cemetery worthy of mention, which is beautifully laid out and arranged. It is that of Dolores, on the hillside southwest of Tacubaya, just beyond Chapultepec. In the American cemetery are buried some four hundred of our countrymen, soldiers, who died here in 1847. The English and American cemeteries lie together. The poor people of the city, when a death occurs in the family, hire a coffin of the dealers for the purpose of carrying their dead to the burial-place, after which it is returned to the owner, to be again leased for a similar object by some other party. The dead bodies of this class are buried in the open earth, a trench only being dug in the ground. Suitable wood is so scarce and so valuable in the capital that coffins are very expensive. Those designed for young children are seen exposed for sale decorated in the most fantastic manner. One narrow street near the general market and close to the plaza is almost wholly appropriated, on the street floor,

to coffin-makers' shops. We counted eleven of these doleful establishments within as many rods of each other. The coffins designed for adults are universally colored jet black; but those for children are elaborately ornamented with scroll work of white upon a black ground. One of these last is hung up as a sign at the entrance of each shop devoted to this business. When a funeral cortege appears on the street, be it never so humble, every one faces the same with uncovered head until it has passed. An episode of this melancholy character is recalled which occurred on San Francisco Street one morning. A very humble peon was seen bearing his child's coffin upon his back, followed by the mother, grandmother, and two children, with downcast eyes, five persons in all forming the sad procession, if it may be so called. It was observed that the gayly-dressed and elegantly mounted caballero promptly backed his horse to the curbstone and raised his sombrero while the mourners moved by, that other peons bowed their bare heads, and that every hat, either silk or straw, was respectfully doffed along the street, as the solemn little cortege wound its way to the last resting-place of humanity.

## CHAPTER XI

The Shrine of Guadalupe. – Priestly Miracles. – A Remarkable Spring. – The Chapels about the Hill. – A Singular Votive Offering. – Church of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. – Costly Decorations. – A Campo Santo. – Tomb of Santa Anna. – Strange Contrasts. – Guadalupe-Hidalgo. – The Twelve Shrines on the Causeway. – The Vega Canal. – The Floating Islands. – Indian Gamblers. – Vegetable Market. – Flower Girls. – The "Noche-Triste" Tree. – Ridiculous Signs. – Queer Titles. – Floral Festival.

Guadalupe, the sacred Mecca of the Roman Catholics of Mexico, is reached by a tramway of about two or three miles in length, running in a northeasterly direction from the city. It appears that in the Aztec period there was here a native shrine dedicated to some mythological god, and as the foolish legend runs, a miracle caused this spot to be changed to a Christian shrine. The story is told with great unction by "true believers," but to a calm, unbiased mind it is too utterly ridiculous for repetition. These church miracles were simply chronic during the Spanish rule. "The religion of Mexico," says Wilson, "is a religion of priestly miracles, and when the ordinary rules of evidence are applied to them, they and the religion that rests upon them fall together." Guadalupe forms a rough, irregular elevation some hundred feet or more above the level of the surrounding plain.



Beside the rude stairway leading to the top of the hill, there is built a stone column, in the shape of a ship's mast with the square sails set upon it. This is said to have been a votive offering by some sailors who were threatened with shipwreck at Vera Cruz. When in dire distress, the party referred to vowed that if the Virgin of Guadalupe would save the lives of the crew, they would bring the ship's mast to her shrine and set it up there, as a perpetual memento of her protecting power. The mariners were saved and kept their vow, bringing the mast upon their shoulders all the way from Vera Cruz. Here they set it up and built around it a covering of stone, and thus it stands to this day. It is between thirty and forty feet high, and about twelve feet wide at the base, tapering upwards – a most unsightly and incongruous monument. On the summit of the hill there is a small chapel known as the Capilla del Cerrito, and two or three near its base, one of which has a large dome covered with enameled tiles. This is known as the Capilla del Pocito, and supports in its cupola some of the harshest and most ear-piercing bells which we have ever chanced to hear. This chapel covers a somewhat remarkable spring, which is abundant and never failing in its supply, for whose waters great and miraculous power is claimed. It manifestly contains a large impregnation of iron, and is no doubt a good tonic, beyond which its virtues are of course mythical. It is held by the surrounding populace to be an infallible remedy in the instance of unfruitful women, and is the constant resort of that class from far and near. These chapels at Guadalupe are decorated in the crudest

and most inartistic manner, entirely unworthy of such belief as is professed in the sacredness of the place, or of the virtues attributed by the priests to them as a religious shrine. Money enough has been wasted, but there seems to be an utter lack of good taste.

Over two million dollars had been expended on the church of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, which stands at the foot of the hill, in supplying the usual inventory of jewels, gold and silver plate, and other extravagant church belongings. The church just named is built of brick and stone combined, with four towers about a central dome, and is also known as the cathedral of Guadalupe. The solid silver railing extending from the choir to the high altar is three feet in height. Owing to its presumed sacredness, this church, unlike the cathedral of the city near at hand, has never been despoiled. Its interior is very rich in ornamentation, among the most effective portions of which we remember its fine onyx columns supporting lofty arches of Moorish architecture. The costly elegance displayed in this cathedral is exactly suited to a faith in which there is so little worship and so much form and ceremony.

On coming out of this elaborate edifice, half dazed by its expensive and gaudy trappings, we step at once into an atmosphere of abject poverty and want. The surroundings of the chapels and cathedral of Guadalupe are in strong contrast with the interiors. This is undoubtedly the dirtiest and most neglected suburb of the capital, where low pulque shops and a half-naked

population of beggars stare one in the face at every turn. What sort of Christian faith is that which can hoard jewels of fabulous value, with costly plate of gold and silver, in the sacristy of its temple, while the poor, crippled, naked people starve on the outside of its gilded walls? "Ah!" says Shelley, "what a divine religion might be found out if charity were really made the principle of it instead of faith!"

The grand view to be obtained from the summit of the hill of Guadalupe amply repays the visitor for climbing the rude steps and rough roadway, notwithstanding the terribly offensive odors arising from the dirty condition of the neglected surroundings. It embraces the city in the middle foreground, a glimpse of Chapultepec and the two grand mountains in the distance, together with the surrounding plains dotted with low adobe villages. The long white roads of the causeways, lined with verdant trees, divide the spacious plain by artistic lines of beauty, while between them green fields of alfalfa, and yellow, ripening maize give delightful bits of light and shade. On the back of the hill, behind the chapel crowning the summit, is a small cemetery full to repletion of tombs dedicated to famous persons. Great prices, we were told, are paid for interments in this sacred spot. Among the most interesting tombs was that of Santa Anna, the hero of more defeats than any notable soldier whom we can recall. He is remembered as a traitor by the average Mexican (just as Bazaine is regarded by the French), although he was five times President and four times military Dictator of Mexico.

It will be remembered that this eccentric and notorious soldier of fortune was banished to the West Indies, whence he wrote a congratulatory letter to the intruder Maximilian, and sought to take command under him. His proffered aid was coolly declined, whereupon he offered his services to Juarez, who was fighting against Maximilian, but was repulsed with equal promptness. In a rage at this treatment, he fitted out an expedition against both parties, landed in Mexico, was taken prisoner, and in consideration of the services once rendered his country his life was spared; but he was again banished, to finish his days in poverty and in a foreign land. His wooden leg, captured during our war with Mexico, is in the Smithsonian Institution at Washington. The town which surrounds the immediate locality of these shrines of Guadalupe has a population of about three thousand, and is particularly memorable as being the place where the treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo was signed, February 2, 1848, between the United States and Mexico. The name of Guadalupe was combined with that of Hidalgo, the Washington of Mexico as he is called, who in 1810 raised the cry of independence against the Spanish yoke, and though he was captured and shot, after eleven years of hard fighting, the goal of independence was reached by those who survived him. He is reported to have said just before his execution: "I die, but the seeds of liberty will be watered by my blood. The cause does not die. That still lives and will surely triumph."

Churches bearing the name of Guadalupe are to be found all

over the country, the Virgin of Guadalupe being the adopted patron saint of Mexico. Along the main road or causeway leading from the capital to the hill of Guadalupe, – now given up to the use of the Vera Cruz Railway, – one sees tall stone shrines which were erected long ago, before which deluded pilgrims and penitents knelt on their way thither. These were intended to commemorate the twelve places at which the Saviour fell down on his journey while bearing the cross to Calvary. It was called the road of humiliation and prayer, over which devotees crept on their hands and knees, seeking expiation for their sins, instigated by priestly suggestions and superstitious fears. Over this causeway, Maximilian, actuated by his fanatical religious devotion, and by a desire to impress the popular mind, walked barefooted from the city walls to the shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe! The hold of the priests on the Mexican people to-day is confined almost entirely to the peons and humble laborers. It is a common saying that when a peon earns two dollars he gives one dollar and forty-five cents to the priest, spends fifty cents for pulque, and supports his family on the remaining five cents. Among the educated classes the men are beginning to refuse to permit their wives and daughters to attend the confessional, the most subtle and portentous agency for evil that was ever invented, which has contaminated more innocence and destroyed more domestic happiness than any other known cause.

The tramway which runs out to the Viga Canal takes one a couple of miles into an extremely interesting region, exhibiting

many novel phases of native life. The thoroughfare runs beside the canal for a considerable distance, the banks of which are shaded here and there by drooping willows and rows of tall Lombardy poplars. How old the canal is, no one can say; it certainly antedates the period of the Conquest. The straw-thatched, Indian, African-looking town of Santa Anita is a curiosity in itself, surrounded by the floating islands, which we are soberly told did really float centuries ago. "Here they beheld," says Prescott, "those fairy islands of flowers, overshadowed occasionally by trees of considerable size, rising and falling with the gentle undulations of the billows." One does not like to play the *rôle* of an iconoclast, but probably these islands were always pretty much as they are to-day. The "floating" idea is a poetical license, and was born in the imaginative brain of the Spanish writers. Had Prescott ever seen them, he would doubtless have come to the same conclusion. "Hanging" gardens do not necessarily depend from anything, "floating" islands need not necessarily float. They really have the appearance of buoyancy to-day, and hence the figure of speech which has been universally applied to them. "I have not seen any floating gardens," says R. A. Wilson, author of "Mexico and its Religion," "nor, on diligent inquiry, have I been able to find a man, woman, or child that ever has seen them, nor do I believe that such a thing as a floating garden ever existed at Mexico." They are now anchored to the bottom fast enough, that is certain, being separated from each other and the main land by little narrow canals. The soil

of which they are constituted is kept always moist by natural irrigation, and is wonderfully fertile in producing flowers, fruits, and mammoth vegetables. Seed-time and harvest are perennial on these peculiar islands. Men are always ready with a rude sort of boat, which the most poetic imagination cannot dignify into a gondola, but which is so called. These floats are about fifteen feet long, four wide, flat bottomed, with low sides, and have no covering. The boatmen row, or rather pole, the boats through the little canals, giving the passengers a view of the low, rank vegetation on the islands, some of which present a pleasing floral picture, rather curious, but not very interesting. On Sundays and festal days the middle and lower classes of the capital come hither in large numbers to amuse themselves with the tall swings, the merry-go-rounds, and the scowl-like boats, to eat dulces at the booths, and to drink inordinate quantities of pulque at the many stands at which it is dispensed at popular prices. The pungent liquor permeates the surrounding atmosphere with its sour and offensive odor. Here one sees numerous groups busy at that besetting sin of the Indians, gambling. It is practiced on all occasions and in all places, the prevailing means being "the wheel of fortune." An itinerant bearing one of these instruments strapped about his shoulders stops here and there, soon gathering a crowd of the curious about him. The lottery-ticket vender drowns all other cries in his noisy search after customers, reaping a large harvest, especially on Sundays, in this popular resort. The old stone church of Santa Anita is a crumbling mass of Moorish

architecture, with a fine tower, the whole sadly out of repair, yet plainly speaking of past grandeur.

On the way to these islands by the Paseo de la Viga, we pass through an out-door vegetable market, which is remarkable for the size of some of the specimens offered for sale; radishes were displayed which were as large as beets, also plethoric turnips, overgrown potatoes, ambitious carrots, and broad spread heads of lettuce as big as a Mexican sombrero. There were many sorts of greens for making salads, of which the average Mexican is very fond, besides flowers mingled with tempting fruits, such as oranges, lemons, melons, and pineapples. The latter, we suspect, must have come from as far south as Cordova. Young Indian girls, with garlands of various-colored poppies about their necks, like the natives of Hawaii, offered us for a trifle tiny bouquets made of rosebuds, pansies, violets, tube-roses, and scarlet geraniums, all grown close at hand on these misnamed floating islands. One low, thatched adobe cabin, between the roadway and the canals, in Santa Anita, was covered with a mammoth blooming vine, known here as the *copa de oro*. Its great yellow flowers were indeed like cups of gold, inviting our attention above all the other floral emblems for which the little Indian village is famous. Great quantities come daily from this suburb to supply the city demand, and especially on the occasion of the floral festivals, which have their headquarters in the plaza and the alameda, as elsewhere described.

There is much to be seen and enjoyed in these brief excursions



by tramway into the environs of the city. One should not forget to take the cars which start from the west side of the Plaza Mayor, and which pass through the Riviera de San Cosme out to the village of Popotla, where the famous "Noche-triste" tree is to be seen. It is situated about three miles from the plaza. Cortez is said to have sat down under its branches and wept over his misfortunes when he was obliged to retreat from the capital, on the night of July 1, 1520, still known as the "Dismal Night." Whether this story be true or otherwise, it matters very little. Suffice it that this big gnarled tree is held sacred and historic by the citizens, and is always visited by strangers who come to the capital. It is of the cedar family, and its dilapidated condition, together with the size of the trunk, shows its great antiquity. At present it measures ten feet in diameter at the base, with a height exceeding forty feet. Although broken and decayed in many of its parts, it is sufficiently alive to bear foliage. The gray, drooping moss hangs from its decaying branches, like a mourner's veil shrouding face and neck, emblematic of the tears which the daring adventurer is said to have wept in its shadow. An iron railing protects the tree from careless usage and from the knives of ruthless relic hunters. A party of so-called ladies and gentlemen – we are sorry to say they were Americans – broke off some of the twigs of the tree, in 1885, to bring away with them. For this vandalism they were promptly arrested, and very properly fined by a Mexican court. Close by this interesting tree of the "Dismal Night" stands the ancient church of San Esteban.

The practice prevails in the cities of Mexico that one sees in Cuba and in continental Spain, as regards the signs which traders place over their doors. The individual's name is never given, but the merchant adopts some fancy one to designate his place of business. Seeing the title "El Congreso Americana," "The American Congress," we were a little disconcerted, on investigation, to find that it was the sign of a large and popular bar-room. Near by was another sign reading thus: "El Diablo," that is, "The Devil." This was over a pulque shop, which seemed to be appropriately designated. Farther on towards the alameda was "El Sueño de Amor," signifying "The Dream of Love." This was over a shop devoted to the sale of serapes and other dry goods. On the Calle de San Bernardo, over one of the entrances where dry goods were sold, was seen, in large gold letters, "La Perla," "The Pearl." Again near the plaza we read, "La Dos Republics," meaning "The Two Republics." This was a hat store, with gorgeous sombreros displayed for sale. "El Recreo," "The Retreat," was a billiard hall and bar-room combined, while not far away "El Opalo," "The Opal," designated a store where dulces were sold. "La Bomba," "The Bomb," was the sign over a saddle and harness shop. "El Amor Cantivo," "Captive Love," was the motto of a dry goods store. "La Coquetta," "The Coquette," was the title of a cigar shop.

These stores are almost all conducted by French or German owners, with now and then a Jew of uncertain nationality; few are kept by Spaniards, and none by Americans, or citizens of the

United States. American enterprise seeks expression here in a larger field. Where a trunk line of railroad a thousand miles or more is demanded, as in the instance of the Mexican Central, they are sure to be found at the front, with capital, executive ability, and the energy which commands success. The surveys for the Mexican railroads demanding the very best ability were made by Americans, the locomotive drivers are nearly all Americans, and more than half the conductors upon the regular railway trains are Americans. The infusion of American spirit among the Mexican people is perhaps slow, but it is none the less sure and steady.

Each sort of business has its distinctive emblem. The butcher always hangs out a crimson banner. In some portions of the town there are painted caricatures on the fronts of certain places to designate their special business. For instance, in front of a pulque shop is found a laughable figure of a man with a ponderous stomach, drinking his favorite tipple. At another, which is the popular drinking resort of the bull-fighters, is represented a scene where a picadore is being tossed high in air from the horns of an infuriated bull, and so on. The names of some of the streets of the capital show how the Roman Catholic Church has tried to impress itself upon the attention of the populace even in the titles of large thoroughfares. Thus we have the Crown of Thorns Street, the Holy Ghost Bridge, Mother of Sorrows Street, Blood of Christ Street, Holy Ghost Street, Street of the Sacred Heart, and the like. Protestants of influence have protested against this

use of names, and changes therein have been seriously considered by the local government. As previously explained, some of these streets have been so named because there were churches bearing these titles situated in them.

Friday, the 28th of March, the day of Viernes de Dolores, was a floral festal occasion in and about the city of Mexico. The origin of this observance we did not exactly understand, except that it is an old Indian custom, which is carefully honored by all classes, and a very beautiful one it most certainly is. For several days previous to that devoted to the exhibition, preparations were made for it by the erection of frames, tents, canvas roofing, and the like, in the centre of the alameda and over its approaches. At sunrise on the day designated, the people resorted in crowds to the broad and beautiful paths, roadways, and circles of the delightful old park, to find pyramids of flowers elegantly arranged about the fountains, while the passageways were lined by flower dealers from the country with beautiful and fragrant bouquets, for sale at prices and in shapes to suit all comers. Nothing but a true love of flowers could suggest such attractive combinations. Into some of the bouquets strawberries with long stems were introduced, in order to obtain a certain effect of color; in others was seen a handsome red berry in clusters, like the fruit of the mountain ash. We had observed the preparations, and were on the spot at the first peep of the day. The Indians came down the Paseo de la Reforma in the gray light of the dawn, and stopped beside the entrance to

the alameda, men and women laden with fragrance and bloom from all parts of the valley of Mexico within a radius of forty miles from the city. One lot of burros, numbering a score and more, formed a singularly picturesque and novel group. The animals, except their heads and long ears, were absolutely hidden beneath masses of radiant color. Groups of women sitting upon the ground were busy making up bouquets, which were most artistically combined. These natives love bright colors, and have an instinctive eye for graceful combinations.

Of course the variety of flowers was infinite. We remember, among them, red and white roses, pansies, violets, heliotropes, sweet peas, gardenias, camelias, both calla and tiger lilies, honeysuckles, forget-me-nots, verbenas, pinks in a variety of colors, larkspur, jasmine, petunias, morning glories, tulips, scarlet geraniums, and others. Three military bands placed in central positions added spirit and interest to the suggestive occasion. The harmony of the music blended with the perfume of the flowers, completing the charm of such a scene of floral extravagance as we have never before witnessed. Our florists might get many bright, new ideas as to the arrangements of bouquets from these Mexicans.

None of the populace seemed to be too poor to purchase freely of the flowers, all decking their persons with them. As fast as the bouquets were disposed of, their places were filled with a fresh supply, the source being, apparently, inexhaustible. Young and old, rich and poor, thronged to the flower-embowered

alameda on this occasion, and there was no seeming diminution of demand or of supply up to high noon, when we left the still enthusiastic and merry crowd. In the afternoon, no matter in what part of the town we were, the same floral enthusiasm and spirit possessed the populace. Balcony, doorway, carriage windows, and market baskets, married women and youthful señoritas, boys and girls, cripples and beggars, all indulged in floral decoration and display. It appeared that several carloads of flowers came from far-away Jalapa to supply the demand in the national capital made upon the kingdom of Flora for this flower festival.

## CHAPTER XII

Castle of Chapultepec. – "Hill of the Grasshopper." – Montezuma's Retreat. – Palace of the Aztec Kings. – West Point of Mexico. – Battles of Molino del Rey and Churubusco. – The Mexican White House. – High above Sea Level. – Village of Tacubaya. – Antique Carvings. – Ancient Toluca. – The Maguey. – Fine Scenery. – Cima. – Snowy Peaks. – Leon d'Oro. – The Bull-Ring and Cockpit. – A Literary Institution. – The Coral Tree. – Ancient Pyramids. – Pachuca. – Silver Product of the Mines. – A Cornish Colony. – Native Cabins. – Indian Endurance.

One of the pleasantest excursions in the environs of the capital is in a southwesterly direction to the castle of Chapultepec, a name which signifies the "Hill of the Grasshopper." It is situated at the end of the long Paseo de la Reforma, the grandest avenue in the country, running straight away two miles and more between statuary and ornamental trees to this historic and attractive locality. About Chapultepec are gathered more of the grand memories of the country than on any other spot south of the Rio Grande. Here it was intended to establish the most grand and sumptuous court of the nineteenth century, over which Maximilian and Carlotta were to preside as emperor and empress. Their ambition was limitless; but how brief was their

day-dream! The fortress occupies a very commanding position, standing upon a rocky upheaval some two hundred feet above the surrounding plain, thus rising abruptly out of the marshy swamp. It is encircled by a beautiful park composed mostly of old cypress-trees, many of which are draped in gray Spanish moss, as soft and suggestive an adornment as that of the moss-rose. We ascend the hill to the castle by a deeply-shaded road, formed by a wood so dense that the sun scarcely penetrates its darkness. On the side of this tree-embowered road, about halfway to the summit, one is shown a natural cave, before the mouth of which is a huge iron gate. Herein, it is said, the Aztec kings deposited their treasures. Here, also, Cortez is believed to have placed his stolen wealth, under guard of his most trusted followers, which was afterward transported to Spain. One immemorial cypress was pointed out to us in the grove of Chapultepec, said to have been a favorite resort of Montezuma I., who often enjoyed its cooling shade. This tree measures about fifty feet in circumference. We were assured, by good local authority, that some of these trees date back to more than twice ten hundred years. If there is any truth in the concentric ring theory, this is easily proved. The best-informed persons upon this subject have little doubt that these trees are the remains of a primeval forest which surrounded the burial-place of the Incas. There is plenty of evidence to show that when Cortez first penetrated the country and reached this high plain of Anahuac, it was covered with a noble forest of oaks, cedars, cypresses, and other trees. To one who has not



seen the giant trees of Australia and the grand conifers of the Yosemite Valley, these mammoths must be indeed a revelation, – trees that may have been growing before the advent of Christ upon earth. Here and there a few modern elms and pines have been planted in the Chapultepec grove; and though they are of respectable or average size, they look like pigmies beside these gigantic trees. During all the wars and battles which have taken place around and above them, these grand old monarchs have remained undisturbed, flourishing quietly amid the fiercest strife of the elements and the bitter contentions of men.

According to Spanish history, here stood of old the palace of the Aztec kings; and it seems to have ever been the favorite abiding place of the Mexican rulers, from the time of Montezuma I. to President Diaz, being a fortress, a palace, and a charming garden combined, overlooking the grandest valley on the continent. On Sundays the *élite* of the city come here to enjoy the delightful drive, as well as the shady park which leads to the summit of the hill, welcomed by the fragrance of flowers, and charmed by the rippling of cooling fountains. At the base of the elevation on which the castle stands, at its eastern foot, bursts forth the abundant spring from which the city is in part supplied with water. Here begins the San Cosme aqueduct, a huge, arched structure of heavy masonry, which adds picturesqueness to the scenery. Maximilian, upon taking up his abode here, caused a number of beautiful avenues to be constructed in various directions, suitable for drives, in addition to the grand paseo

leading to the city, which also owes its construction to his taste and liberality. The drives about the castle are shaded by tall, thickly-set trees of various sorts, planted within the last twenty years.

Chapultepec is now improved in part for a military school, the "West Point" of Mexico, accommodating a little over three hundred cadets, who, coming from the best families of the country, here serve a seven years' apprenticeship in acquiring a sound education and a thorough knowledge of the art of war. The course of studies, it is understood, is very comprehensive, and to graduate here is esteemed a high honor from an educational point of view. Several of the professors who are attached to the institution came from the best European schools. We were shown through the dormitories of the cadets and other domestic offices, where everything was in admirable order, but it was a disappointment to see the lackadaisical manner of these young gentlemen on parade, quite in consonance with the undisciplined character of the rank and file of the army. The pretense of discipline was a mere subterfuge, and would simply disgust a West Pointer or a European soldier. These cadets were somehow very diminutive in stature, and their presence was anything but manly.

This is justly regarded as classic ground in the ancient and modern history of the country. It will be remembered that the steep acclivity, though bravely defended, was stormed and captured by a mere handful of Americans under General Pillow

during the war of 1847. In the rear of the hill, to the southward, less than two miles away, is the field where the battle of Molino del Rey – "the King's Mill" – was fought, and not far away that of Churubusco, both contests won by the Americans, who were under the command of General Scott. Lieutenant Grant, afterwards General Grant and President of the United States, was one of the first to enter the fortified position at the taking of Chapultepec. Grant, in his memoirs, pays General Scott due honor as a soldier and a strategist, but expresses the opinion that both the battles of Chapultepec and Molino del Rey were needless, as the two positions could have been turned.

Any civilian can realize the mistake which Scott made. The possession of the mill at that juncture was of no consequence. Chapultepec was of course to be carried, and when our troops were in possession of that fortified height the position at the mill was untenable. A fierce and unnecessary, though victorious battle on our part was here fought, wherein the Americans suffered considerable loss, principally from a masked battery, which was manned by volunteers from the city workshops. Near to Molino del Rey the Mexicans have erected a monument commemorating their own valor and defeat, when close to a city of nearly three hundred thousand inhabitants their redoubtable army was beaten and driven from the field by about ten thousand Americans. The Mexicans did not and do not lack for courage, but they required proper leaders which they had not, and a unity of purpose in which they were equally deficient.

As intimated, a portion of the spacious castle forms the residence of the chief of the republic, being thus the "White House," as it is termed, of Mexico, in which are many spacious halls and galleries, all of which are handsomely decorated, the outside being surrounded by wide marble terraces and paved courts. Here Maximilian expended half a million dollars in gaudy ornamentations and radical alterations to suit his lavish desires. The interior decorations were copies from Pompeii. For the brief period which he was permitted to occupy the castle, it was famous for a succession of *fêtes*, receptions, dinners, and dances. No European court could surpass the lavish elegance and dissipation which was indulged in by Maximilian and his very sweet but ambitious wife Carlotta. Her personal popularity and influence was fully equal to that of her husband, while her tenacity of purpose and strength of will far excelled that of the vacillating and conceited emperor.

The view from the lofty ramparts is perhaps the finest in the entire valley of Mexico, which is in form an elevated plain about thirty by forty miles in extent, its altitude being a little less than eight thousand feet above the sea. This view embraces the national capital, with its countless spires, domes, and public buildings, the magnificent avenues of trees leading to the city, its widespread environs, the looming churches of Guadalupe, the village-dotted plain stretching away in all directions, the distant lakes glowing beneath the sun's rays, and having for a background at the eastward two of the loftiest, glacier-crowned mountains

on the continent, bold and beautiful in outline, tranquil and immovable in their grandeur. The steady glow of the warm sunlight gilded cross and pinnacle, as we gazed on this picture through the softening haze of approaching twilight, – a view which we have hardly, if ever, seen surpassed.

In ascending the many steps which lead to the battlements of Chapultepec, one of our party, a Boston lady, fairly gasped for breath, declaring that some serious illness threatened her; but when she was quietly informed that she was about forty times as high above the sea as the vane on Park Street Church in her native city, she realized what it was that caused a temporary difficulty in breathing; it was the extremely rarefied atmosphere, to which she was not accustomed. At such an elevation, in the latitude of Boston, the temperature would be almost arctic; but it is to be remembered that this high table-land of the valley of Mexico is under the Tropic of Cancer, and therefore enjoys almost a perpetual spring, though it is extremely dry. The atmosphere is, in fact, so devoid of moisture that food or fresh meat will dry up, but will not mould or spoil, however long it may be kept.

On the left of Chapultepec lies the attractive suburban village of Tacubaya, already referred to, where the wealthy citizens of the capital have summer residences, some of which are really so elegant as to have a national reputation. These are thrown open to strangers on certain days, to exhibit their accumulation of rare and beautiful objects of art, and the luxuries of domestic life.

As we left Chapultepec by a narrow road winding through

the remnant of a once vast forest, attention was called to the ancient inscriptions upon the rocks at the eastern base of the hill near the roadside. They are in half relief; and, so far as we could decipher them, they seemed to be Toltec rather than Aztec. They are engraven on the natural rock, and are of a character quite unintelligible to the present generation. For years these were hidden by the dense undergrowth, being on the edge of the plain, near the spot where the Americans clambered up the steep acclivity when they stormed the castle. The shrubbery has now been cleared away so as to render them distinctly visible.

Toluca, the capital of the State of Mexico, is easily reached by a narrow gauge railway, being less than fifty miles from the national capital. It is a well-built and thriving town, containing about twenty-five thousand inhabitants, more or less, and situated at an elevation of about eight thousand and six hundred feet above the sea. The municipal buildings and state capitol, all modern, are thought to be the finest in the republic. They face upon a delightful plaza, the almost universal arrangement in these cities. Beyond the valley of Toluca, which is larger than that of Mexico, are others as broad and as fertile, all of which are watered by the Rio Lerma. The trip hither from the national capital leads us through some of the grandest scenery in the country, as well as taking us over some of the most abrupt ascents in Mexico. The districts through which the road passes nearest to the city are mostly given up to the cultivation of the pulque-producing maguey. These plantations are of great extent, being

arranged with mathematical precision, the plants placed ten feet apart in each direction, in fields of twenty or thirty acres. The very sight of them sets one to moralizing. Like the beautiful but treacherous poppy fields which dazzle one in India, they are only too thrifty, too fruitful, too ready to yield up their heart's blood for the pleasure, delusion, and ruin of the people. We are all familiar with the broad, long, bayonet-like leaf of this plant, which is to be seen in most of our conservatories, known to us by the name of the century plant, and to botanists as the *Agave Americana*. It rarely blooms except in tropical climates. Indeed, it is best known with us at the north as the century plant, a popular fallacy having become attached to it, that it blooms but once in a hundred years. Hence the name which it bears in New England. When the juice is first extracted it is sweet like new cider, and is as harmless; it is believed to possess special curative properties for some chronic ills that flesh is heir to, but fermentation sets in soon after it is separated from the plant, and the alcoholic principle is promptly developed. We were told at the city of Mexico that the government treasury realizes a thousand dollars each day as a tax upon the pulque which is brought into the capital from various parts of the country, and that the railway companies receive an equal sum for the freight.

There are two kinds of maguey: the cultivated plant from which comes pulque, and one which grows wild in the desert parts of the country. From the latter is distilled a coarse liquor which is highly intoxicating, called mescal. This is a digression.

Let us speak of our journey to Toluca. If this very interesting city did not possess any special attraction in itself, the unsurpassed scenery to be enjoyed on the route thither would amply repay the traveler for the brief journey. At about twenty miles from the city of Mexico, it is found that we have risen to an elevation of eleven hundred feet above it, from which point delightful views present themselves, embracing the entire valley, its various thrifty crops distinguishable by their many hues; here, yellow, ripening grain; there, the blue-green maguey plant; and yonder, wide patches of dark, nutritious alfalfa; together with irrigating streams sparkling in the sunshine, enlivened here and there by groups of grazing cattle. Now an adobe hamlet comes into view, the low whitewashed cabins clustering about a gray old stone church. Creeping up the mountain paths are long lines of toiling burros, laden from hoofs to ears with ponderous packs, and on the dusty road are straggling natives, men and women, bearing heavy loads of produce, of wood, pottery, and fruit, to the nearest market; while not far away a ploughman, driving three mules abreast, turns the rich black soil with his one-pronged, one-handled plough. Villages and plantations are passed in rapid succession, where scores of square, tower-like corn cribs, raised upon four standards, are seen adjoining the low, picturesque farmhouses.

At Dos Rios (Two Rivers), half-clad, gypsy-looking women and young, nut-brown girls besiege the passengers to partake of fresh pulque, which they serve in small earthen mugs. Two



stout engines are required to draw us over the steep grade. The highest point reached is at Cima (The Summit) twenty-four miles from the city of Mexico, and ten thousand feet above the level of the sea. This is the most elevated station in the country, seriously affecting the respiration of many of our party. Indeed, any considerable exertion puts one quite out of breath at such an altitude. The conductor of the train was an American, who had been engaged upon this route for a year and more; but he assured the author that he was as seriously affected by the great elevation as when he first took the position. It was observed, however, that the natives did not seem to experience any such discomfort.

From Cima we descend the western slope of the ridge by a series of grand, abrupt curves through the valley of San Lazar, after having thus crossed the range of mountains known as Las Cruces. The white-headed peak of the Nevada de Toluca, over fifteen thousand feet in height, – the fourth highest peak in Mexico, – is long in sight from the car windows, first on one side of the route and then on the other, while we pass over the twists and turns of the track to the music of rippling waters escorting us to the plains below. Mountain climbers tell us that from the apex of this now sleeping volcano the Pacific Ocean, one hundred and sixty miles away, can be seen. It is also said that with a powerful field-glass the Gulf of Mexico can be discerned from the same position, at a much longer distance. Baron von Humboldt tells us that he ascended this peak in September, 1803, and that the actual summit is scarcely ten feet wide. It occupied

this indefatigable scientist two days to make the ascent from Toluca and return.

But let us tell the patient reader about Toluca itself. The streets are spacious, well-paved, and cleanly. A tramway takes us from the depot through the Calle de la Independencia, on which thoroughfare there is a statue of Hidalgo, which by its awkward pose and twisted limbs suggests the idea of a person under the influence of pulque. At the hotel Leon d'Oro, an excellent and well-served dinner was enjoyed, and it is spoken of here because such an experience is a *rara avis* in the republic of Mexico. Among the numberless churches, a curious one will long be remembered, namely, the Santa Vera Cruz, the façade of which very much resembles that of a dime museum, having a lot of grotesquely-colored figures of saints standing guard.

Toluca, notwithstanding its appearance of newness, is really one of the oldest settlements in the country, dating from the year 1533. Activity and growth are manifest on all sides. There is a spacious alameda in the environs, but it is not kept in very good condition. The town has two capacious theatres, and a large bull-ring, which is infamously noted for its many fatal encounters. The bull-ring and the cockpit are two special blots upon this otherwise attractive place, – attractive, we mean, as compared with most Mexican towns. Cock-fighting is the favorite resort of the amusement seekers, and in its way is made extremely cruel. One of the two birds pitted against each other must die in the ring. This and the hateful bull-fight were introduced by

the Spanish invaders of Mexico centuries ago, and are still only too popular all over the land. In the cities one frequently meets a native with a game-cock under each arm, and at some of the inland railroad stations they are tied in long rows, each by its leg, and out of reach of the others, so that purchasers can make their selection. It must be a very small town in Mexico which does not contain one or more cockpits, not only as a Sunday resort for amusement, but also as a medium for the inveterate gambling propensities of the native people.

Here, also, there is the usual profusion of Roman Catholic churches, but there is nothing remarkable about them. A couple of miles west of the city is the church of Nuestra Señora de Tecajic, in which is exhibited a "miraculous" image which is held in great veneration by the credulous Indians. It is a picture painted on coarse cotton cloth, and representing the assumption of the Virgin. This is an ancient shrine, and has been in existence over two hundred years.

Near Toluca is an extinct volcano, the crater of which forms a large lake of unknown depth, the water being as cold as ice.

The city supported several notable convents previous to the confiscation of the church properties, which are now utilized for schools, hospitals, and public offices. One educational establishment, the Instituto Literario, is perhaps the widest known institution of learning in Mexico, and has educated most of the distinguished men of the country. It may be called the Harvard College of the republic. The edifice devoted to the

purpose is a very spacious one, and besides its various other departments, it contains a fine library and a museum of natural history, together with a well-arranged gymnasium.

Toluca has the best and largest general market which we saw in Mexico. It is all under cover, and each article has its appropriate place of sale, meats, fruits, vegetables, fish, flowers, pottery, baskets, shoes, and sandals. It was a general market day when we chanced to be upon the spot, and the throng of country people who had come in to the city to dispose of their wares could not have numbered less than a couple of thousand. Such a mingling of colors, of cries, of commodities! The whole populace of the place seemed to be in the streets.

We chanced to see in the patio of a private dwelling-house at Toluca a specimen of that little tropical gem, the coral-tree, a curious and lovely freak of vegetation, its small but graceful stem, six or seven feet in height, being topped above the pendent, palm-shaped foliage with a prominent bit of vegetable coral of deepest red, precisely in the form of the Mediterranean sea-growth from which it takes its name. A pure white campanile with its inverted hanging flowers, like metallic bells, which it so much resembles, stood beside the coral-tree.

An excursion of about thirty miles on the Mexican and Vera Cruz Railroad took us in sight of the two remarkable pyramids erected to the gods Tonateuh, the sun, and Meztli, the moon, situated near the present village of San Juan Teotihuacan. With the exception of the pyramid at Cholula, these are doubtless the

most ancient prehistoric remains on the soil of Mexico. That dedicated to the moon has been so far penetrated as to discover a long gallery with a couple of wells situated very nearly in the middle of the mound. The entrance to this is on the southern side, at about two thirds of the elevation. What the purpose of these pits could have been, no one can say. There are still some remains on the pyramid dedicated to the sun which indicate that a temple once occupied the spot, which is said to have been destroyed by the Spaniards nearly four hundred years ago. Excavations show that the neighboring ground is full of ancient tombs. The pyramid dedicated to the sun-god is a little larger than the other, being about two hundred feet high and seven hundred feet in length at the base, with a nearly corresponding width.

Speaking of Teotihuacan, Bancroft says: "Here kings and priests were elected, ordained, and buried. Hither flocked pilgrims from every direction to consult the oracles, to worship in the temples of the sun and moon, and to place sacrificial offerings on the altars of their deities. The sacred city was ruled by the long-haired priests of the sun, famous for their austerity and their wisdom. Through the hands of these priests, as the Spanish writers tell us, yearly offerings were made of the first fruits of the fields; and each year at harvest-time, a solemn festival was celebrated, not unattended by human sacrifice." In the neighborhood of these huge mounds there are traces of a large and substantially built city having once existed. It is believed to have been twenty miles in circumference. Obsidian

knives, arrowheads, stone pestles, and broken plaster trowels are often found just below the surface of the soil. A large number of smaller pyramids stand at various distances about the two principal ones which we have named. These do not exceed twenty-five or thirty feet in height, and are thought to have been dedicated to the stars, and also to have served as sepulchres for illustrious men. We have mounds of a similar character and size to these secondary ones in the Western and Middle States of the Union.

After passing through several small cities and towns, by taking a branch road, the city of Pachuca is reached, at eighty-five miles from the city of Mexico. It is interesting especially as being a great mining centre which has been worked long and successfully. It was in this place that the process of amalgamation was discovered, and a means whereby the crude ores as dug from the mines are most readily made to yield up the precious metal which they contain. It will be remembered in this connection that for more than two centuries Mexico has furnished the world with its principal supply of silver, and that she probably exports to-day about two million dollars worth of the precious metal each month. The production of gold is only incidental, as it were, while the output of silver might be doubled. The ore of this district is almost wholly composed of blackish silver sulphides. Mr. Frederick A. Ober, who has written much and well upon Mexico and her resources, tells us that the sum total coined by all the mints in the country, so far as known, was, up to 1884,

over three billions of dollars, while the present annual product is greater than the amount furnished by all the mines of Europe.

Pachuca is the capital of the State of Hidalgo, lying on a plain at an altitude of eight thousand feet and more, environed by purple hills, and is one of the oldest mining districts in the republic, having been worked long before the Spanish conquest. It has a population of about twenty thousand, nearly half of whom are Indian miners. The surrounding hills are scarred all over with the opening of mines. In all, there are between eighty and a hundred of them grouped near together at Pachuca. The streets are very irregular and narrow, the houses being mostly one story in height, and built of stone. The place is said to be healthy as a residence, though in a sanitary sense it is far from cleanly. A muddy river makes its way through the town, the dwellings rising terrace upon terrace on either side. The market-place is little more than a mound of dirt; cleanliness is totally neglected, and everything seems to be sacrificed to the one purpose of obtaining silver, which is the one occupation. The wages of the miners are too often gambled away or wasted in liquor. There are both English and American miners at work with fair pecuniary success; and this is almost the only locality where foreign miners have been introduced. Government supports a school here for teaching practical mining, established in an imposing structure which was once a convent.

Quite a colony of Cornish miners emigrated to this place a few years since, many of whom have acquired considerable

means and have become influential citizens. Here and in the immediate district, including Real del Monte to the northwest, El Chico to the north, and Santa Rosa to the west, there are nearly three hundred silver mines, all more or less valuable. The most famous is named the Trinidad, which has yielded forty million dollars to its owners in a period of ten years! Real del Monte stands at an elevation of a little over nine thousand feet above the sea. The country which surrounds this district is extremely interesting in point of scenery. It was here that an English mining company came to grief pecuniarily, under the name of the Real del Monte Mining Company. At the organization of the enterprise, its shares were a hundred pounds sterling each; but they sold in one year in the London market for sixteen hundred pounds a share! The management was of a very reckless and extravagant character. Economy is certainly more necessary in conducting a silver mine than in nearly any other business. After a few years, it was found that sixteen million dollars worth of silver had been mined and realized upon, while the expenses had amounted to twenty million dollars, – a deficit of four million dollars in a brief period. The property was then sold to a Mexican company for a merely nominal sum, and is now regularly worked at a handsome percentage of profit upon the final cost. Much of the modern machinery was promptly discarded, and the new managers returned to the old methods of milling the ore. The Indians who bring in the supplies from the vicinity for this mining town are typical of the race all over the country. At their



homes, far away from the city, they live in mud cabins, under a thatched roof, with the earth for a floor. One room serves for every purpose, and is often shared with pigs and poultry. These Indians do not eat meat once a month, nay, scarcely once a year. Some wild fruits are added to their humble fare, which consists almost wholly of tortillas, or cake made from maize and half baked over charcoal. A rush mat serves them for a bed, a serape as an overcoat by day and a blanket at night. The men wear a coarse, unbleached cotton shirt and cotton drawers reaching to the knees, leaving legs and feet bare. The women wear a loose cotton chemise and a colored skirt wrapped about the loins, the legs, feet, and arms being bare. They supply the town with poultry, charcoal, eggs, pottery, mats, baskets, and a few vegetables, often trotting thirty miles over hills and plains with a load of one hundred and twenty pounds or more on their backs, in order to reach the market, where a dollar, or perhaps two, is all they can hope to get for the two or three days' journey.

An Indian will cheerfully spend four days in the mountains to burn a small quantity of charcoal, load it upon his back, and take it twenty-five miles to market, where it will sell for half a dollar or seventy-five cents. When he gets home, he has earned from ten to fifteen cents a day, and traveled fifty or sixty miles on foot to do it! If the poor native lives anywhere within the influence of a Catholic priest, the probability is that the priest will get half of this pittance. There is a local saying here that "Into the open doors of the Roman Catholic Church goes all the small change of

Mexico." This is a sad story, but it is a true one; and it represents the actual condition of a large class of the country people known as Indians. The condition of our own Western tribes of aborigines is, in comparison, one of luxury. And yet these Mexicans, as a rule, are temperate and industrious. The women, though doomed to a life of toil and hardship, are not made slaves, nor beaten by fathers or husbands, as is too often the case among our Western tribes.

We are speaking of the Aztecs pure and simple, such as have kept their tribal language, habits, and customs. They form nearly two thirds of the populace of the republic, and, as a body, are ignorant to the last degree, complete slaves to superstition of all sorts. The idolatrous instinct inherited from their Indian ancestors finds satisfaction in bowing before the hosts of saints, virgins, pictures, and images generally, which the Catholic Church presents for their adoration; while their simplicity and ignorance permit them to be dazed and overawed, if not converted, by a faith which presents itself in such theatrical form as to captivate both their eyes and ears. "This people have changed their ceremonies, but not their religious dogmas," says Humboldt, significantly.

## CHAPTER XIII

Puebla, the Sacred City. – General Forey. – Battle-Ground. – View of the City. – Priestly Miracles. – The Cathedral. – Snow-Crowned Mountains. – A Cleanly Capital. – The Plaza Mayor. – A Typical Picture. – The Old Seller of Rosaries. – Mexican Ladies. – Palm Sunday. – Church Gala Day. – Education. – Confiscation of Church Property. – A Curious Arch. – A Doll Image. – Use of Glazed Tiles. – Onyx a Staple Production. – Fine Work of Native Indian Women. – State of Puebla full of Rich Resources. – A Dynamite Bomb. – The Key of the Capital.

Our next objective point is Puebla, situated seventy-five miles, more or less, southeast of the city of Mexico. It is the capital of the state of the same name, and in a military point of view is the key to the national capital. It has often changed hands with the fortunes of war, both civil and foreign, which have so long distracted this land of the sun. One of the most desperate fights which took place between the Mexicans and the French forces occurred here, the event being celebrated by the people of the republic annually as a national festival. Puebla cost the intruders a three months' siege and the loss of many lives in their ranks before it yielded. General Forey, the commander of the besieging force, increased as far as possible the difficulties of the conflict, in order to send, with the

customary French bombast, brilliant bulletins to Paris, and thus bind a victor's wreath about his own brow, and enable him to obtain a much-coveted marshalship. In this he was successful, as he was promoted to that dignity upon his return to France. The fact was that an ordinary fighting column of American or English troops would have taken the place in twenty-four hours, the defense being totally inadequate, and the Mexican soldiers comparatively insignificant. The defenders of the place were raw and undisciplined, and composed of the worst possible material. Many of them were peons who had been impressed at the point of the bayonet; others were taken from the prisons and put at once into the ranks. As we have already stated, this is a common practice in Mexico.

In the environs of the town is what is called the hill of Guadalupe, famous in the annals of Mexican history, this being the principal battle-ground of the 5th of May. The Mexican forces were four thousand strong, defended by earthworks improvised by cutting down the walls of the church of Guadalupe. The French troops were six thousand strong. The defenders were under command of General Zaragoza; the French, under General de Lorencez, who attacked the fort with great dash and vigor. The Mexicans repulsed them with heavy loss to the attacking party. It was not a very important battle, but its moral effect upon the Mexicans was excellent. They realized that they were comparatively raw troops, and that their enemies were trained soldiers of the much-lauded French army.

Though it was only a gallant repulse, it was heralded all over the country as being a great victory, and probably had as much effect upon the popular mind as though it had been. It gave them courage to continue their warfare against the invaders with increased determination. Five years later, the position was reversed, when General Porfirio Diaz – now President – took Puebla by storm and made prisoners of its French defenders. Between the occurrence of these battles the fortifications on the hill of Guadalupe had been erected. The view from the fort is one of extraordinary interest, taking in three snow-capped mountains, and affording a comprehensive panorama of the city with its myriad domes and fine public buildings, the tree-decked Plaza Mayor, the alameda, the stone bridge over the Atoyac, while over the Cerro de San Juan is seen the church of Los Remedios, which crowns the great earth-pyramid of Cholula. To the south of the city lies the interesting suburb of Jonaco, and to the north, on the hill of the Loreto, stands the fort of the Cinco de Mayo.

Puebla contains between eighty and ninety thousand inhabitants, and is rated as the fourth city of the republic in point of population and general importance. It certainly rivals the larger cities in the character of its principal buildings, which are mostly constructed of granite, as well as in some other respects. Among the citizens it bears the fanciful name of La Puebla de los Angeles (The City of the Angels). One might reasonably think this was on account of its beautiful situation and salubrious

climate; the veracious chroniclers tell us it was because the walls of the grand cathedral were erected amid the songs of angels. What would any Roman Catholic institution be in Mexico without its mystery and miracles? In this instance, the legend runs to the effect that the angels built as much each night upon the walls of the church while it was erecting as the terrestrial workmen did each day. It is of basaltic material, supported by massive buttresses, and as a whole is surpassingly grand. High up over the central doorway of the main front is placed in carved stone the insignia of the order of the Golden Fleece. The interior is as effective and elegant as that of any church we can recall, having some fine old bronzes and valuable paintings, the latter well worthy of special attention, and embracing some thirty examples. The woodwork upon the grand altar shows an artistic excellence which is rarely excelled. The two organs are encased, also, in richly carved wood, exhibiting figures of angels blowing trumpets. The interior adornments, as a whole, are undoubtedly the finest of any church or cathedral in Mexico. A majority of writers consider that the cathedral of the national capital is the grandest church on the continent of America, but with this we cannot agree; to our mind, the cathedral of Puebla, all things considered, is its superior.

Puebla might be appropriately called the city of churches, for, at a short distance, the countless domes and steeples looming above the flat tops of the houses are the main feature. We believe that it has as many edifices occupied for religious purposes as

the city of Mexico. The twin towers of its stately cathedral are especially conspicuous and beautiful. The town was founded three hundred and sixty years ago, and retains, apparently, more of its ancient Spanish character than most of its sister cities. From any favorably situated spot in the town, for instance from the hill of Guadalupe, one beholds rising in the southwest, twenty-five miles away, the snowy crown of the world-renowned Popocatepetl, the view of this mountain being much superior to that had at the national capital, while the two hardly less famous mountains of Orizaba and Iztaccihuatl are also in sight, though at farther distances. The rarefied atmosphere makes all these elevations clear to the view with almost telescopic power.

The nights here are a revelation of calmness and beauty. The stars are much brighter than they appear to us in the dense atmosphere we inhabit. The North Star and the Southern Cross are both visible, though only a portion of the Dipper is to be seen. Within the points of the Southern Cross there is a brilliant cluster of stars, which are not apparent to the naked eye, but which are made visible by the use of the telescope, shining like a group of gems in a choice necklace. How glorious is the sky on such nights as we experienced at Puebla, so full of repose; no force can disturb its eternal peacefulness! Below, all about us, rages a nervous activity; every one is stricken with the fever of living; but we raise our eyes to that broad, blue, star-spangled expanse, and behold only the calm, adorable majesty of heaven.

There are extensive manufactories in Puebla, especially in

cotton goods, leather, soap, hats, matches, and earthenware; indeed, it has been called the Lowell of Mexico. It is also destined to become eventually a considerable railroad centre, having already established connections with the capital, Vera Cruz, and other important points. There are six railroad depots in the city, each representing a more or less important railway line.

The stranger is agreeably struck with the appearance of Puebla at first sight, and is confirmed in this impression as he becomes better acquainted with its mild and healthful climate, tempered by being more than seven thousand feet above the sea level, its wide, cleanly streets, running exactly east and west, north and south, its beautiful, flower-decked Plaza Mayor, its fine public squares, the interesting Moorish *portales* nearly surrounding the plaza, its gray old churches, and its neat stores and houses, having their various-colored fronts ornamented by iron balconies. The ever-present contrast between wealth and poverty, so striking in most of the Mexican cities, did not seem so prominent here. The people were certainly better clothed, and looked more cleanly and respectable. We saw very few beggars in the streets. The lame and the blind must have been taken care of by the municipal authorities, for none were to be seen in public. The city is clean in all its visible belongings. There are no offensive smells, such as greet one in the badly-drained capital of the republic. The thoroughfares teem with a bright, cheerful population, often barefooted and in rags, to be sure, but still smiling and good natured. True, we first saw the town



under favorable auspices, it being Palm Sunday, and those who had them probably donned holiday costumes. The Plaza Mayor was radiant with the brilliant colors of the rebosas and serapes, agreeably relieved by the black lace mantillas of the more select señoras and señoritas. Many of these wore marvelously high heels, not infrequently having only Eve's stockings inside of their gayly-ornamented boots! The Indian women who had come to town to see the church ceremonials formed an unconscious but interesting portion of the holiday show in their sky-blue or red rebosas, and the variegated skirt wound about waists and hips, leaving the brown limbs and bare feet exposed. They were gathered all about the square, awaiting their opportunity; and as half a hundred came pouring down the broad steps, others hastened to take their places inside the church.

The cathedral already alluded to forms one whole side of the Plaza Mayor. It is not quite so large as that of the city of Mexico, though it has the effect of being so. Like that, it stands upon a raised platform, built of dark porphyritic stone, the surface being five or six feet above the level of the plaza. The principal front is in the Doric style; but the two tall side towers are Ionic. The two domes, covered with the glittering native tiles, throw back the sunlight with a dazzling mottled effect. The chapels of the interior are perhaps a little tawdry with their profuse gilding, and the main altar is dazzling with gold, having cost, it is stated, over a hundred thousand dollars. The pulpit is especially curious, and was carved by a native artist from onyx, which came from

a neighboring quarry. The floor is of marble, while that of the more pretentious edifice at the city of Mexico is of wood, a token indicative of more important matters wherein the Puebla cathedral is superior in finish. The main roof, with its castellated cornice and many pinnacles, its broken outlines, and crumbling, gray old stone sides, is wonderfully picturesque.

Not many years ago there hung from the lofty ceiling a famous and most beautiful golden lamp of exquisite workmanship, the intrinsic value of which is said to have been over one hundred thousand dollars. During the civil war it was ruthlessly broken up and coined into doubloons to aid General Miramon to keep the field while representing the church party. The bells attached to the cathedral are of the most costly character and of superior excellence. These are eighteen in number, the largest of which weighs about ten tons. One is at a loss to understand why so many and so expensive bells are required, since they are not arranged as chimes, and have no apparent connection with each other.

A typical picture is recalled which presented itself as we entered for the first time the broad portal of the cathedral, where an old, wrinkled, bare-limbed woman, poor and decrepit, sat upon the stones at the entrance of the church offering rosaries for sale. She did not speak, but held up a cross with its attachments, accompanied by a look so cadaverous, so weak and pitiful, that she got the silver she desired and kept her beads. The poor creature, so aged, emaciated, and ragged, had somehow a strangely significant look about her, suggestive of having known

better days. It was a festal occasion, and many bright-eyed señoritas, casting stolen glances about them while accompanied by their duennas, were passing into the church. What a contrast of youth and age, between these fair young creatures so richly clad, so fresh and full of life, and the faded, hopeless vender of rosaries resting her weary limbs on the flinty portal!

The Mexican ladies have none of the languor of their continental sisters, but are overflowing with vivacity and spirit. We remember these buds of humanity at the church door; they seemed to be "spoiling" for a chance flirtation, looking out from deep black eyes full of roguishness. Within the dimly-lighted church the smell of burning incense, the sharp tinkling of the bell before the distant altar, the responsive kneeling and bowing of the worshipers, the dull murmur of the officiating priest, the deep, solemn tones of the great organ, – all combined to impress themselves upon the memory, if not to challenge an unbeliever's devotion.

At midday, on the occasion of our second visit, the priests were clad in the gayest colors, the robes of some being red, some blue, others white, and all more or less wrought with gold and silver ornamentation. The attendants and the priests who were not officiating carried tall palm branches. The marble floor of the nave was covered with kneeling devotees, among whom every class of the populace was represented; rags and satins were side by side, bare feet and silken hose were next to each other. Indians, Spaniards, and foreign visitors mingled

indiscriminately; there were few men, but many women. The choir was singing to an organ accompaniment, while the military band was playing in the plaza close at hand, opposite the open church doors, causing rather an incongruous mingling of sounds, and yet with the remarkable surroundings it did not strike the ear as inharmonious. Here and there, along the side of the church, a woman was seen kneeling, with her lips close to the little grating of the confessional. Now and again the closely wrapped figure of a man was observed making its way among the crowd, with a dark and sinister expression upon his face betraying his lawless character. He was here prompted by no devotional impulse, but to watch and mark some intended victim. As we came out of the cathedral, long lines of natives were seen, men, women, and children, sitting on the edge of the sidewalks, or squatting near the low garden wall of the church, eating tortillas, while an earthen jar of pulque was occasionally passed among them, all drinking from the same vessel. Another group close by these had a lighted cigarette which they were handing from one to another, men and women alike, each taking a long whiff, which was swallowed to be slowly emitted at the nostrils. It was a gala day, a church festival, of which there are something less than three hundred and sixty-five in the year. These idlers had nothing to do and plenty of time to do it in. Puebla has always been most loyal to the Catholic Church, even when directly under the evil influence of the Inquisition. It is visited to-day by thousands of Roman Catholics from various parts of the country at periods

when church ceremonies are in progress, because they are more elaborately carried out here than in any other city of the republic. Indeed, the place is generally known and spoken of by Mexicans as "The Sacred City."

It seemed on inquiry and from casual observation that more attention was given to the cause of education here than in some other districts we had visited, colleges and schools being maintained by the state as well as by the municipality, however much opposed by the priestly hierarchy. The fact is, that education is the true panacea for the ills of this people, and it is the only one. It is the poor man's capital. Freedom can exist only where popular education is fostered. The soldier and the priest have been too long abroad in Mexico. When the schoolteacher's turn shall come, then let tyranny and bigotry beware. The primer, not the bayonet, should be relied upon to uphold the liberty of a nation. Thirty or forty years ago illiteracy was the rule in Mexico; but each year sees a larger and larger percentage of the population able to read and write. This evidence of real progress is not confined to any locality, but is widespread among both those of Spanish descent and the half-castes. The situation of the peons is still one of entire mental darkness.

The episcopal palace, near the cathedral, is a picturesque edifice, with its red roof tiles faced with white. So late as 1869, the city contained a dozen nunneries and nine or ten monasteries; but these institutions are happily of the past, the buildings which they once occupied having been occupied for various business

purposes, as hospitals, public schools, and libraries. When the confiscation of the enormous wealth of the church was decreed and carried out by the government some twenty years since, that organization actually held a mortgage on two thirds of the real property of the entire country. The priesthood was completely despoiled of even their churches, which they now occupy only on sufferance, the legal fee in the same being vested in the government. To emphasize this fact one sees the national flag waving on special occasions over the cathedrals as well as other government properties. Their other real estate has been sold and appropriated to various uses, as we have shown. The indefatigable priesthood are and have ever since been steadily at work accumulating from the poor, overtaxed, and superstitious people money which we were told was hoarded and so disposed of as not to be again liable to seizure under any circumstances. It is the boast of the church party that their confiscated millions shall all be gathered into their coffers again. They may possibly get back the gold, but their lost power will never be regained. Intelligence is becoming too broadcast in Mexico, and even the common people begin to think for themselves.

In the church of San Francisco, erected in 1667, there was pointed out to us an arch, supporting one of the galleries, so flat that no one believed it would stand even until the church was dedicated. So pertinaciously was the architect badgered and criticised at the time of its construction, that he finally lost faith in his own design, and fled in despair before the threatening arch

was tested. It was therefore left for the monks to remove the supporting framework at the proper time. This they ingeniously did without any danger to themselves, by setting the woodwork on fire and letting the supporting beams slowly burn away! To the wonder of all, when they had been thus removed, the arch stood firmly in its place, and there it stands to-day, sound and apparently safe, after being in use for two hundred years, and having passed through the severe test of more than one slight earthquake. In this church, which, after the cathedral, is the most interesting in Puebla, we were shown by an old, gray-haired priest the little doll representing the Virgin Mother which Cortez brought with him from Spain to Cuba, and thence to Vera Cruz, carrying it through all of his campaigns with apparent religious veneration. It is astonishing to see the reverence with which this toy is regarded. Adjoining the church is a reconstructed convent which is now used as a military hospital, and before which lounged an awkward squad of soldiers belonging to the regular army. There are several very old churches in the city, on whose eaves and cornices small trees and tropical bushes, which have planted themselves in these exposed places, have grown to considerable size, surrounded by deep-green moss, shaded by the rounded domes and lofty towers.

A feature of the town which is sure to attract the attention of a stranger is the fanciful manner in which the people adapt richly colored and highly ornamented glazed tiles for both internal and external decoration of public and private buildings. The effect

of this was certainly incongruous, not to say tawdry. There are eight or ten tile factories in Puebla, and one glass manufactory. Some of the work turned out in both these lines is really very artistic and attractive. Large quantities are regularly shipped to various parts of the country. In several shops collections of onyx ornaments are to be seen, besides handsome baskets and mats of colored straw, all of which are of native workmanship. Onyx may be said to be the rage of Puebla. We remember an attractive store solely devoted to the sale of this stone, where the large and most artistic display formed a veritable museum. Here members of our party expended considerable sums of money in the purchase of pretty mementoes to take home with them as souvenirs of Puebla de los Angeles. Onyx articles are shipped from here in considerable quantities to London and Paris, where there are agencies for their sale. The quarries whence these fine specimens come are fifty miles away from the city, near Mount El Pizarro.

The State of Puebla is remarkable for producing a fine quality of wheat, and also for its heavy yield of other cereals. One may look in vain elsewhere for better apples, pears, peaches, and plums than are offered in the public market of this attractive town, all of which are grown in its immediate vicinity. Articles of embroidery were offered at one of the open stands in the market-place fully equal to the Fayal product so well known in Boston. The very low price demanded for fine linen handkerchiefs and napkins, representing days of patient labor on each, showed how cheaply these native women estimate their time. They will



follow the most intricate design which may be given to them as a pattern, reproducing it with Chinese fidelity, and with as much apparent ease as though it were their own conception. It seemed to us, as we examined this delicate product, that art needlework could hardly go further as to perfection of detail. This work is not that of dainty fingers and delicate hands, educated and taught embroidery in some convent school, but the outcome of very humble adobe cabins, and the instinctive artistic taste of hands accustomed to the severe drudgery of a semi-barbarous life. It was found that the sales-people, when they first receive these goods from the natives, are obliged to wash and bleach them thoroughly, they are so begrimed, but they know very well how beautifully the work will prove to be executed, and gladly purchase it even in this soiled condition.

For so restricted a territory, Puebla contains a great aggregate of valuable resources, – a rich and extensive coal-mine near by on the ranch of Santa Barbara, inexhaustible stone-quarries on the hill of Guadalupe, abundant deposits of kaolin close at hand for the manufacture of porcelain ware, a sufficient supply of material for making lime to last a hundred years, an iron mine within eight or ten miles which employs a large foundry, running night and day; while the neighboring foothills are covered with an almost inexhaustible supply of good merchantable wood. Certainly, no city in Mexico is better situated as to natural resources. The state is so located as to embrace a great variety of climate. In the north it produces wheat, corn, and other cereals, also affording grazing

ground to immense herds of domestic animals, while in the south it yields liberal crops of cotton, tobacco, sugar, rice, and a great variety of fruits, together with many rich and beautiful cabinet and dye woods. Truly, this is a record which few localities can equal in any zone.

We have said that Puebla is the key to the national capital. This is proven by the fact that the chief events in its history have been the battles fought for its possession. A few of those which most readily occur to the memory are its capture by Iturbide, August 2, 1821; its occupation by Scott, May 25, 1847; its successful defense against the French, May 5, 1862; its capture by the French, May 17, 1863; and its capture *from* the French, April 2, 1867, by General Diaz, now President of the republic.

We were told that the thieving populace of Puebla had so provoked the agent of the company who own the road between Mexico and Vera Cruz, by abstracting everything they could lay their hands on, whether available for any purpose of their own or not, that he finally resolved to set a trap which should teach them a severe lesson. A small dynamite bomb with its brass screw at the vent was left exposed in the yard at night. One of the prowling, thieving peons climbed the wall and attempted to abstract the cap, – not because he was in want of a brass cap to a dynamite bomb; he would have stolen a railroad spike or an iron tie all the same. He hadn't fooled with this instrument more than sixty seconds before it was discharged in his hands with a report like a cannon. The consequence was, that not enough of

that would-be thief could be found to give the body Christian burial! It was observed thereafter that peons didn't feel sufficient interest in the company's affairs to climb the wall which incloses the depot, and meddle with the articles of railroad property lying about the yard. This was a pretty severe dose of medicine, but it wrought a radical cure.

## CHAPTER XIV

Ancient Cholula. – A Grand Antiquity. – The Cheops of Mexico. – Traditions relating to the Pyramid. – The Toltecs. – Cholula of To-Day. – Comprehensive View. – A Modern Tower of Babel. – Multiplicity of Ruins. – Cortez's Exaggerations. – Sacrifices of Human Beings. – The Hateful Inquisition. – A Wholesale Murderous Scheme. – Unreliable Historians. – Spanish Falsification. – Interesting Churches. – Off the Track. – Personal Relics of Cortez. – Torturing a Victim. – Aztec Antiquities. – Tlaxcala. – Church of San Francisco. – Peon Dwellings. – Cortez and the Tlaxcalans.

In leaving Puebla for Cholula, which lies at a distance of only a couple of leagues to the westward, we first pass on the left the fine architectural group formed by the church of San Javior and Guadalupe, with its attractive cluster of domes, spires, and pinnacles. Our course lies through broad maguey fields and across the Atoyac River, a shallow stream most of the year; but at times it becomes a rushing torrent. The country hereabouts is under excellent cultivation, though the awkward plough introduced by the Spaniards centuries ago still does service here. Almost as soon as the city disappears from view, there looms in the distance the grand pyramid of Cholula, crowned by a lofty modern chapel, its dome of enameled and

parti-colored tiles glistening in the warm sunshine. Far beyond the pyramid the volcanoes are seen in their lonely grandeur. Cholula lies upon a perfectly level plain, broken only by the great artificial mound called the pyramid, situated on the eastern outskirts of the present city. The town, Spanish history tells us, once contained over two hundred thousand inhabitants; but to-day there are less than nine thousand, while of its four hundred reputed temples, scarcely a trace now remains.

When Cortez made his advent here he found Cholula to be the sacred city of the Aztecs, where their main body of high priests and their most venerated temples were located. Is it possible that these mud-built cabins represent a city once so grand and so populous? Can it be that these half-clad, half-fed peons whom we see about us, exhibiting only a benighted intelligence, represent Aztecs and Toltecs who are supposed to have possessed a liberal share of art and culture; a people, whose astronomers were able to determine for themselves the apparent motion of the sun and the length of the solar year: who had the art of polishing the hardest of precious stones; who cast choice and perfect figures of silver and gold in one piece; and who made delicate filigree ornaments without solder? These are achievements belonging to quite a high state of civilization. The cabins consist mostly of one room, in which lives a whole family, with the bare earth for a floor, the open door often affording the only light which reaches the interior. There are some better dwellings here, to be sure; but all are adobe, and this brief description is applicable to nine

tenths of the people and their rude dwellings.

Cholula has one grand antiquity, which even the ruthless finger of Time has made little impression upon, being the remains of one of those remarkable earth-pyramids which was probably built by the Toltecs; though how they could erect a mountain without beasts of burden is an endless puzzle. The rains, winds, and storms of ages have opened crevices in the sides of the artificial hill; but these have only served to show what labor it must have cost to build the structure in stout layers of sun-dried brick, so substantially that it has lasted thus intact for many centuries. It is not at all unreasonable to fix the date of its completion at a thousand years ago. This peculiar elevation rises a little over two hundred feet above the plain, and measures about a thousand feet square at the base, forming one of the most interesting relics in all Mexico; though its height is less than half that of Cheops in Egypt, its base is twice as large, covering about as many acres as Boston Common. In its composition it strongly resembles the pyramids of Upper Egypt. On its summit is a level space one hundred and sixty feet square, the view from which is one of vast breadth and beauty, embracing the entire valley of Puebla. The four sides of the huge mound face the cardinal points, the whole being composed of alternate strata of adobe bricks and clay. The sides are mostly overgrown with trees and shrubs; but a winding road, well paved with stones laid in broad, deep steps, leads to the top. The constant wear of centuries has thrown the original shape somewhat out of harmony with the

supposed idea; but there is quite enough extant to establish the original design. One corner has been excavated to a considerable extent to make room for the railway, an exposure which has served a double purpose, since it has proven the whole elevation to be artificial, constructed in layers, and not a natural hill, as some casual observers have declared it to be. The material of which the pyramid is composed is earth, sun-dried bricks, limestone, and lava. It is thought by some that besides having the apex crowned originally with a temple of worship, the sides were covered by adobe houses from base to near the summit, accommodating a large population. That there were once terraces and steps here which would carry out such an idea is very clear from the portions which have been laid bare by excavation.

The mounds of our Western and Southwestern States are almost the counterpart of this grand elevation at Cholula, so far as the idea goes, except that they are mere pigmies in comparison. The fact is worth recalling that the same species of domestic implements of stone which are found from time to time deeply buried in portions of the United States are also exhumed here. So in the museum of the capital one sees stone hatchets, pestles, mortars, and arrowheads of the same shapes that we have been accustomed to find beneath the soil of our Northern States.

The most casual observer will be satisfied that this pyramid dates long before the time of the Spanish conquest, and that it was not built by the race of Indians whom Cortez found in possession. It may represent a race who existed even prior to the Toltecs, to

whom the Aztecs were indebted for all their arts and refinements, and upon which it is doubted if they much improved. No one can possibly say how many centuries are looking down upon us from this colossal ruin. We are told of one tradition, recorded by a Jesuit priest named Torquemada, which ascribes the origin of this pyramid to a period contemporary with that of the Tower of Babel, in the land of Shinar. The tradition also speaks of a great deluge, and says that this artificial mound was originally designed to reach the clouds; but the gods were angered by the attempt, and dispersed the workmen with lightning, after it had got to its present height. With mountains close at hand, so much loftier than any human agency could achieve, it is a mystery what motive could have actuated a people to rear this colossal mound except it was for the foundation of a temple. The pretended legend of aboriginal origin is no doubt a pure fabrication, like nine tenths of the priestly records relating to Mexico.

The ancient builders erected a shrine and sacrificial stone on the summit of the pyramid. This idolatrous temple was promptly destroyed by Cortez, and the place where it stood is now occupied by a Roman Catholic chapel dedicated to the Virgin of Remedios. The present edifice is of quite modern construction, replacing the original chapel erected by the Spaniards, which was destroyed by fire. It struck us as being more than usually tawdry in its equipment. Its cupola is decidedly out of proportion to the small body of the structure. There are traditions among the natives here, as is usually the case in relation to all



antique remains, telling of interior galleries and chambers of great extent; but no confidence is placed in such rumors. The excavation already referred to laid bare a tomb containing two skeletons, with a couple of idols in basalt, also a small collection of aboriginal pottery. The sepulchre was square, with stone walls supported by cypress beams. The discovery of these two skeletons in one corner and at the base of the pyramid does not indicate that it was reared for the purpose of a tomb. It would require the discovery of such a burial near the centre of the immense mound to indicate such a design.

The hoary-headed monarch, Popocatepetl, looms in the distance, proudly dominating the scene, with Puebla and the hill of Cinco de Mayo on the right. The exceeding transparency of the atmosphere brings these distant objects seemingly close to the observer, as though he was looking at them through a telescope.

The small city of Cholula is spread out at the base of the pyramid, and beyond it are wide, fertile fields of grain and alfalfa, with gardens of semi-tropical fruits. One large orchard seemed to be a very garden of Hesperides, yellow with golden oranges and sweet with fragrant blossoms. The pyramid originally stood near the centre of the town, the streets radiating from it; but the dwellings which once lined these thoroughfares have long since crumbled into dust, leaving standing only the useless stone churches, of which there are forty dotting the plain here and there, built without regard to any adjacent population. Two lesser pyramids are visible near the main elevation. Farther away, small

villages, each with its church tower, add interest to the scene, while the mellow notes of distant bells mingle and float upon the air. The multiplicity of these churches shows how dense must have been the population in the time of Cortez, as it was the practice of the invading Spaniards to compel the natives not only to demolish their own temples, but to build a Christian church in place of each one thus destroyed. A number of the churches are abandoned and are gradually going to decay. "Why," said a practical individual of our party, "it's all churches and no town." The site of the ancient city is very evident from the lines of its regular streets stretching away in all directions.

"I assure your majesty," wrote Cortez from Cholula to his sovereign in Spain, "that I have counted from a mosque or temple four hundred mosques and as many towers, all of which were mosques in this city." We have here an example of this adventurer's style of exaggeration and hyperbole. If we take three hundred and sixty from the four hundred "mosques" which he pretends to have seen, there will be forty left, which is probably about the truth. Cortez not only uses oriental words to express himself, but is exercised by a truly oriental extravagance in his stories. There are no "mosques" in Mexico, nor were the native temples anything like such structures. There are sufficient remains of Aztec temples left to show that they were plain in construction, of pyramidal form, without towers, and that their altars were erected on the summits in the open air, surrounded by broad platforms.

This pyramid was dedicated to the benevolent god Quetzalcoatl, "the great, good, and fair god of the Aztecs." Yet, it seemed to have been considered necessary to sacrifice human life to his godship in a most sanguinary manner, as was the practice at the great temple of the capital. We are told that twelve thousand lives were laid at the feet of Quetzalcoatl in a single year! If this is true (which we very much doubt), one would say that the advent of Cortez with all his cruelty was a blessing that came none too soon. No matter how low the type of Christianity which replaced the murderous devotion of these idolaters, any change, it would seem, must have been for the better. The frightful barbarity of the Aztecs is apparently shown by the records of Spanish priests concerning the sacrificial stone, now preserved in the museum at the national capital, upon which the victims were bound, their hearts cut out and laid reverentially thereon, while their bodies were cast down the declivity of the pyramid to the exultant multitude below, who cooked and ate them at religious banquets. Even the hateful Inquisition was an improvement upon this ghastly cannibalism covered up by a cloak of religious rites.

It was Southey who expressed the opinion in poetic lines that heaven made blind zeal and bloody avarice its ministers of vengeance against the Aztec idolaters. Still, the Aztec remains and is the governing race in Mexico, while the Spaniards as a distinct people have virtually disappeared.

But we must take the record of these events with a degree

of caution. That fable and history have been indiscriminately mingled by the Spanish authors is plain enough from the fact that ridiculous miracles are constantly recorded by them as having actually occurred, which were the pure invention of the priesthood, designed to influence and awe the ignorant native race. This reduces us to the unfortunate condition of being obliged to doubt what may have been historically true. The Inquisition exercised a censorship over everything designed for publication, and unless it subserved the interest of that fiendish institution, it was made to do so, or it was suppressed. These facts caused Prescott to say: "In short, the elements of truth and falsehood became so blended that history was converted into romance, and romance received the credit due to history." The confusion of fact and fiction in the writings of Spanish historians, as they are called, is so grave and obvious as simply to disgust the honest seeker after truth. This is the case not only as relating to Mexico, but the past story of Spain both at home and abroad. "What is history," says the first Napoleon, "but a fable agreed upon?"

The horrid pictures of human sacrifice as represented by the Spanish chroniclers, also by the letters and despatches of Cortez, we do not credit, though undoubtedly they had some foundation in truth. It is the characteristic of all these records to persistently distort facts so as to further the purposes of the writers, and as to correctness where figures are concerned, they are scarcely ever to be relied upon. Though forced to admit this want of

veracity, Prescott has relied almost entirely upon these sources for the material of his popular work. No person can calmly survey the field to-day, compare the statements of the various authors, and visit the country itself, without seeing clearly how much of absurd exaggeration and monstrous fiction has been foisted upon the reading public relative to this period of the conquest of Mexico.

"These chroniclers," says Bancroft, "were swayed like other writers of their time, and all other times, by the spirit of the age, and by various religious, political, and personal prejudices."

"I lay little stress upon Spanish testimonies," says Adair, "for time and ocular proof have convinced us of the labored falsehood of almost all their historical narrations."

At the advent of the Spaniards, Cholula was doubtless the commercial centre of the plain; Puebla, the now large and thriving capital of the state, was then a mere hamlet in comparison. It was also the Mecca of the Aztecs, who came from far and near to bow down before Quetzalcoatl. The grand public square or plaza is still extant where Cortez perpetrated his most outrageous act of butchery, killing, it is said, three thousand Cholulans who had assembled unarmed and in good faith, in compliance with his request. Everything in and about this spacious area seems strangely silent and dilapidated, as though stricken by decay. The present interest and attraction of the place exists almost solely in the pyramid and the tragic legends of its vanished people. A few ancient trees ornament

the neglected plaza, about which a score of weary burros were seen cropping the scanty herbage which springs up naturally here and there. The spot is said to exhibit some life on market-days, but it was lonely and deserted when we looked upon it, while the dry earth seemed on fire under the intense heat of the sun. It was difficult, while looking upon this gloomy area, to realize that the place was once conspicuous for its trade and manufactures, for its wealth and splendor. The social and official life of Cholula is reported at one time to have even rivaled the court of Montezuma. Here religious processions, sacrifices, and festivals were of continual occurrence, and no other city had so great a concourse of priests and so incessant a round of ceremonies.

The church known as the Royal Chapel, and also as the Church of the Seven Naves, situated at the northeast corner of the plaza, was of considerable interest. The last named was closed, undergoing radical repairs; but our curiosity was aroused, and a small fee soon opened a side door through which entrance was effected. The repairs going on will greatly change its original appearance. One could not but regret to see its ancient and delicate Moorish frescoes ruthlessly obliterated, the colors and designing of which so completely harmonized with the architecture and with the dim light which struggled in through the deep, small, mullioned windows. This chapel, with its sixty-four supporting columns, forcibly recalled the peculiar interior of the cathedral mosque at Cordova in Spain, which, indeed, must

have suggested to Cortez so close though diminutive a copy, for it was built by his special orders and after his specified plans.

It is said that the early dwellers in this region excelled in various mechanical arts, especially in the working of metals and the manufacture of cotton and agave cloth, to which may be added a delicate kind of pottery, rivaling anything of the sort belonging to that period. Examples of this pottery are often exhumed in the neighborhood, and as we suspect are quite as often manufactured to order, for the present generation of Aztecs is not only very shrewd and cunning, but also very able in imitating all given models in earthenware. This sort of work forms a remunerative industry at the present time in Cholula. As we pass the open doors and windows of the dwelling-houses, cotton goods are weaving on hand looms by members of the families. Another local industry was observed here, namely, the manufacture of fireworks of a toy character, which we were told were shipped to all parts of the country.

The engine which had drawn our train from Puebla hither, after doing so, managed to get derailed, and a Mexican crowd spent hours in an ineffectual attempt to get the iron horse once more upon the track. As the day drew to its close our party was prepared to return to Puebla; but there was the engine stubbornly fixed upon the sleepers of the track, and the wheels partially buried in the ground. Mexican ingenuity was not equal to the emergency, so Yankee genius stepped forward. One of our party conversant with such matters took charge, and by a few judicious

directions and appliances improvised upon the spot, he soon had the heavy engine once more in its proper position, and we started back to Puebla amid the cheers of the Mexicans at Yankee skill and energy, which seemed to them equal to any exigency.

A branch railway takes us from Puebla to Santa Ana, from whence ancient Tlaxcala is reached by tramway. It is the capital of the state bearing the same name, and has some four or five thousand inhabitants; it is credited with having had over fifty thousand three centuries ago. Had it not been that civil discord reigned at the time of the advent of Cortez here, he could never have conquered Montezuma; but the Tlaxcalans were induced by cunning diplomacy to join the Spaniards, and their united forces accomplished that which neither could have done single-handed. One is struck by the diminutive size of the native men and women at Tlaxcala. The latter are especially, short in stature, the never absent baby lashed to their backs making the mothers look still shorter.

This place is remarkable for the accumulation of Aztec and Spanish antiquities. The municipal palace, situated on the east side of the plaza, contains four remarkable oil paintings bearing the date of the conquest. Here also is preserved the war-worn banner of Spain, which was carried by Cortez from the time of his first landing at Vera Cruz throughout all his triumphant career. The material is rich, being of heavy silk brocade, the color a light maroon, not badly faded considering its age. Large sums of money have been offered for this ancient and interesting



banner, the object being to take it back to Spain, from whence it came nearly four hundred years ago; but the Tlaxcalans refuse to part with it at any price. Despite the lapse of so many years and its having passed through so many vicissitudes, the flag is nearly perfect at this writing. It is eight or nine feet long and six broad, cut in swallow-tail fashion. The iron spearhead bears the monogram of the sovereigns of Spain, and the original staff, now broken, is still preserved with the flag. Here one is also shown the arms of Tlaxcala illuminated on parchment and bearing the signature of Charles V., together with the standard presented to the local chiefs by Cortez; the robes which they wore when baptized, and a collection of idols which have been unearthed from time to time in this immediate neighborhood, are also shown in the municipal palace. In the corridor stands the great treasure chest, with departments for silver and gold. This was locked with four different keys, one being held by each of four officers who were unitedly responsible for the treasures, the chest thus requiring the presence of the four when there was occasion to open it.

There are many personal relics of Cortez shown to the visitors at the municipal palace; but the intelligent observer, aided by the light of history, finds it difficult to accord much admiration to this man. He is represented to have been handsome, commanding in person, brave, but far from reckless, and to have possessed strong magnetic power over his associates and those whom he desired to influence. He was eloquent

and persuasive, exercising an irresistible control over the half savage people whom he came to conquer. Another secret of his influence with the authorities at home, in Spain, was his never-failing fidelity to the legitimate sovereign, and the shrewd despatch of rich presents and much gold to his royal master. We know him to have been ambitious, cruel, heartless, avaricious, and false. He deserted his faithful wife in Spain, a second in Cuba (whom tradition accuses him of murdering), and was shamefully unfaithful to the devoted Marina, mother of his acknowledged son, she who was his native interpreter, and who more than once saved his life from immediate peril, finally guiding his footsteps to a victorious consummation of his most ambitious designs. Cortez owed more of his success to her than to his scanty battalions. If nothing else would serve to stamp his name with lasting infamy, the infernal torture which he inflicted upon the ill-fated Guatemozin, for the purpose of extorting information as to the hiding-place of the imperial treasures, should do so. The true record of the life of Cortez reads more like romance than like the truth. This is not perhaps the place to refer to his private life, which history admits to have been perfidious. Landing on the continent with a band scarcely more than half the number of a modern regiment, he prepared to traverse an unknown country thronged with savage tribes, with whose character, habits, and means of defense he was wholly unacquainted. We know that this romantic adventure was finally crowned with success, though meeting with various checks and stained with

bloody episodes, that prove how the threads of courage and ferocity are inseparably blended in the woof and warp of Spanish character.

Just above the town, on the hillside, is the ancient convent of San Francisco, which contains over one hundred paintings more than two centuries old. The old church of San Francisco, close at hand, dates from a period, three hundred and seventy years ago, when Mexican history often fades into fable. The approach is over a paved way, and through a road bordered by a double row of old trees, which form a gothic perspective of greenery. The convent now serves in part for the purpose of a military barrack, before which stand a few small cannon so diminutive as to have the appearance of toys. A few soldiers lounged lazily about, and some were asleep upon a bench. Probably they were doing guard duty after the Mexican style. On the hillside above the church of San Francisco is a modern church, and beyond it a Campo Santo.

This gray old church, the oldest in Mexico, is certainly very interesting in its belongings, carrying us in imagination far into the dim past. "The earliest and longest have still the mastery over us," says George Eliot. This was the first church erected by the Spaniards in Mexico, and was in constant use by Cortez, who, notwithstanding his heartless cruelty, his unscrupulous and murderous deeds, his gross selfishness, faithlessness, and ambition, was still a devout Catholic, never omitting the most minute observances of church ceremonies, and always accompanying his most questionable deeds with the cant

phrases of religion. The roof of the church of San Francisco is a curiosity in itself, being upheld by elaborately carved cedar beams, which were imported from Spain. In a side chapel is preserved the original pulpit from which the Christian religion according to the tenets of the Church of Rome was first preached in the New World, and also the stone font in which the native Tlaxcalan chiefs were baptized. The defacing finger of Time is visible on all perishable articles. One or two of the mediæval paintings were scarcely more than tattered, drooping canvas, presenting here and there a shadowy human figure or a clouded emblem. We were shown a series of religious vestments, said to have been worn by the first officiating priests in this ancient church; but we instantly realized that they could not be so old, for such articles would long ago have become too frail to hold together, whereas these were exposed upon an open table, and were freely handled by any one who chose to do so. They were of a light, thin texture, silk and satin, and elaborately trimmed with gold and silver lace.

One is shocked on observing the roughly carved figures of bleeding saints and martyrs, with crucifixion scenes and mangled bodies, suspended from the walls of the church. "The repulsive and ghostly images, paintings, and mechanical contrivances, common in the small towns and villages, are mostly banished from the capital and other large cities," says Hon. John H. Rice, in "Mexico, Our Neighbor," "in obedience to the demands of a more decent civilization. They are used, however, where most

practicable (representing the crucifixion and diverse rites and ceremonies of the church), to hold in awe and superstitious thralldom the weak and untutored minds of the degenerated children of the republic; and so to extort from them the last dregs of their poverty-stricken purses."

The prevailing style of this Tlaxcalan church, as well as that of the churches generally which we visited throughout the country, is of the Spanish Renaissance. Puebla, Guadalajara, and the city of Mexico contain cathedrals which will compare favorably even with those of continental Spain, where the most elaborate and costly religious edifices in the world are to be seen to-day. The plans of all these churches came originally from Spain, and builders from thence superintended their erection. The parish church of Tlaxcala, situated on a street leading from the plaza, has a curious façade of stucco, brick, and blue glazed tiles. In this edifice was seen an interesting picture representing the baptism of the Tlaxcalan chiefs already referred to. This was an event which was of local importance, perhaps, at the time, but which is without a shadow of interest to-day, though it is duly emphasized and repeated by the guides. The dome of the church was destroyed by an earthquake so late as 1864. Near this church are the ruins of a chapel, the façade of which is still standing, and on which are displayed the royal arms of Spain.

Regarding the dwellings of the poorer classes of this region, as well as of the country generally, they are of the most miserable character, wanting in nearly all the requirements of health and

comfort. They consist of adobe-built cabins, wherein the people live, eat, and sleep upon the bare ground, without light or ventilation, except that which comes in through the open door, and where drainage of any sort is not even thought of. Mud cabins on the bogs of Ireland are not poorer places to live in. In the warmer regions, the common people live in mere huts of cane, consisting of a few poles covered with dry plantain leaves, palms, or cornstalks, made into a thatch by braiding and twining them together. A mat woven of dried husks and laid upon the ground forms the only bed. Neither chairs, tables, nor benches are seen in these cabins, – they are unknown luxuries. In the more tropical regions of the country, the cabins have no sides, the thatched roof coming down to near the ground, thus forming only a screen from the rain during the season of the year when it falls. A sort of instinct causes the common people of the tropics to seek some sort of shelter from the stars when they sleep; but half the Indian population of Mexico do not see the inside even of an adobe cabin from one year's end to another. The universal food depended upon to support life, besides the wild fruits, is the preparation of corn called tortillas, and a few vegetable roots. The grain is pulverized by hand between two stones, made into a paste or dough, and eaten half baked in thin cakes. We are, of course, speaking of the poor Indian people, but they form probably two thirds of the population, especially in the rural districts. These natives make their own fermented liquor. On the coast it is what they call palm wine, and rum from sugar-cane; on

the table-land, it is pulque, from the maguey plant, – their delight and their curse. After the maguey has yielded its sap to the last quart, and begins to wilt, there appears in the stalk a nest of white caterpillars, which the Indians consider to be a great luxury, and which they eat with avidity, besides which the roots of the exhausted plant are boiled and eaten, possessing considerable nutritive properties. The native people of New Zealand exhibit a similar appetite. When the trunks of the tall kauri trees, which have been uprooted by storms, have lain so long upon the moist ground that they begin to decay, a large worm breeds in the decomposing wood; these, when arrived at maturity, are eagerly grubbed for and devoured by the Maoris. Our ideas of what constitutes proper food for human beings are governed by very arbitrary rules. The Chinese consume dogs, cats, and rats; the Japanese and Africans are fond of monkey flesh; the Parisians often eat horse-meat from choice; while some of the South Sea Islanders have still an appetite for human flesh. The London gourmand revels in snails, and the New Yorker demands frogs upon his bill of fare. Is the New Zealander so very exceptional in his fancy for wood-worms? Green goose and broiled chicken are among the delicacies of our table, and yet there is scarcely any sort of foul garbage which they will not consume as food. Why is their flesh considered more delicate than any other?

The better dwellings of Tlaxcala are nearly all adobe houses, standing in a rough, hilly region on the eastern slope of the mountains which inclose the valley. It is difficult to conjecture

what possible industry keeps the place alive, for, though interesting to the thoughtful traveler and the scientist, it has no visible business activity beyond the exhibition of the antiquities to which we have referred, but seems to smoulder in a sort of moss-grown, picturesque decay. The seats of the old, half-forgotten, and neglected plaza were occupied by groups of idle natives, who regarded us with a dull, sleepy interest. A few laden burros passed through the streets bearing charcoal, wood, or bags of grain, and others with high panniers of straw lashed in compact form. They carried their noses close to the ground, picking up any edible object – banana skins, orange peel, bits of garbage, and similar scraps. This small creature which carries such enormous loads seems to eat anything, no matter how little nutriment it contains, and, strange to say, keeps in good flesh. The single candy shop under the arches beside the plaza did a lively business with our party while we remained, its members having suddenly developed a marvelous appetite for dulces. Bright-eyed boys and girls, with a paucity of clothing and any amount of good looks, met us at each turn with hands extended, and a cry of "Centavo, centavo!"

It was to Tlaxcala that Cortez and his small band of followers retreated when the natives of the valley of Mexico rose and in desperation drove him from their midst. Here, after some months devoted to recuperation and being joined by reinforcements from Cuba, he prepared to lay siege once more to the Aztec capital. Part of this preparation consisted in building a number of small,



flat-bottomed boats in pieces, so that they could be transported over a mountainous district, and put together on the shore of Lake Texcoco, thus enabling him to complete the investment of the water-begirt city. It sounds ludicrous in our times to read of the force with which the invading Spaniards laid siege to a nation's capital. His "army" consisted of forty cavalymen, eighty arquebusiers and cross-bowmen, and four hundred and fifty foot-soldiers, armed with swords and lances, to which is to be added a train of nine small cannon, about the size of those which are carried by our racing yachts of to-day for the purpose of firing salutes. Of course he had a crowd of Tlaxcalans with him, the number of which is variously stated, but who could not be of much actual use. More than one of these veracious Spanish historians states the number to have been one hundred and twenty thousand! So large a body of men would have been a hindrance, not a help, in the undertaking. Cortez neither had nor could he command a commissariat suitable for such an army, and it must be remembered that the siege lasted for months. "Whoever has had occasion to consult the ancient chronicles of Spain," says Prescott, "in relation to its wars with the infidels, whether Arab or American, will place little confidence in numbers." We all know how a French imperial bulletin can lie, but Spanish records are gigantic falsifications in comparison. This siege lasted for over six months, and finally, on August 13, 1521, Cortez entered the city in triumph, hoping to enrich himself with immense spoils; but nearly all valuables, including those of the royal treasury, had

been cast into the lake and thus permanently lost, rather than permit the avaricious Spaniards to possess them. Cortez's final success of this invasion caused it to be called a "holy war," under the patronage of the church! Had he failed, he would have been stigmatized as a filibuster.

A brief visit was paid to the palace once occupied by Cortez, and now the residence of the highest city official. It has been so modernized that nothing was found especially interesting within the walls. The hot sun of midday made the shade of the ancient trees on the plaza particularly grateful, and the play of the fountain was at least suggestive of coolness. Sitting on one of the long stone benches, we mused as to the scenes which must have taken place upon this spot nearly four hundred years ago, and watched the tri-colored flags of Mexico floating gayly over the two palaces. In the mean time, the swarthy, half-clad natives, regarded curiously and in silence the pale-faced visitors to their quaint old town, until, by-and-by, we started on our return to Puebla by tramway, stopping now and then to gather some tempting wild flowers, or to purchase a bit of native pottery, which was so like old Egyptian patterns that it would not have looked out of place in Cairo or Alexandria.

Occasionally, in this section and eastward, towards Vera Cruz, as we stop at a railway station, a squad of rural police, sometimes mounted, sometimes on foot, draw up in line and salute the train. They are usually clad in buff leather uniforms, with a red sash about their waists, but sometimes are dressed in homespun, light

gray woolen cloth, covered with many buttons. They remind one of the Canadian mounted police, who guard the frontier; a body of men designed to keep the Indians in awe, and to perform semi-military and police duty. It is a fact that most of these men were formerly banditti, who find that occupation under the government pays them much better, and that it is also safer, since the present energetic officials are in the habit of shooting highwaymen at sight, without regard to judge or jury.

## CHAPTER XV

Down into the Hot Lands. – Wonderful Mountain Scenery. – Parasitic Vines. – Luscious Fruits. – Orchids. – Orizaba. – State of Vera Cruz. – The Kodak. – Churches. – A Native Artist. – Schools. – Climate. – Crystal Peak of Orizaba. – Grand Waterfall. – The American Flag. – Disappointed Climbers. – A Night Surprise. – The French Invasion. – The Plaza. – Indian Characteristics. – Early Morning Sights. – Maximilian in Council. – Difficult Engineering. – Wild Flowers. – A Cascade. – Cordova. – The Banana. – Coffee Plantations. – Fertile Soil. – Market Scenes.

After returning to Puebla from Tlaxcala, we take the cars which will convey us eastward from the elevated table-land towards the tropical region of the coast. The steep descent begins just below Boca del Monte (Mouth of the Mountain), where the height above the Gulf of Mexico is about eight thousand feet, and the distance from Vera Cruz a trifle over one hundred miles. Here also is the dividing line between the states of Puebla and Vera Cruz. The winding, twisting road built along the rugged mountain-side is a marvelous triumph of the science of engineering, presenting obstacles which were at first deemed almost impossible to be overcome, now crossing deep gulches by spider-web trestles, and now diving into and out of long,

dark tunnels, all the while descending a grade so steep as to be absolutely startling. The author remembers nothing more remarkable of the same character, unless it may be portions of the zigzag railway of the Blue Mountains in Australia, and some grades among the foothills of the Himalayan range in India. This road leading from Vera Cruz to the national capital, a distance of two hundred and sixty miles, ascends seven thousand six hundred feet. The scenery all the while is so grand and beautiful as to cause the most timid traveler to forget his nervousness. We were reminded by an officer of the road of the fact, remarkable if it is true, that no fatal accident had ever occurred upon the line. The geological formation of this region is on a most gigantic scale, the rocks of basalt and granite rising in fantastic shapes, forming ravines and pinnacles unparalleled for grandeur. Presently we come in full view of the beautiful valley of La Joya (The Gem), revealing its lovely gardens, beautifully wooded slopes, and yellow fields of ripening grain. By-and-by the lovely vale and pretty village of Maltrata is seen, with its saffron-colored domes and towers, its red-tiled, moss-enameled roofs, its flower-bordered lanes, and its squares of cultivated fields. These greet the eye far, far down the dizzy depths, two thousand feet, on our right, while on the left the mountains rise abruptly hundreds of feet towards the sky. The mingled rock and soil is here screened by lovely ferns and a perfect exposition of morning glories, fabulous in size and dazzling in colors. No artificial display could equal this handiwork of nature, this exhibition of

"April's loveliest coronets." Now and again large trees are seen on the line of the road withering in the cruel coils of a parasitic vine, which winds itself about the trunk like a two-inch hawser, and slowly strangles the stout, columnar tree. Finally the original trunk will die and fall to the ground, leaving the once small vine to grow and fatten upon its decay until it shall rival in size the trunk it has displaced. This is a sight common in tropical regions, and often observed in the forests of New Zealand, where the author has seen trees two and three feet in diameter yielding their lives to the fatal embrace of these parasites.

We descend rapidly; down, down, rushes the train, impelled by its own impetus, approaching the town first on one side, then on the other, until we stop at a huge elevated tank, rivaling the famous tun of Heidelberg in size, to water the thirsty engine. Here, and at most of the stations along the route, boys and girls offer the travelers tropical fruits in great variety at merely nominal prices, including large, yellow pineapples, zapotas, mameys, pomegranates, citrons, limes, oranges, and the like. Large, ripe oranges are sold two for a penny. One timid, half-clad, pretty young girl of native blood held up to us diffidently a bunch of white, fragrant orange blossoms which were eagerly secured and enjoyed, the child could not know how much. Other Indians brought roses and various orchids, splendidly developed, which they sold for a *real* (twelve cents) each, with the roots bound up in broad green leaves. Doyle or Galvin would charge ten dollars apiece for such in Boston. Some of them had

marvellous scarlet centres, eccentric in shape but very beautiful. As to color, there were blue, green, scarlet, yellow, and purple specimens among them.

Still winding in and out among the mountains, our ears frequently greeted by the music of tumbling waters, we finally arrive at Orizaba, in the State of Vera Cruz. The capital of this state was formerly Jalapa, but it is now Orizaba, which is named after the grand old mountain whose base is about twenty-five miles away. The State of Vera Cruz contains something over half a million of inhabitants. Few places in Mexico have a more fascinating site, or are surrounded by more lovely scenery. We are here eighty miles from Vera Cruz, and one hundred and eighty from the city of Mexico. Orizaba, having a little over twenty thousand inhabitants, is in many respects the quaintest, as it is one of the oldest, cities in the country. Most of the dwellings are but one story in height, built with broad, overhanging eaves, and are composed of rubble-stone, mortar, sun-dried brick, and a variety of other material; but not including wood. The low, iron-grated windows, so universal in Spanish towns, are not wanting here, through the bars of which, dark-eyed señoritas and laughing children watch us as we pass, often exhibiting pleasant family groups which were photographed as swiftly and as surely on the brain as a No. 2 Kodak instrument would depict them. Some of our party, by the way, were very expert with their Kodaks, and brought away with them illustrated records of their extended journey which, for interest, would put these pen-and-ink sketches

to utter shame.

The pitched roofs of the low houses of Orizaba are covered with big red tiles, which afford a sort of ventilation, as well as serving to throw off the heat of the burning sun, while the dry earth seems to absorb it, radiating a glimmer of heated air, like the sand dunes of Suez. It is singular that everything should be so oriental in appearance, while it would be puzzling to say exactly wherein lies the resemblance.

That there are numerous churches here goes without saying, and we may add that two or three of them are quite imposing, while all are suggestive, with a few crippled beggars standing like sentries at their doors. An Indian artist, Gabriel Barranco, has contributed oil-paintings of considerable merit to nearly all the churches in his native town. He is still alive, or was so a couple of months since, and is a most interesting conversationalist, though he is blind and decrepit. This locality seems particularly liable to earthquakes in a mild form. The largest church here has had its steeple overthrown three times, and the towers on several others have been made to lean by the same agency, so that they are considerably out of plumb. No earthquake, however, is likely to make much headway against the low dwellings, which cling to the ground like one's shoe to his foot. It is pleasant to mention that several good schools have been established at Orizaba, supported by the local government. These, we are told on good authority, are in a flourishing condition in spite of all opposition from the church party. There are four schools for boys and three



exclusively for girls. Bigotry may make a bold show, but it cannot prosper where a system of free schools prevails.

A river runs through the city, lending a little life to the sleepy old place, and affording ample water power for six or eight mills which manufacture sugar, cotton, and flour. The situation is about midway between Vera Cruz and Puebla, on one of the two principal routes from the former port to the city of Mexico. The surrounding valley is quite fertile, and is mostly devoted to the raising of coffee, sugar, and tobacco. The climate is said to be very fine all the year round, the average temperature being 74° Fahr. in summer and rarely falling below 60° at any season, though it seemed to us, who had just come from the higher table-land, to be about 90°. The scenery is that of Switzerland, the temperature that of southern Italy. It affords an agreeable medium between the heat of the lower country towards the Gulf and the almost too rarefied atmosphere of the high table-lands of Mexico. "In the course of a few hours," says Prescott, "the traveler may experience every gradation of climate, embracing torrid heat and glacial cold, and pass through different zones of vegetation, including wheat and the sugar-cane, the ash and the palm, apples, olives, and guavas."

In this vicinity one sees the orange, lemon, banana, and almond growing at their best, while the coffee, sugar, and tobacco plantations rival those of Cuba, both in extent and in the character of their products. While Spanish rulers were still masters here, and when all manner of arbitrary restrictions

were put upon trade, the cultivation of tobacco was confined by law to the districts about Cordova and Orizaba. There is no such handicapping of rural industry now enforced, and sugar and tobacco, which are always sure of a ready market where transportation is to be had, are engaging more and more of the attention of planters. It was found that the best of sugar-cane land, that is, best suited for a sugar plantation, could be had here for from thirty to forty dollars per acre; superior for the purpose to that which is held at one thousand dollars per acre in Louisiana. Though cotton is grown in about half the states of Mexico, the states of Vera Cruz and Durango are the most prolific in this crop. The plant thrives on the table-land up to an elevation of about five thousand feet above the level of the Gulf, and according to Mexican statistics the average product is about two thousand pounds to the acre, which is double the average quantity produced in the cotton-growing States of this Union. The modes of cultivation are very crude and imperfect, especially at any distance from the large and populous centres, but the amazing fertility of the soil insures good and remunerative returns to the farmer or planter even under these unfavorable circumstances. Water is the great, we may say the only, fertilizer – none other is ever used, and irrigating facilities are excellent. The city is elevated more than four thousand feet above Vera Cruz, but is also as much below the altitude of the national capital. As to the climate, one is prepared to agree with its inhabitants, who declare it to be "perfection." The city is overshadowed, as it

were, by the crystal peak of Orizaba, though it is some miles away, rising to nearly eighteen thousand feet above the sea. It is probably the second loftiest mountain in North America south of the Territory of Alaska, and exceeds the highest point in Europe. Violent eruptions took place from its crater in 1545 and 1546.

About two miles east of Orizaba, near the hamlet of Jalapilla, is a fine waterfall, known as the Cascade Rincon Grande; this body of water makes a daring plunge of fifty feet over precipitous rocks, amid a glorious growth of tropical vegetation. From here parties are made up to ascend Orizaba (Mountain of the Star). It has stopped business as a volcano since the last date named, and is the highest mountain in Mexico with the exception of Popocatepetl. Until about forty years ago, the summit was considered to be inaccessible to human feet, but a party of energetic Americans planted our national flag on the summit at that time, the tattered remains of which were found to be still there in 1851, by Alexander Doignon, an adventurous Frenchman. We were told by a resident of the city of the experience of an English party, who came up from Vera Cruz not long since on their way to the city of Mexico, and who made a stop at Orizaba, intending to ascend the famous mountain. There is said to be no very great difficulty to overcome in climbing to the top if one has experience in such work and is at the same time strong and well, but the party referred to had just arrived from the level of the sea. The summit of Orizaba is, as we have stated, considerably over seventeen thousand feet

above the port of Vera Cruz. This party of confident climbers had to give it up after reaching what is known as the timber line, simply for want of the necessary breathing power. One's lungs must become in a degree accustomed to the rarefied atmosphere of the table-land before attempting to ascend to such a height. Guides, blankets, and two days' provisions should be taken by any party designing to climb Orizaba. One must seek a favorable point in the limits of the town to see this elevation to advantage, because of the close intervening hills. On the west side of the town is an elevation known as El Borrego, where five thousand Mexicans were completely routed by a single company of Zouaves during the ill-conceived French invasion. To be sure, this was a night surprise, wherein the French appeared among the sleeping Mexicans and cut them down as fast as they opened their eyes, until the whole camp took to flight. The importance of military discipline was never more clearly demonstrated. Probably the average of the Mexican soldiers were of nearly as good material as the French, but the former were little better than a mob, each man for himself. Even to-day, it is observed, in the few military exhibitions given in public, that the rank and file are lackadaisical, indifferent, undrilled, evincing a want of nearly every element of discipline, while their officers lounge along the avenues, – they do not *march*, – presenting an appearance as far from true military bearing as the greatest clown in the ranks.

It will be remembered that Orizaba was for a considerable time the headquarters of General Bazaine's army, and it was here

that the French general finally, in 1866, bade good-by to the ill-fated Maximilian, whose cause he deserted by order of his royal master, Napoleon the Little. Stories are told by the residents of the outrages committed by the French soldiers, who were permitted unlimited license by their commander. "The whole army," said an aged citizen to us, "was a body of cutthroats. They stole everything they could carry away, besides which, cruel and aimless murder was their daily diversion."

The small plaza is a delightful resort, a wilderness of green with an ornamental fountain in the middle, about which are stone seats among flowering shrubs, orange and other fruit trees. Indeed, the entire surroundings of Orizaba are gardenlike in fertility and bloom. The vegetation, owing to the humidity of the atmosphere rising from the Gulf, is always intensely green. Huge butterflies flitted in clouds about the plaza, many-colored, sunshine-loving creatures, with widespread, yellow wings shot with purple bars, and bearing strongly contrasting dots of inky-black and lily-white. A tall cluster of the glorious tulipan, quite by itself, looked like a tree on fire, so glowing was its scarlet bloom.

The streets of the town are in tolerably good condition, paved with lava once vomited from the neighboring mountain, now so quiet. The gutters are in the middle of the thoroughfares, and the sidewalks are only a few inches in width. Carts or wheeled vehicles of any sort are very little used, freight being carried almost wholly on the backs of burros and Indians. All vegetables, charcoal, wood, and country produce come into town on the

backs of sturdy, copper-colored natives, men and women, and it is really astonishing to see what loads they will carry for long distances over the mountain roads at the rate of five or six miles an hour. Humboldt, in his description of these Indians, tells us that they enjoy one great physical advantage which is undoubtedly owing to the simplicity in which their ancestors lived for thousands of years. He referred to the fact that they are subject to hardly any deformity. A hunchbacked Indian is not to be seen, and it is very rare to meet a maimed or a lame one. Their hair does not grow gray like that of white men, nor do their faces grow wrinkled as they become old. The absence of deformity is also supposed to be owing to their general mode of life, simple food, living in the open air, and temperate habits. Their ivory-white teeth contrast strongly with their black hair and bronzed features. The country people rarely indulge in pulque, never unless when they come to town, and they have too little money to throw it away in the purchase of much of even that cheap liquor. It is said that its injurious effects upon the system are very trifling compared to those of American whiskey. It seems to be little more than a powerful narcotic to those who drink of it freely. The strong distilled liquor made from the roots of the maguey plant is quite another article, and is more like Scotch whiskey in effect.

If you rise from your couch early enough in the morning, you will see many Indian men and women coming in to market from the country, all bending under the weight of provisions,

pottery, or some other home product. You will see the women (industrious creatures) knitting or netting as they jog along. And near them long trains of burros laden with grain, alfalfa, straw, or wood. You will see some dark-eyed, coquettish girls with inviting bouquets for sale; also here and there a pretty señora or señorita, with a dark lace veil thrown over her jet black hair, hastening to early mass; but, above all, behold the glorious sun encircling the frosty brow of Orizaba with a halo of gold and silver which sparkles like diamonds in the clear, crisp morning atmosphere. How full of vivid pictures is the memory of these early morning hours in Mexico!

In a small village known as Jalapilla, situated about a couple of miles south of the city, is the spot where Maximilian resided for a brief period after the French army had deserted him. Here he held the famous council as to whether he should abdicate the Mexican throne or not. He was more than half inclined to do it. It was really the only common-sense course which was left open to him. Had he done so, he might have been living to-day. Vera Cruz was close at hand and easily reached, a French steamship lay off San Juan d'Ulloa ready to take him across the sea, but there were three causes working against his abdication. First, his own pride; second, the pressure of the church party; and, last but not least, the confident counsels of Carlotta. These influences prevailed, and decided him to remain. He thus challenged the inevitable fate which ended his career at Queretaro. That two generals who were on his personal staff believed in his star and

were wedded to his service under all circumstances, was fully proven in the fact that they made no attempt to escape, but calmly and devotedly died by his side when the crisis finally came.

The railroad station at Orizaba adjoined a neat inclosure, which is a small floral paradise, exhibiting very clearly a woman's taste in the arrangement and cultivation. Roses white and red, lilies tall and pearl-colored, the scarlet hibiscus, tube-roses, orange-trees, coffee-trees full of berries, all are to be seen here, with a few bananas waving their long, broad green leaves, like pennons, over the undergrowth, and showing their one pendulous blossom as large as a pineapple.

The descent from the high elevation of Orizaba is continued, the route leading through groves of bananas, maize and sugar plantations, and creeping down the steep sides of a terrific gorge over a thousand feet deep, where the purple shadows look like shrouded phantoms hastening out of sight. This abyss is crossed by means of extraordinary engineering skill, much of the roadway along the nearly perpendicular side of the ravine having been hewn out of the solid rock. To accomplish this it was necessary at first to suspend workmen by ropes over the brow of the cliffs, lowering them down until they were opposite the point to be operated upon, and, after making fast the ropes which held them, leave them there to work for hours with hammer and chisel. There was one piece of roadbed, not more than ten rods in length, where the track seemed to run on a narrow shelf barely wide enough for the cars to pass, which is said to have required



seven years to render available. We can well conceive it to have been so, for the whole road from Vera Cruz to Mexico was about five times seven years in building. The view is at times such as to incline the experienced traveler to hold his breath, if not to close his eyes, in a tremor of excitement. In the steepest part of the route the descent is at the rate of one hundred thirty-three and one third feet to the mile! Were a wheel to break, an iron nut to give way, or the trusted brakes fail to operate, what a frightful catastrophe would instantly follow!

Between Orizaba and Cordova, a few rods off the line of the railway to the left as we go from the former to the latter place, is a dark, cavernous passage cut through the hillside a hundred feet or more, leading to the view of a waterfall of great beauty and of considerable size. It is closely framed on all sides by dark green foliage, tall and graceful trees partially overhanging it. Dainty orchids and beautiful ferns hang upon the damp rocks and the brown tree-trunks. Here the cars stop for a brief period, to enable us to delight our eyes and ears by the sight and sound of the riotous waters. A waterfall or cascade in this climate is enhanced in importance for many reasons; the very sight of rushing, foaming water has a cooling and refreshing effect when the thermometer is at 90° Fahr. The rank, tropical verdure, the depth of the sombre gorge, the tumultuous, sparkling waters, the cool, welcome shade, and the ceaseless anthem of the falls make the charming spot a scene long to be remembered. One would have liked to linger there for hours. Finally, after having passed

over a distance of nearly twenty miles, we cross the bridge of Metlac, built over a river of the same name, and arrive in sight of Cordova, whose domes and towers are just far enough away to clothe them in a soft, inviting, amber hue.

Cordova is situated in the fertile valley of the Rio Seco, and in the midst of a sugar and coffee producing district about seventy miles west of Vera Cruz, nearly upon the direct line between the Gulf and the city of Mexico. To be exact, it is sixty-six miles from the former city and two hundred from the latter. Speaking of coffee, the region wherein it thrives and is remuneratively productive is very large in Mexico. It grows down to the coast and far up into the table-lands, but it does best in an altitude of from one to three thousand feet above the level of the sea. In this region, as we have already indicated, a berry is produced which we consider equal to the product of any land. Under proper conditions the republic could furnish the whole of this country with the raw material wherewith to produce the favorite beverage, enormous as is the consumption. The bananas of this region were found to be especially luscious and appetizing. In growth this is a beautiful, thrifty, and productive annual, forming a large portion of the food supply of the humbler classes, and a favorite dessert at the tables of the rich. From the centre of its large, broad, palm-like leaves, which gather at the top of the thick stalk, twelve or fifteen inches in diameter, when it has reached a height of about ten feet, there springs forth a large purple bud, eight or nine inches long, shaped like a huge acorn, but a little

more pointed. This cone hangs suspended from a strong stem upon which a leaf unfolds, displaying a cluster of young fruit. As soon as these have become fairly set, this sheltering leaf drops off and another unfolds, exposing its little brood of young fruit, and the process goes on until eight or ten rings of small bananas are started, forming bunches, when ready to pick, of from seventy-five to a hundred of the finger-like product. After bearing, the stalk and top die, but it sprouts up again from the roots, once more to go through the liberal process of producing a crop of luscious fruit. It is said that the banana is more productive and requires less care or cultivation than any other food-producing growth in the tropics or elsewhere.

Neither Florida nor Cuba can furnish finer oranges than are grown in vast quantities in the region round about Cordova. Peddlers offer them by the basketful to passing travelers, ripe and delicious, two for a penny; also, mangoes, bananas, pineapples, and other tropical fruits, at equally low prices. Great quantities are shipped to other cities by rail, and passengers carry away hundreds in baskets daily. Coffee and sugar are, however, the staple products. Among the neighboring planters, as we were told, are a few enterprising Americans, who have lately introduced more modern facilities than have been in use heretofore for planting, cultivating, packing, and the like. A coffee plantation is one of the most pleasing tropical sights the eye can rest upon, where twenty-five or thirty acres of level soil are planted thickly with the deep green shrub, divided into

straight lines, which obtains the needed shade from graceful palms, interspersed with bananas, orange and mango trees. Coffee will not thrive without partial protection from the ardor of the sun in the low latitudes, and therefore a certain number of shade and fruit trees are introduced among the low-growing plants. The shrub is kept trimmed down to a certain height, thus throwing all the vigor of the roots into the formation of berries upon the branches which are not disturbed. So prolific is the low-growing tree thus treated that the small branches bend nearly to the ground under the weight of the ripening berries. Conceive of such an arrangement when the whole is in flower, the milk-white blossoms of the coffee so abundant as to seem as though a cloud of snow had fallen there and left the rest of the vegetation in full verdure, while the air is as heavy with perfume as in an orange grove.

The soil between here and Orizaba is considered to be of the richest and most fertile in all Mexico. Plantations devoted to the raising of cinchona have proved quite profitable. Four times each year may the sower reap his harvest amid perpetual summer. We saw some fine groves of the plantain, the trees twelve feet high and the leaves six feet long by two in width. This, together with the banana, forms the chief feature as regards the low-growing foliage in all the tropical regions about the Gulf of Mexico, gracefully fanning the undergrowth with broad-spread leaves, and affording the needed shade. The stem of the plantain gradually decays, like the banana, when the fruit has ripened,

after which the young shoots spring up from the roots once more to produce the abundant and nourishing food. It does not seem to have any special season, but is constantly in bloom and bearing. The accumulation of sugar and starch in the fruit makes it a most valuable source of food in the tropics, while the product from a small area of land is enormous when compared with that of cultivated grains and fruits generally.

The cacao, the source from whence our chocolate comes, was originally found in Mexico, where its seeds once formed the money, or circulating medium, of the aboriginal tribes. It grows here in abundance and to great perfection.

Cordova has between six and eight thousand inhabitants. It is nearly three thousand feet above sea level, and is rarely troubled with yellow fever; but ague is common. The streets are very regular and are all paved. On one side of the plaza is the cathedral, a grand edifice with a gaudily-finished interior. The central plaza, though small, is exquisitely kept, full of flowers, and vivid with the large scarlet tulipan. The ground is well-filled with fruit-trees and palms, interspersed with smooth paths, and furnished with ornamental iron seats. On the outside of the plaza is the market, where rows of country-women sit on their haunches in true Asiatic fashion, beside their articles for sale. This class of women here affect high colors in their rude costumes, wearing a profusion of cheap coral and silver ornaments, besides a peculiar headdress, more Neapolitan than Mexican. It is quite the thing in speaking of Cordova to

remember that it was here, in 1821, that the treaty was signed between Iturbide and O'Donoju, which officially recognized the independence of Mexico. The vicinity of the town abounds in antique remains. An organized party was engaged in exhuming old pottery and other domestic utensils at the time of our visit.

## CHAPTER XVI

The City of Vera Cruz. – Defective Harbor. – The Dreaded and also Welcome Norther. – San Juan d'Ulloa. – Landing of Cortez. – His Expedition Piratical. – View of the City from the Sea. – Cortez's Destruction of his Ships. – Anecdote of Charles V. – A Sickly Capital. – Street Scenes. – Trade. – The Mantilla. – Plaza de la Constitucion. – Typical Characters. – Brilliant Fireflies. – Well-To-Do Beggars. – Principal Edifices. – The Campo Santo. – City Dwelling-Houses. – The Dark-Plumed Buzzards. – A City Fountain. – A Varied History. – Medillin. – State of Vera Cruz.

Vera Cruz, which is at present the principal seaport of the republic, and which has heretofore been considered as the gateway of Mexico, is without a harbor worthy of the name, being situated on an open roadstead and affording no safe anchorage among its shoals, coral reefs, and surf. It is not safe, in fact, for vessels to moor within half a mile of the shore. A cluster of dangerous, merciless-looking reefs, together with the island of San Juan d'Ulloa, form a slight protection from the open Gulf. A sea-wall shelters the street facing upon the water, and there is a serviceable mole where boats land from the shipping when a "norther" is not blowing; but when that prevails no one attempts to land from vessels in the roadstead.

No wonder that underwriters charge double to insure vessels bound to so inhospitable a shore. Even in ordinary weather a surf-drenching has sometimes to be endured in landing at the mole. This is a serious objection to the port where every ton of freight must be transferred between ship and shore by lighters. Nevertheless, this difficulty might be easily overcome by the construction of a substantial breakwater, such as has lately been successfully built at Colombo, Ceylon, or that which has robbed the roadstead of Madras, India, of its former terrors. To be sure, such a plan requires enterprise and the liberal expenditure of money. Unless the citizens open their purses and pay for the needed improvement, which would promptly turn their exposed shore into a safe harbor, they will have to submit to seeing the present commerce of the port diverted to Tampico, where suitable engineering is about to secure an excellent harbor. Improvements are of slow growth in this country. The railway between this city and the national capital was over thirty years in building, and cost fully forty million dollars.

The captain of a freighting steamer sailing out of New York told the writer that he had more than once been obliged, at certain seasons of the year, to sail from Vera Cruz carrying back to his port of departure a portion of his cargo, as there was no time while the ship remained here that he dared to risk the landing of valuable goods liable to be spoiled by exposure to a high-running sea.

When a norther comes on to blow at Vera Cruz, all the vessels



remaining near the city let go an extra anchor and batten down the hatches; or, wiser still, they let go their ground tackle and hasten to make an offing. The natives promptly haul their light boats well on shore; the citizens securely close their doors and windows; while the sky becomes darkened by clouds of sand driven by fierce gusts of wind. It is a fact that passengers have been obliged to remain for a whole week upon a European steamer, unable to land during a protracted norther. These storms are terrific in violence. It is not a straight out-and-out gale, an honest tempest, such as one sometimes meets at sea, and with which an experienced mariner knows how to cope. A norther is an erratic succession of furious squalls with whirlwinds of sand, the wind blowing from several points at the same time. When a norther blows, work is suspended in the city, and the streets are deserted until the fury of the blast has subsided. This wind, however, like most other serious annoyances in life, has its bright side. Very true is the saying: "It's an ill wind that blows nobody good." The norther drives away that fatal enemy of the city, the yellow fever; and when it fairly sets in to blow, that surely ends the disease for the season; its germs are swept away as if by magic. The insect plague is only second to that of the vomito as regards the danger and discomfort to be encountered in this "City of the True Cross." But even mosquitoes succumb to the northers. The muslin bars which surround the beds of the Hotel Diligencia, fronting the plaza, are effectual, so that one can generally sleep during the two or three nights that he is likely to stay in the city.

A longer sojourn is simply inviting disease, besides which there is no possible attraction to keep one here any longer.

The only good harbor in the Gulf of Mexico within a hundred miles of this point is that of Anton Lizardo, about fifteen miles to the southward of Vera Cruz, which, in fact, should have been made the commercial port. This position is now, doubtless to be filled by Tampico, in connection with the Mexican Central Railroad branch running from the main trunk of that road to the Gulf, by way of San Luis Potosi. We heard of another element operating very seriously against the interests of Vera Cruz. It seems that the sand of the Gulf shore, moved by various currents, is gradually depositing itself in the shallow roadstead in such quantities as to seriously imperil navigation. It is admitted that should this continue for a few years it would close the port to commerce. The railroad management are already talking of extending the line southward to Anton Lizardo.

On an island, less than one mile off the shore of Vera Cruz, stands the grim old fortress of San Juan d'Ulloa, a most conspicuous object with its blackened and crumbling walls. It has often been declared to be impregnable, and yet, curious to say, it has never been attacked by a foe without being compelled to surrender. Here Cortez landed on Mexican soil, April 21, 1519. He disembarked on a Friday, a day which the Romish church has set apart for the adoration of the cross; he therefore called the place Vera Cruz (The True Cross). The mere handful of followers which he brought with him to conquer and possess a

nation consisted of four hundred and fifteen men at arms, sixteen horses, and seven cannon! These last were mere howitzers. Was ever a more daring and reckless scheme conceived of? Fully realizing the peculiar nature of the venture, and fearing that when his followers should awaken to the extravagant folly of the invasion, they would mutiny, forcibly seize the ships which had brought them, and return in them to Cuba, he deliberately destroyed all the galleys save one, and thus cut off the means of retreat. This was quite in accordance with the desperate nature of the enterprise and the reckless spirit of its leader, who had boldly taken upon himself unauthorized responsibility. In bringing about the destruction of his vessels, Cortez resorted to a subterfuge so as to deceive the people about him. He did not "burn" his ships, as has been so commonly reported, but ordered a marine survey upon them, employing an officer who had his secret instructions, and when the report was made public it was to the effect that the galleys were unseaworthy, leaky, and not fit or safe for service. A certain sea worm had reduced the hulls to mere shells! So the stores and armament were carried on shore, and the vessels sunk or wrecked. "His followers murmured at the loss of the ships," says Chevalier, "but were quieted by Cortez, who promised them salvation in the next world and fortunes in this." This is one version of the famous episode which has come down to us, and which we believe to be the true one. It is certainly the most in accordance with all the known facts in the case.

There are important circumstances connected with this often

repeated episode which are not always considered in forming an estimate of the whole affair. The departure of the expedition from Cuba was nothing less than open rebellion on the part of Cortez. Had it eventuated in failure, its leader would have been pronounced a pirate and filibuster. It was Talleyrand who declared that nothing succeeds so well as success. Thus it is that history makes of the fortunate adventurer a hero, never pausing to consider the means by which his success was attained. "Cortez and his companions," says Chevalier, "had incurred the necessity of signaling themselves by some great exploit. They had committed a fault which the laws of all states treated as crime, and one that the leaders must expiate on the gibbet and their followers at the galleys, unless atoned for by brilliant deeds. Their departure from Cuba was an act of flagrant rebellion." In his great haste to get away from Cuba he embarked in nine small vessels, the largest not over one hundred tons and some were even undecked boats. Velasquez, the governor of the island of Cuba, had for some time previously contemplated sending an expedition to Mexico, and having got it about ready for departure, he was over-persuaded to give Cortez the command; but after due consideration, repenting of his decision, he took steps to replace him by a more trusted officer. Cortez learned of this, and hastily got as many of the people together who had enlisted for the purpose as he could, and putting the munitions on board, sailed without taking leave! He had already been once pardoned out of prison by Velasquez, where he was confined

for gross insubordination, and for the baseness of his private life, which, though he was thirty-four years of age, exhibited all the faults of earliest manhood. R. A. Wilson pronounces the expedition to have been "purely piratical, whose leader could have no hope of royal pardon but in complete success." Cortez knew that it would not answer for him to return to Cuba, therefore he unhesitatingly destroyed the means by which even his comrades could do so. These facts rob the act which has been so lauded by historians of all heroism. Depend upon it, all our heroes have feet of clay. He had just made a rough campaign with the natives of Tabasco, in Yucatan, where he learned that farther up the Gulf, where he finally landed, there was "a people who had much gold." That was what he sought. It was not God but gold that drew him onward from Vera Cruz to Montezuma's capital. He was not seeking to christianize the natives; that was a plausible subterfuge. His aim was to enrich himself with native spoils and to acquire empire, nor did he pause until he had consummated the ruin of a kingdom and his own aggrandizement.

The traveler should not fail to take a boat across the bay to the castle, and there visit the dark and dismal dungeons built below the surrounding waters of the Gulf, like those in the castle of Chillon beneath the surface of the lake of Geneva. One may obtain an admirable view of the city and its neighborhood from the cupola of the lofty lighthouse, which is of the first class, and rises grandly to ninety feet above the sea. The fortress is now only

partially manned, being used mostly as a place of confinement for political prisoners. As this island was the first landing-place of the Spaniards, so it was their last foothold in Mexico. There is a familiar anecdote, which is always retailed by the guides to the strangers whom they initiate into the mysteries of the fortress upon which Cortez is said to have expended uselessly many millions of dollars. Charles V., being asked for more funds wherewith to add to the defenses of San Juan d'Ulloa, called for a spyglass, and, seeking a window, pointed it to the west, seeming to gaze through the glass long and earnestly. When he was asked what he was looking for, he replied: "San Juan d'Ulloa. I have spent so much money upon the structure that it seems to me I ought to see it standing on the western horizon."

The low-lying town – nearly eight thousand feet below the city of Mexico – is, perhaps, one of the most unhealthy spots on this continent, where the yellow fever, or *vomito* as it is called, prevails for six or seven months of the year, claiming myriads of victims annually, while a malarial scourge, known as the stranger's fever, lingers about the place more or less fatally all the year round, according to the number of persons who are liable to be attacked. The yellow fever, which makes its appearance in May, is generally at its worst in August and September, at which periods it is apt to creep upwards towards the higher lands as far as Jalapa and Orizaba, though it has never been known to exist to any great extent in either of these places. The dangerous miasma which prevails seems to be quite harmless to the natives of the

locality, or at least they are rarely attacked by it. When a person has once contracted yellow fever and recovered from it, as a rule he is presumed to be exempt from a second attack, but this is not a rule without an exception. In summer the streets of Vera Cruz are deserted except by the buzzards and the stray dogs. These quarrel with each other for scraps of food. The latter by no means always get the best of it. Even the Mexicans at such times call the place *Una ciudad de los muertos* (a city of the dead).

A large share of the business of Vera Cruz is carried on by French or German residents who have become acclimated, or by those born here of parents belonging to those nationalities. Many of the merchants of the city keep up a permanent residence at Jalapa for sanitary reasons. It is singular that the climate of this port on the Gulf side of the peninsula should be so fatal to human life, while the Pacific side, in the same latitude and quite near at hand, is perfectly salubrious. When the French army landed here in 1863-64, the ranks were decimated by the epidemic, and the graveyard where the bodies of between three and four thousand French victims lie buried near the city has been named by their countrymen, with grim humor, "Le Jardin d'Acclimatation"!

On viewing the town from the castle of San Juan d'Ulloa, one is struck by the oriental aspect which it presents. Everything is seen through a lurid atmosphere. The glare of sunshine reflected by the porcelain domes and the intense blue of the sky are Egyptian. Groups of mottled church towers surmounted by glittering crosses; square, flat-roofed houses;

rough fortifications; a long reach of hot sandy plain on either side relieved by a few palm-trees; and scattered groups of low-growing cactus, – these make up the picture of the flat, miasmatic shore. There are no suburbs; the dreary, monotonous sand creeps close up to the city. But if the near foreground thus exhibits a certain repulsive nakedness, there looms grandly on the far-away horizon the Sierra Madre range of mountains, the culminating point of which is the bold, aspiring peak of Orizaba. It must be clear weather, however, to enable the visitor to see this remarkable elevation, with its hoary crown, to reach whose base twenty-seven leagues must be traversed.

The long, straight, narrow streets are laid out with great uniformity, a characteristic of all Mexican cities, and cross each other at right angles, the monotony being broken by green blinds opening on to the little balconies which are shaded by awnings. The streets have a sort of sun-baked hue, though the principal thoroughfares show a fair degree of life and activity considering that the population is so largely made up of Mexicans. The area covered by the city cannot much exceed sixty acres, the town being built in a very compact manner, a bird's-eye view of which makes it resemble the outspread human hand. The port has seen its most prosperous days, if we may judge by present appearances. The aggregate of the imports and exports amounted to about thirty million dollars annually before the completion of the railroads to the national capital and thence to El Paso, but, as was anticipated, this new facility for transportation has diverted a



large portion of this amount northward through the United States. The streets of Vera Cruz are still crowded in business hours with mule carts, porters, half-naked water-carriers, Indians, and a few negroes, military officers, and active civilians. Speaking of negroes, there are a less number in all Mexico than in any one State of this Union. In the plaza pretty flower-girls with tempting bouquets mingle with fruit venders, lottery-ticket sellers, and dashing young Mexican dudes, wearing broad sombreros heavy with cords of silver braid. Occasionally there passes some dignified señora, whose head and shoulders are covered with a black lace mantilla, imparting infinite grace to her handsome figure. How vastly superior is that soft, drooping veil to the tall hats and absurd bonnets of northern civilization! Broad contrasts present themselves on all hands, in groups of men, women, and children, half clad in rags, perhaps, but gay with brilliant colors, sharing the way with some sober-clad Europeans, or rollicking, half tipsy seamen on shore-leave from the shipping at anchor in the roadstead.

The Plaza de la Constitucion is small in extent, about two hundred feet square, but it is very attractive. It is skillfully arranged, having a handsome bronze fountain in its centre, the gift of Carlotta, the unfortunate, energetic wife of Maximilian. In the evening the place is rendered brilliant by a system of electric lights. The flower plots and marble walks are ornamented with many lovely tropical flowers, cocoanut palms, and fragrant roses nodding languidly in the hot summer atmosphere under

a sky intensely blue, and nine tenths of the time perfectly cloudless. The Australian gum-tree and the Chinese laurel were conspicuous among other exotic varieties. As the twilight approaches, it is amusing to watch the *habitués*, consisting of both sexes, especially in shady corners where there is obviously much love-making on the sly, but not the legitimate article of the Romeo and Juliet sort which has already been described. Here and there strolls a dude, – a Mexican dude, with his dark face shaded by his sombrero, his tight trousers flaring at the bottom and profusely ornamented at the side with silver buttons. He is jostled by a fellow-countryman, who gathers his serape across his left shoulder and breast so adroitly as to partially conceal his shabby attire, while he puffs his cigarette with assumed nonchalance, exchanging a careless word in the mean time with the gypsy-like woman who offers bananas and zapotas for sale. Dainty señoritas trip across the way in red-heeled slippers of Cinderella-like proportions, while noisy, laughing, happy children, girls and boys, romp with pet dogs, trundle ribbon-decked hoops, or spin gaudy humming tops. Flaring posters catch the eye, heralding the cruel bull-fight or a performance at the theatre. On Sundays a military band performs here forenoons and evenings. Under the starlight you may look not only among the low growing foliage to see the fireflies, which float there like clouds of phosphorescence, but now and again one will glow, diamond-like, in the black hair of the fair señoritas, where they are ingeniously fastened to produce this effect. It is strictly a

Spanish idea, which the author has often seen in Havana. So brilliant are these tropical fireflies that with three or four placed under an inverted wineglass one can see to read fine printed matter in the nighttime. It is the common people mostly who use these insects as evening ornaments on their persons, though sometimes the most refined ladies wear them. The firefly has a hook-like integument on its body by which it is easily fastened to the hair or dress without any harm to itself. It seems as though nature had anticipated this peculiar use of the "lightning-bug," and so provided the necessary means for the purpose. The country people bring them to market in little wicker baskets or cages, and it is curious to see with what avidity they will consume sugar. As you gaze with interest at the picture of tropical life, you are quietly asked for a few pennies by a man so well dressed, and apparently so well to do, that it seems more like a joke than like real begging. Just so the author has been accosted in the streets of Granada, in continental Spain, with a request for a trifling sum of money, by well-dressed people. Comparatively few beggars importune one in the large cities of Mexico, being deterred by the watchful police; but in the environs of any large settlement the poverty-stricken people are sure to descend upon the stranger like an army with banners.

The architecture of Vera Cruz is of the old Spanish style, with a dash of Moorish flavor in it, recalling Tangier and other cities of Morocco. The governor's palace is a building of some pretension, two stories in height, with a veranda on each, and

a tall square tower at one end of the edifice. Having visited the plaza, the alameda, with its fine array of cocoa-palms, the municipal palace, the custom-house, the public library, and the large church fronting the plaza, one has about exhausted the main features of interest. This latter structure is an imposing building, but it will in no respect compare with the cathedrals of the other cities which we have described. There are a fair number of public schools in the town, two well-endowed hospitals, public baths, and a few other institutions worthy of a progressive people. A thoroughfare, called the Street of Christ, leads out to the Campo Santo, half a mile away. This burial-place is an area surrounded by high walls, built very thick of rubble-stones and adobe, in which the tombs are made to receive the bodies instead of placing them in the ground. This neglected city of the dead has been taken in hand by Nature herself, and wild flowers are seen amid the sombre and dreary surroundings, rivaling in beauty and fragrance many cultivated favorites.

The city houses are built of coral limestone, stuccoed. The roofs, when pitched, are covered with tiles of a dull red color, but they are nearly all flat. The interior arrangements are like those elsewhere described. Each house of the better class has its square inner court, or patio, round which the dwelling is constructed, and this is ornamented more or less prettily, according to the owner's taste, potted plants always forming a prominent feature, together with an array of caged singing birds. The long windows are guarded by significant iron bars, like the dwelling-houses

throughout this country and in Havana. Sometimes on the better class of houses this iron work is rendered quite ornamental. The narrow streets are kept scrupulously clean, and are paved with cobble-stones which we were told were brought by ships from the coast of New England, and have a gutter running down the middle. There is an abundance of active, keen-eyed scavengers waddling about, always on the alert to pick up and devour domestic refuse or garbage of any sort which is found in the streets. These are the dark-plumed, funereal-looking buzzard, or vulture, a bird which is protected by law, and depended on to act in the capacity we have described. They are two feet and over in length of body, and measure six feet from tip to tip of the wings, or about the size of a large Rhode Island turkey. Employing these birds for the removal of refuse is a remedy almost as bad as the disease, since the habits of the huge, ungainly, ill-omened creatures are extremely disgusting. Clouds of them roost upon the eaves of the houses, the church belfries, and all exposed balconies, and would invade the patios of the dwellings were they not vigorously driven away and thus taught better manners. The cathedral façade on the plaza is sometimes black with them, the rays of the bright tropical sun being reflected from their glossy feathers as from a mirror. It seems there is one mystery which appertains to these unpleasant birds; namely, as to their breeding places. No one knows where they go to build their nests and to raise their young. The imaginative stranger is perhaps inclined to regard them as tokens of danger to the newcomer.

All things considered, many a northern city has a less efficient street-cleaning department.

For a striking picture of strong local color, we commend the stranger to watch for a short half-hour the picturesque old fountain at the head of the Calle Centrale. Here he will find at almost any time of the day scores of weary burros slaking their thirst; busy water-carriers filling their red earthen jars; the street gamin wetting his thirsty lips; the itinerant fruit peddler seeking for customers; the gay caballero pausing to water the handsome animal he bestrides; while the tramway mules seek their share of the refreshing liquid. Dark-hued women are coming and going with earthen jars poised upon their heads, wonderfully like their Eastern sisters at the fountains of oriental Cairo. Here are men with curiously trimmed fighting birds in their arms, wending their way to the cruel cockpit. On the edge of the sidewalk close at hand, women are cooking dough-cakes of corn-meal over charcoal in tiny earthen braziers, – the universal tortillas. A sand-covered muleteer, just arrived, is testing their quality while his burros are drinking at the fountain.

Though Vera Cruz has suffered more than any other capital with which we are acquainted from bombardments, change of rulers, ravages of buccaneers, hurricanes, fevers, and other plagues, yet it is still a prosperous city, always spoken of with a certain degree of pride by the people of the republic as Villa Rica de Vera Cruz, that is, "the rich city of the true cross." A brief glance at its past history shows us that, in 1568, it was in

the hands of pirates, and that it was again sacked by buccaneers in 1683, having been in the interim, during the year 1618, swept by a devastating conflagration which nearly obliterated the place. In 1822-23, it was bombarded by the Spaniards, who still held the castle of San Juan d'Ulloa. In 1838, it was attacked by a French fleet, and in 1847, was cannonaded and captured by the American forces. In 1856, it was nearly destroyed by a hurricane. In 1859, civil war decimated the fortress and the town. The French and Imperialists took and held it from 1861 until 1867, when the cause of national independence triumphed. Since this latter date Vera Cruz has enjoyed a period of quiet and a large share of commercial prosperity.

About ten or twelve miles southward from the city is the little town of Medillin, a sort of popular watering-place, the Saratoga of this neighborhood. It is made up of a few decent houses of brick and wood, and many very poor ones, having plenty of drinking, dancing, and gambling saloons. The trip thither is most enjoyable to a stranger, for the glimpse it gives him of the tropical character and the rank fertility of this region. On the way one passes through a floral paradise, where flowers of every hue and teeming with fragrance line the way. Almond-trees, yielding grateful shade, and the *Ponciana regia*, blazing with gorgeous flowers, are in strong contrast to each other. The productive breadfruit-tree and the grapefruit with its yellow product abound. Here one sees the scarlet hibiscus beside the *galan de noche* (garland of night), which grows like a young palm to nearly ten

feet in height, throwing out from the centre of its tufted top a group of brown blossoms daintily tipped with white, the mass of bloom shaped like a rich cluster of ripe grapes. Truly, the trees and flowers to be seen on the way to Medillin are a revelation.

The State of Vera Cruz borders the Gulf for a distance of five hundred miles, averaging in width about seventy-five miles. No other section of the country is so remarkable for its extreme temperature and for the fertility of the soil. The variety of its productions is simply marvelous. The intense heat is tempered by the northers, which usually occur about the first of December, and from time to time until the first of April, during which period any part of the state is comparatively healthy. A list of the native products would surprise one. Among them we find tobacco, coffee, sugar, cotton, wheat, barley, vanilla, pineapples, oranges, lemons, bananas, pomegranates, peaches, plums, apricots, tamarinds, watermelons, citrons, pears, and many other fruits and vegetables. The natives push a stick into the ground, drop in a kernel or two of corn, cover them with the soil by a mere brush of their feet, and ninety days after they pluck the ripe ears. There is no other labor, no fertilizer is used, nor is there any occasion for consulting the season, for the seed will ripen and yield its fruit each month of the year, if planted at suitable intervals.



## CHAPTER XVII

Jalapa. – A Health Resort. – Birds, Flowers, and Fruits. – Cerro Gordo. – Cathedral. – Earthquakes. – Local Characteristics. – Vanilla. – Ancient Ruins. – Tortillas. – Blondes in a City of Brunettes. – Curiosities of Mexican Courtship. – Caged Singing Birds. – Banditti Outwitted. – Socialistic Indians. – Traces of a Lost City. – Guadalajara. – On the Mexican Plateau. – A Progressive Capital. – Fine Modern Buildings. – The Cathedral. – Native Artists. – A Noble Institution. – Amusements. – San Pedro. – Evening in the Plaza. – A Ludicrous Carnival. – Judas Day.

Jalapa, signifying "the place of water and land," – pronounced Halápa, – is situated about sixty miles north-northwest of Vera Cruz, and is considered to be the sanitarium of the latter city, whither many of the families who are able to do so resort during the sickly season. Not a few of the prosperous merchants maintain dwellings in both cities. Its situation insures salubrity, as it is more than four thousand feet higher than the seacoast. The yellow fever may terrorize the lowlands and blockade the shores of the Gulf of Mexico, as it surely does at certain seasons of the year, from Yucatan to Vera Cruz, but the atmosphere of the highlands, commencing at Jalapa on the north and Orizaba on the south, is, as a rule, full of life-invigorating properties. We do not mean to say that these places are absolutely free from

yellow fever and miasmatic illness, but they are so far superior to Vera Cruz in this respect as to be considered health-resorts for the people on the shores of the Gulf. The route to Jalapa from the coast passes through the old national road by the way of Cerro Gordo. The hamlet bearing this name, where General Scott outflanked and defeated Santa Anna, April 18, 1847, consists of a few mud cabins in a tumble-down condition. It has become a memorable spot, but save its historical association is possessed of no attractions. It is not a populous district: there are few haciendas met with, and fewer hamlets, but the scenery is very grand, and the vegetation is characterized by all the luxuriance of the tropics. Birds and flowers abound, and wild fruits are so plenty that they ripen and decay undisturbed by the hands of the natives. Nature is over-bountiful, over-prolific. There is no sere and yellow leaf here – fruits and flowers are perennial. If a leaf falls, another springs into life on the vacant stem. If fruit is plucked, a blossom quickly appears and another cluster ripens.

Of birds distinguished for beauty of plumage and sweetness of song there are, according to Clavigero, between fifty and sixty different species. Of those suitable for food there are over seventy sorts in the republic, according to the same authority. The rage for brilliant-colored feathers with which to decorate the bonnets of fashionable ladies in American cities has led to great destruction among tropical birds of both Mexico and South America. Here they have also been always in demand for the purpose of producing what is termed feather pictures, as

elsewhere described in these pages.

The road is very tortuous, winding up long hills and down steep gulches, with here and there a rude, significant wooden cross, held in place by a little mound of stones, raised above the burial-place of some murdered man. This, it seems, is a conscientious service always rendered in Mexico by any one who is the first to discover such a body. Each native who afterwards passes the spot adds a small stone to the pile, and kneeling, utters a brief prayer in behalf of the dead man's soul.

Jalapa has a permanent population of some fourteen thousand, which is considerably increased at certain seasons of the year. It contains a large, well-appointed cathedral, with a number of other Catholic churches. Cortez and his followers covered the land with cathedrals and demi-cathedrals, but the disestablishment of the church and the general confiscation of ecclesiastical property has rendered it impossible to sustain them all, together with the crowds of officiating priests. The consequence is that here, as elsewhere in the republic, many are crumbling into decay, and when an erratic earthquake, which is no respecter of sacred buildings, tumbles over some high-reaching dome or tower, or twists a façade out of plumb, it is left to remain in that condition, and soon becomes a partial ruin. We saw several thus dilapidated in different sections of the country. Jalapa enjoys a commanding situation at the base of the Cofre de Perote, on undulating ground on the slope of the so-called hill of Macuiltepec; many of the streets are therefore very steep, and

the scenery, which is really beautiful, is quite Alpine in character.

The low stone houses are perched on the hillsides, and the streets are irregular. This neighborhood is said to produce the prettiest women and the loveliest flowers to be found in all Mexico, and it is certain that in its gardens may be gathered the fruits and flowers of every zone. Among other special products of this vicinity is the aromatic vanilla plant, which is indigenous here and grows in wild abundance in the forests, proving a great source of income to the industrious native gatherers. The plant requires only shade and moisture. The peculiar soil and climate do the rest. The harvest is gathered in March and April. The flowers of the vanilla are of a greenish yellow, touched here and there with white. It has a climbing stalk. The pods grow in pairs and are about as large round as one's little finger, and six inches long, though they vary, and the longer they are the greater is considered their value. These are green at first, gradually turning to yellow, and then to brown, as they become fully ripe. They are carefully dried in the sun, being touched during the process with palm oil, which gives them a soft, glossy effect when they reach the consumers' hands. Chocolate perfumed with vanilla was a Mexican dish which Montezuma placed before Cortez. The quantity shipped from Jalapa is very considerable in the aggregate, and proves an important source of revenue. We are told that the vanilla was successfully cultivated here by the Totonacs, ancient dwellers in this region, the aromatic product being highly appreciated by the Sybaritic Montezuma

and the Aztec nobles generally, and commanding even in those days a liberal price. Humboldt speaks of "the vanilla, whose odoriferous fruit is used as a perfume, growing in the ever-green forests of Papantla." Here also are found ruins left by some forgotten race who must have reached to a certain degree of high civilization, judging by these interesting remains. Of this land, lying far to the south of the Aztec territory, and of its people, even tradition has nothing to reveal to us. But its ruins are presumed to be contemporary with those better known in Yucatan, which they resemble in many important particulars. One other notable plant grows wild hereabouts, less pleasing to the senses, but well known as an important drug in our medical practice, namely, jalap, which takes its name from the locality, or the place is named after the plant.

The atmosphere of Jalapa is always humid, and the city is often overshadowed by clouds which come up from the Gulf of Mexico, heavy with moisture to be precipitated in the form of rain. A sort of "drizzling" prevails most of the time, like that which one encounters at Bergen, in Norway, or at Sitka, Alaska. In the former place it is said to rain eight days in the week.

The old convent of San Francisco, vast in extent and once equally so in influence, is an object of considerable interest, situated in the centre of the town. It is believed to have been erected by Cortez, and was once occupied by a powerful community of Franciscans. This was also the birthplace of General Santa Anna, the most notorious of Mexico's soldiers

of fortune, and whose now neglected hacienda is pointed out to the visitor. In his checkered career Santa Anna was constantly falling from position, but this was only the prelude to his rising again and to a greater elevation, from which he was sure to be ignominiously hurled.

Here the author had a first taste of the universal tortilla, which is to the people of Mexico what macaroni is to the lazzaroni of Naples, or bread to a New Englander. It is made from Indian corn, as already intimated, not ground in a mill to the condition of meal, but after being soaked in the kernel and softened by potash, it is rolled between two stones, and water being added a paste or dough is formed, which is manipulated between the palms of the hands to a thin flat cake and baked over a charcoal fire in an earthen brazier. It is very palatable and nutritious to a hungry person. Those who can afford to do so often mix some appetizing ingredient with the simple cakes, such as sweets, peppers, or chopped meats. The scores of Indian women who come to market to offer their grain, baskets, fruits, vegetables, and flowers for sale, are wrapped in rebosas of various colors, but are barefooted, bareheaded, and with no covering on their arms or legs, forming striking and characteristic groups.

Though the natives go about during the day only half clad, both men and women exposing a large portion of the bare body to the atmosphere, it was observed that as soon as the evening shadows fell, both sexes protected their necks and shoulders with wraps; the men winding their woolen serapes even over the

lower part of their faces, and the women covering theirs with the universal reboza. The change of temperature soon after sunset and in the early mornings, as compared with the rest of the day, is very decided throughout Mexico. Foreigners who observe these native precautions and follow them avoid taking colds, while others, more heedless, are liable to pay the penalty.

One peculiarity was observed at Jalapa. While most of the Mexican women are quite dark-hued, especially those from the rural districts and of mixed blood, that is of Indian and Spanish descent, yet a large number of those one meets in Jalapa are decided blondes, having light hair with blue eyes, and possessing as blooming complexions as the orchids which so much abound in this district.

There is a rage for caged singing birds in the better class of houses, a perfect flood of melody floating out of open windows and patios. The birds are brilliant both in plumage and in song, a combination not always found in the low latitudes. As a rule, south of the equator, the gaudily-plumed birds please the eye, and the plain ones delight the ear. The Mexican parrots are the most voluble to be found this side of southern Africa. It seems that there are conventional rules relating to bird-fancying here; the middle and lower classes make pets of the parrot tribe, while the more pretentious people prefer mocking-birds, canaries, and the favorite little clarin. Boys walk about the streets of the national capital with a species of small paroquet for sale, trained to run all over the owner's arms, neck, and fingers, showing

no inclination to seek liberty by flight. A lady stopping at the Iturbide purchased a bird of many colors, marvelous to look at, which she had been assured by the itinerant vender would sing gloriously as soon as it became acquainted with its new home. It was sufficiently curious, however, because of its remarkably brilliant and queerly disposed colors. After petting it for a few days the new mistress gave the bird a warm bath, out of which the little fellow came all of one hue, namely a dark ash color. The deceitful bird merchant had ingeniously painted him from the crown of his head to the very tip of his tail feathers!

Like all these Spanish cities, the windows of the dwellings are secured by a screen of iron bars, and many fronts where the house is of two stories in height have also delightful little balconies, answering a Romeo and Juliet purpose, all courtship being conducted here in a surreptitious manner. A Mexican never goes about a courtship whereby he hopes to win a wife in an open, straightforward manner. On the contrary, he forms cunning schemes for meeting his fair inamorata, and employs ingenious subterfuges to gain a stolen interview. He tells his passion not in words, but with profound sighs and significant glances, as he passes her flower-decked balcony, while she, although perfectly understanding his pantomime, assumes the most profound innocence and even indifference. This fires the suitor's ardor; he bows sadly when passing her balcony, with his right hand pressed vehemently upon his left breast, where a youthful lover's heart is popularly supposed to be located.



Finally, after a good deal of pretentious pantomime, the fair señorita appears to realize the purport of all this wooing, and seems gradually to yield to his silent yet expressive importunities. There is also a language of the fan, of flowers, of the fingers, all of which are pressed into the service of the amorous couple. We were shown a small pocket manual printed in Spanish and sold in the stores and upon the streets, containing a printed code of the significance of certain flowers, a "dumb alphabet" for the fingers, and the meaning of the several motions of the ever-ready fan which, like a gaudy butterfly, flits before the face of beauty. There is the rapid flirt which signifies scorn, another motion is the graceful wave of confidence, an abrupt closing of the fan indicates vexation, and the striking of it into the palm of the hand expresses anger. The gradual opening of its folds intimates reluctant forgiveness, and so on. In short, the fan can be more eloquent than words, if in the hands of a Mexican señorita, stimulated by the watchful eyes and the adoration of an ardent Romeo. But this is only preliminary. All parents are presumed to be implacably and absolutely opposed to all lovers' wishes, and great diplomacy is consequently required. This ludicrous game often continues for a twelvemonth before anything is consummated. The charm of the whole affair with these people consists in its secrecy and difficulties either real or assumed. Lydia Languish cared nothing for Beverly when all obstacles to their union vanished; opposition is the spice of love.

A pleasant story is told of the attractiveness of Jalapa. It seems

that an old traveler came here to pass a day, but was so fascinated with the beauty of the place and its surroundings, the fragrance of its flowers, the beauty of its women, and the salubrity of the climate, that he never left it to the day of his death. Every nook and corner has its charming bit of verdure, its plot of flowers, its broad green banana leaves overhanging some low, white wall, or a tall palm with its plume-like top overshadowing a dainty balcony. One often hears Jalapa spoken of among the Mexicans as a bit of heaven dropped on earth.

The great shame and disgrace of Mexico has been the prevalence of brigandage in the several states of the republic, and even in the immediate environs of the national capital. All the efforts of the government for years have proved ineffectual to suppress this lawlessness until very lately, when, for reasons not very clear to a stranger, it has seemed gradually to subside. Brigandage has not only been a crying shame to the country, but has paralyzed business, kept visitors away from Mexico, and caused her to lose her national credit both in Europe and America. People will not invest money in great enterprises in regions where the persons of their agents are not safe, and where robbery and kidnapping are every-day occurrences. An intelligent native attempted to convince the author that these highwaymen were not composed of native Indians, half-breeds, or Spaniards, but that they were mostly made up from Italians and other Europeans who had been induced to leave their own country for their country's good. Our credulity was not, however,

equal to this solution. Brigandage was long chronic here, and the brigands were Mexicans.

When the French army was here, it is said that General Bazaine had occasion to be in the city at an opportune moment. Having heard by some chance that the brigands had been very troublesome hereabouts, and also that they would probably stop the next mail coach on its way to Vera Cruz, he resolved to give these outlaws a lesson which they would not soon forget. When the expected coach arrived, and while the mules were replaced by fresh ones, the general ordered the passengers, some of whom were ladies, to remain in the hotel, while he put ten of his most daring Zouaves inside the coach to fill their places. These men were specially instructed, and half of them were disguised as women, the others having their uniforms covered from sight. The driver was sworn to secrecy under a threat of being shot if he disobeyed orders, and was directed to go on his way as usual. By-and-by, when the coach had arrived at a certain point, the driver suddenly drew up his horses, for he saw a row of muskets in the hands of a dozen men ranged across the road, pointing at him, and heard the usual order to stop. A moment later the leader of these men came to the door of the coach, where he saw, apparently, a lady, and in a peremptory voice ordered the passengers to get out upon the roadway. The door being thrown open, the pseudo woman who sat next to it was aided to descend to the ground by the leader of the brigands on one side and his lieutenant on the other. At the instant this individual alighted, two

simultaneous pistol-shots were heard. The passenger standing between the two robbers had pressed the triggers of two pistols, held one in his right and one in left hand, quite unobserved. The leading brigand together with his lieutenant fell dead upon the road. In the mean time the opposite door of the coach had been quickly opened, whence the other nine Zouaves, trained athletes, sprang like cats to the ground, each one selecting his foe among the robbers, who, on their part, were taken so completely by surprise that they fired their muskets at random, while the Zouaves with their keen sword bayonets literally chopped them to pieces. There were fourteen of these gentlemen of the road, only one of whom escaped alive, and he was so severely wounded that he bled to death in a native hut among the hills. There was no more brigandage, as the reader may well imagine, in the vicinity where the French troops were stationed.

A small and rather peculiar party of Indians was observed here, some special occasion having lured them from their agricultural hamlet. They were not attached to any hacienda, but lived in a primitive manner, illustrating a communistic idea, a practice, it appears, which is not uncommon among this class in some parts of the country. Their cabins are of adobe. Indeed, wooden buildings are almost unknown, wood being seldom used, even in the cities, for inside finish. These Indians cultivate the land in common, and when the crop is gathered, it is divided after recognized laws of their own. Irrigation is the sole means of fertilizing, and it seems to be all the soil requires. They plough

with oxen, using a crooked stick, which method, several times alluded to, is not so very surprising when we remember that the Egyptian fellah uses a similar instrument to-day, and irrigates the soil by means of buckets worked by hand. The women of the group of whom we are speaking were bareheaded, and wore their long, straight, black hair in braids hanging down over their naked shoulders, their arms being bare, and also their legs to the knee. A loose cotton tunic and short petticoat formed their dress. The men wore straw hats with tall crowns, their broad brims throwing their swarthy faces into deep shadow. Unbleached cotton shirts and drawers of the same reaching to the knees completed the costume. Some wore leather sandals, but most were barefooted. There were a few children among them, all slung to the mothers' backs, and quite naked.

Between the lofty peak of Orizaba and the Cofre de Perote, there exists many traces of a very numerous native population, who must have occupied the country long previous to the advent of the Spanish conquerors. Not even tradition tells us anything about this locality, which is abundantly supplied with water, is fertile to an extraordinary degree, and possesses a healthy climate. That extensive and intelligent cultivation of the soil was carried on here at some period of the past is clearly shown by numberless remains. The fact that oak trees four feet in diameter are found growing over the stone foundations of ruined dwellings proves that many centuries have passed since the population disappeared. The remains of the dwellings are all of stone laid

without mortar, arranged in streets, or in groups. A series of pyramids of stone are also found here, the largest of which is over fifty feet in height, and the smallest not over ten or twelve feet, the last seeming to have been designed for tombs. Several of these have been opened and found to contain skeletons and elaborately ornamented burial urns. The locality referred to is the eastern slope of the sierra towards the coast between Orizaba and Jalapa.

Our next objective point is the city of Mexico, to reach which from Jalapa we return to Vera Cruz, though not necessarily, taking the railway from the port through Orizaba and Puebla. As we have been over this route with the reader, let us pass on to places which we have not yet spoken of. At the national capital we once more take passage on the Mexican Central Railway north-northwest to Guadalajara, the capital of the State of Jalisco. This growing and prosperous city is reached by a branch road from Irapuato, being that which is designed ultimately to reach the Pacific at San Blas. One hundred and sixty miles of this branch road is completed. Guadalajara is three hundred and eighty miles from the city of Mexico, situated in a pleasant valley six thousand feet above the sea, with a population of one hundred thousand, stating it in round numbers. It will be remembered that we are now on what is called the Mexican plateau. The Indian name of the valley is Alemaxac. As to temperature, we found that the annual mean was 70° Fahr., but our thermometer gave us 90° Fahr. nearly all the time during our stay, and even at midnight

it did not fall below 82°. A small river, San Juan de Dios, runs through the town about its middle, in a charmingly crooked fashion. In coming hither we pass through the valley of the Rio Lerma, one of the best developed regions as regards agriculture in the entire republic. The route takes us through some populous towns and many interesting villages, also near to the famous Lake Chapala, the largest body of water in Mexico, sixty miles long and over fifteen in width.

Guadalajara is one of the most progressive cities in the country, and is the second in point of population, supporting an admirable school system worthy of all commendation. It has numerous public squares, besides the Plaza Mayor and a fine alameda. The plaza is about three hundred feet long and of nearly the same width, one side occupied by the cathedral, another by the state buildings, and on the two remaining sides is a line of arches in which are some of the most attractive stores of the town. A large number of the public buildings are of modern construction, including the governor's palace, the municipal palace, the mint, and other edifices, all fronting, as usual, on the Plaza Mayor. The only Academy of Fine Arts in the country, outside of the city of Mexico, is to be found here, and it is in a highly flourishing condition, a large local interest being pledged to its support. It is somewhat difficult to decide in one's own mind which of the two cities, Puebla or Guadalajara, should rank next to the city of Mexico in wealth, general interest, and commercial importance. Both are progressive capitals, remarkably so for this

country.

The grand cathedral was finished in 1618, having a noble façade, a graceful dome, and two lofty towers partly covered with enameled tiles. The front is richly carved, and ornamented by fluted pillars. The interior of the dome is as finely frescoed as the famous church of Burgos, in Spain, or that of the church of St. John, in the island of Malta. Of this latter church it strongly reminded us. The great altar is finished in white and gold. A narrow gallery of gilded metal runs around the entire building on a level with the capitals of the pillars which support the roof. It seems that during religious services here a few years ago, two of the organists were struck by lightning while playing and instantly killed. The towers of the cathedral show some evidence of having been disturbed by an earthquake, which occurred in 1818. There are thirty churches in all in Guadalajara, and, like the other public buildings, they are unusually fine.

This is quite an ancient city, having been founded in 1541. Manufacturing is carried on to a considerable extent; among the articles produced are fine pottery, cotton cloth, silk, rebosas, musical instruments, and leather goods. The native Indian race hereabouts, and, indeed, in places further south, are great adepts, as already explained, in the manufacture of antiquities. We saw here some remarkably fine examples of pottery, designed and finished by native artists who had never enjoyed an hour's instruction. It was the result of an inborn artistic taste. The lace-like drawn-work produced by the Indian women from fine



linen rivals the best work of the kind which comes from South America, where the natives have long been famous for fine work in this special line.

The Hospicio San Miguel de Belen is a very comprehensive and well-conducted establishment, containing a hospital proper, with male and female wards, a lunatic asylum, and a primary school. Other evidences of keeping pace with the times were seen in the presence of the telephone, electric lights, and a good system of tramways. The environs of the city are justly famous for many beautiful gardens and a grand paseo shaded by noble trees, mostly elms, with broad, spreading limbs and of great age. The Campo Santo is not unlike that at Vera Cruz, the bodies being deposited in niches built in the thick walls about the grounds. Some of the monumental tombs are of a very impressive and beautiful character.

Another remarkable and very interesting institution of this city is the Hospicio de Guadalajara, situated on the eastern side of the small stream which flows through the town. It is approached by a wide, handsome avenue lined with orange-trees. The edifice covers eight acres, being constructed about numerous open areas which are utilized as gardens, devoted to raising flowers and fruits, each also ornamented by a cheerful fountain. There are over twenty of these courts within the grounds, from which broad, high corridors open, which traverse the several departments of the institution. Mangoes, oranges, and bananas thrive on the trees in these patios, and such an abundance of red

and white roses, in such mammoth sizes, we have rarely seen. The sister who acted as our guide through the spacious edifice insisted upon plucking them freely and presenting them to the ladies of the party. There is a spacious and fine chapel within the group of buildings, as capacious as an ordinary church. Its lofty dome is beautifully frescoed, and many fine oil paintings adorn the walls. Hundreds of children, ranging from babyhood to twelve years, were seen in the various departments, where everything was scrupulously neat and clean. This admirable Hospicio is used as an asylum for foundlings, a home for the blind, and also for the deaf and dumb, besides which there is here provided a home for the infirm who are unable to support themselves. This very worthy institution presents an imposing appearance, with its lofty dome and pillared portico facing the broad, tree-lined avenue which leads up to its spacious doors.

There is a bull-ring and two theatres here. The favorite promenade is the paseo, which runs for over a mile within the city proper, terminating at the alameda. Gambling, next to the bull-fight, is the average Mexican's delight, and just outside the thoroughfare of the alameda all sorts of games of chance prevail. As government legalizes the lottery-ticket business, it opens the door for much gambling. Ten per cent, of the gross receipts of all lottery enterprises goes into the national treasury. Even blind men were seen selling lottery tickets, and when it was suggested that they were liable to be cheated by unscrupulous purchasers, the reply was that such an act would surely bring ill luck, and

no ticket bought under such circumstances could possibly draw a prize! This was repeated to us as being the sentiment governing the throng of humble purchasers. The Mexicans of the lower class are very superstitious, and will often pay a young and innocent child a trifle to select a ticket for them, believing that good luck may thus be secured.

A short trip by tramway will take the traveler to the suburb of San Pedro, where the native Indians produce a species of pottery which is both curious and artistic, each one working independently in his adobe cabin. One often detects an article which genius alone could originate and produce. The work is done solely by hand, the workmen employing only the most primitive methods. Some of the vases and jars are identical with those one finds in Egypt, finely glazed, and enameled in colors which are burned in by the maker. These wares are so well appreciated by strangers that the peons realize good prices for their skill; and travelers take home with them mementoes worthy of being placed in the best collections of pottery.

On the evening of Good Friday the spacious plaza of Guadalajara was thronged with the citizens, men and women, peons as well as the better classes, the former scrupulously keeping within certain limits, while the ladies and gentlemen promenaded upon the broad path encircling the plaza, beneath the shade of orange-trees and amid a rose-scented atmosphere. The moon was near its full, but the electric lamps rivaled its serene brilliancy, and the stars were outshone. When the hands

on the illumined clock over the governor's palace pointed to half-past eight, the military band, placed in the central pagoda, with soldierly promptness struck up a grand and elaborate anthem. The thirty performers were skillful musicians, and the effect was admirable. They were all swarthy natives, descendants of the Aztecs, but fully able to compete with the average French, German, or American musicians. The throng passed and repassed each other on the gayly lighted paths, or seated themselves in a broad circle about the plaza. Merry children, nicely dressed, romped hither and thither, now and again coming up pleasantly to greet the strangers, and making the most of the few words of English at their command, while the big fountain kept up its delightfully-cooling notes, heard in the intervals of the music. There were thousands of natives and foreigners promenading hither and thither about the great square and in the plaza, forming a gay and impressive scene until nearly midnight. There is a holiday gayety about life in this southern clime which is quite infectious.

The fascination of the scene; the delights of a land of perpetual sunshine; the charming surface aspect of everything; the rank, luxuriant vegetation; the perfume of flowers mingling with the delightful music that floated upon the air in such an hour as we have described, – all these did not blind the moral sense, though for the moment the physical powers were led captive. One pauses to review the aimless lives of these indolent but beautiful women, and the useless career of the men who form the upper class. It

is natural to contrast the lives of such with that of the abject poor, the half-starved, half-naked masses who hung about the outer lines of the assembled throng on the plaza; men and women living a mere animal existence, and yet who represented such grand and noble possibilities. Ah! the puzzle of it all! Who can solve the riddle? Lazarus and Dives jostle each other not alone in Guadalajara, but all over the world.

In this city, on the Saturday following Good Friday, occurred what is here termed "Judas Iscariot Day," when the concentrated vengeance of the Christian world is supposed to be visited upon the vile betrayer of his Master. The whole object of the occasion is to heap contumely, derision, and dishonor upon the name of Judas. Extensive preparations are made a week or more before the special day. The town presented an appearance similar to the Fourth of July in the United States. The streets were full of temporary booths, and all the inhabitants were out of doors. Figures twelve or fifteen inches long, made of paper, rags, or other combustible material, in various colors, representing Judas, and stuffed with firecrackers and powder, were sold to men and boys, to be fired at the proper time. Some of these figures were of life size, containing rockets and blue lights. Judas was represented with folded hands, arms akimbo, with legs in a running posture, and, in short, in every conceivable attitude. Some of the larger figures bore mottoes about their necks in Spanish, such as "I am a scion of the Devil;" another, "I am about to die for my treachery;" and a third, "I have no friends, and

deserve none," "Let me give up the ghost," etc. Hundreds of these toy figures were tied to a rope, and hung across the thoroughfares at the height of the second story, reaching from one balcony to another. Small pyramids were raised for them and of them in the open squares. People carried hoops of Judases elevated on the top of a long pole. Some men had a single large figure with the conventional Judas face dressed in harlequin colors. Everybody on the streets had at least one toy Judas, and some had a dozen.

Finally, at ten o'clock on the forenoon of Judas day, the great bell of the cathedral sounds, a score of other church bells follow suit, and the matches are applied to the fuses with which each emblematic figure is supplied. Young Mexico is almost crazed. Old Mexico approves and participates. Everybody is elated to the highest point. Sidewalks and balconies are crowded with both sexes. Señoras and señoritas are hilarious, and little children clap their hands. The noise of the bells is great, that of firecrackers, rockets, and fuses is greater, and the shouts of the excited multitude who swarm about the Plaza Mayor is the greatest of all. People become mentally intoxicated with intense excitement. The large Judases in exploding go to pieces, first losing one arm, then a leg, followed by another arm, until at last the body bursts into fragments, at which one universal shout rends the air. The small Judases keep up their snapping and explosions for an hour or more. At last Judas is utterly demolished, literally done for. Then the bells cease ringing, and the overwrought people gradually subside. The whole is a queer, strange piece of

ludicrous mockery, ending as a good-natured annual frolic.

## CHAPTER XVIII

Santa Rosalia. – Mineral Springs. – Chihuahua. – A Peculiar City. – Cathedral. – Expensive Bells. – Aqueduct. – Alameda. – Hidalgo's Prison and his Fate. – Eulalia. – A Large State. – A Grand Avenue of Trees. – Local Artists. – Grotesque Signs. – Influence of Proximity to the United States. – Native Villages. – Dangerous Sand-Spouts. – Reflections on Approaching the Frontier. – Pleasant Pictures photographed upon the Memory. – Juarez, the Border Town of Mexico. – City of El Paso, Texas. – Railroad Interests. – Crossing the Rio Grande. – Greeted by the Stars and Stripes.

Santa Rosalia is a quiet, quaint old place, with six or seven thousand inhabitants; but, being on the direct line of the Mexican Central Railroad, it is sure to rapidly increase in numbers and in material prosperity. Though it is now scarcely more than a country village, still it has its plaza and its alameda, in the former of which a military band performs two evenings in each week. A couple of small but most valuable rivers, the Rio Conchos and the Rio Florido, flank the town and afford excellent means for irrigation, which are improved to the utmost, the effects of which are clearly visible to the most casual observer, in the delightful verdure and the promise of teeming crops. The place has a most equable climate, for which reason many northern invalids



suffering from pulmonary troubles have come hither annually. A few miles west of Santa Rosalia are mineral springs believed to possess great curative properties, especially in diseases of a rheumatic type. There are yet no comfortable accommodations for invalids, but we were told that it was contemplated to build a moderate cost hotel at this point. The ruins of the fort captured by the American army on its way to join General Taylor are seen near Santa Rosalia.

Still pursuing our northward course, bearing a little westerly, over an immense desert tract so devoid of water that the railway train is obliged to transport large cisterns on freight cars to supply the necessary article for the use of its locomotive, we finally reach Chihuahua, – pronounced Chee-waw-waw, – capital of the state of the same name. One would think this immediate region must be well watered, as we cross several rivers while in the state. Among them the Florido, at Jimenez; the Concho, just north of Santa Rosalia; the San Pedro, at Ortiz, and the Chubisca, near to the city of Chihuahua. This name is aboriginal, and signifies "The place where things are made." It was founded in 1539, and lies upon a wide, open plain at the base of the Sierra Madre, whose undulating heights are exquisitely outlined in various hues against the sky, and beneath whose surfaces are hidden rich veins of iron, copper, and silver. The valley extends towards the north as far as the eye can reach. It is looking southward that we see the disordered ranks of the mountain range. When we first came upon the town, it rested beneath a cloudless sky, bathed

in a flood of warm, bright sunlight. We were told that these are the prevailing conditions for seven months of the year. This is on the main line of the Mexican Central Railroad, a thousand miles, more or less, north of the city of Mexico, and has a population of about eighteen or twenty thousand; but, like most of the Mexican cities, it once contained a much larger number of inhabitants than it can boast of to-day. It will be remembered that the American forces, in the year 1847, advanced upon and took possession of the city after the battle of Sacramento, which occurred February 28 of that year. This was the force commanded by Colonel Doniphan, and from here it made the celebrated march southward, forming a junction with the division of General Taylor.

The city presents a pleasing and thrifty aspect, though most of the houses are but one story in height and constructed of adobe, with low, flat roofs, very much like an Egyptian town, – a comparison which is constantly occurring to us in Mexico. The patios of the better class of houses are ornamented with flowering plants, and pets of all sorts, especially birds, are numerous, the favorite species being the mocking-bird. One patio we noticed full to repletion of tame pigeons, blue, black, white, and mottled fantails. The state and government buildings, the mint with its low, square tower, and a few other edifices are large and handsome structures. In the tower of the mint the patriot Hidalgo was confined, with three of his comrades, previous to their execution. They were shot here July 31, 1811.

In the Plaza de Armas there stands a fine monument to the memory of Hidalgo. The cathedral, the shell of which cost over eight hundred thousand dollars, stands on one side of the plaza, an area ornamented as usual with beautiful trees and flowers, together with a large fountain in the centre, about which are winding paths, and benches whereon to enjoy the shade. This is a delightful resort in the evening, when the music-loving populace are regaled with the admirable performance of a Mexican military band three or four times a week. The cathedral is of the Moorish and Gothic orders combined, and it has considerable architectural merit, bearing upon its rather crudely ornamented front thirteen statues, representing San Francisco and the twelve apostles. The interior was found to contain some interesting and valuable oil-paintings, though we saw them in an extremely bad light. The towers of this cathedral are remarkable for a costly collection of bells, and the interior of the church for a series of magnificent carvings. One of these bells is pointed out to the visitor as having been broken by a cannon-ball during the bombardment of the town by the French in 1866. The other sides of the plaza are bordered by the state buildings and the best stores of the town.

The gray, crumbling line of an arched stone aqueduct, built long ago to supply the town with water, forms a picturesque feature of the environs. There is an admirably kept alameda for public enjoyment, divided by four rows of ancient cottonwood-trees, some of which are five feet in diameter. The Rio Chubisca

flows through the city. Crops are raised solely by liberal irrigation; water is the one thing most needed on this high, flat land. Some of the finest grapes in Mexico are raised in great abundance here, and are shipped both to the south and across the border into our own country. A very large share of the republic, with its volcanic soil, is admirably adapted to this industry. Fifteen miles from Chihuahua are the rich silver mines of Eulalia. The road thither is a rough one, but many persons enjoy the excursion, over what at first sight seems to be a plain of lava, though as there is no volcano visible, one is a little at fault in divining from whence it came. We were told finally that it was slag from the workings of the mines at Eulalia, and that more modern processes of disintegration and amalgamation might extract good pay in silver from these "tailings," now spread broadcast for many miles on the surface of the plain. Santa Eulalia is a rude hamlet lying among the mountains, with a very humble mining population and a small stone church. There are over two hundred mines in and about these hills, all of which have been worked more or less successfully.

This state, by the way, is the largest in the republic, being about the size of New York and Pennsylvania combined. To be exact, the state is four hundred and thirty miles long from north to south, and three hundred, thirty-seven miles wide, It is famous for its many sheep and cattle ranches, affording, as it does, great advantages for stock-raising. Large herds are driven over the borders into our own country every season, and sold to American

herdsmen, to be driven still further north and fattened for the eastern and northern markets. There is a quaint, oriental aspect about the adobe-built town which would prove very attractive to an artist's eye. One tree-embowered roadway attracted our attention, which so strikingly resembled the Beacon Street Mall in Boston as to call forth remarks to that effect from more than one of our party. It is known as the Calle de Guadalupe. The deep shadow of the long gothic arch, formed by the entwined branches, was exquisite in effect. In the busy portion of the town, groups of Indians, wrapped in bright-colored blankets, added variety to the scene.

Wood carvings and wax figures from the hands of intelligent native artists, – for artists they are – come so near to one's ideas of perfection as to be a surprise. This artistic genius was also observed among the humbler classes further south, and is by no means confined to the neighborhood of Chihuahua. After a few moments of watchful observation of even a stranger, some of these Indians will retire, and in an almost incredibly brief space of time will return with an excellent likeness of the individual whom they design to represent, not merely as regards his ordinary physique, but in facial expression. Practice has made them quite perfect in this impromptu modeling. Chihuahua, if we may credit the historians, as well as judge by the remains, once had a population of two hundred thousand.

A singular and most disagreeable custom was observed here which prevails in some other Mexican cities: that of placing

fantastic signs, painted in gigantic size, on the outside of shops. These are grotesque representations of the business carried on within. It would seem as though the object was to ridicule the proprietor's occupation by the vulgarity of these signs. Be this as it may, the inevitable half dozen pulque drinkers lean upon the counter all the while, absorbing the liquid which brings insensibility. As they drop off one by one, their places are taken by others, who are promptly supplied by the plethoric bar-tender. In the plaza peons were offering for sale a very small species of dog indigenous to this district, tiny creatures, peculiarly marked and evidently stunted by some artificial means. However, some of our party were captivated, and became purchasers of the delicate little tremulous creatures. Considerable building was observed to be in progress here, not structures of adobe, but fine stone edifices, of an attractive and modern style of architecture, three stories in height. One of these was designed for a hotel, and would be an ornament to any city.

Though Chihuahua is two hundred and twenty-five miles south of the Rio Grande, still it shows many signs of its proximity to this country. Such buildings as we have just referred to would not be thought of in middle or southern Mexico. American fashions in many things are obvious; a large portion of the population speak English; the faces of the common people evince more intelligence; and the masses are better clothed than they are a little further south. We found that free schools were established and other matters of higher civilization were in progress. Many

of the customs prevailing north of the national boundary line have been adopted here. The universal burro of Mexico begins to disappear, and strong, shapely mules and large horses take his place. Beggars are few and far between.

There is very little of interest to engage the traveler's attention on the route of the Mexican Central Railroad between Chihuahua and Juarez, formerly known as Paso del Norte. The country is quite sterile, varied by occasional long, tedious reaches of cactus and mesquite bushes, or a few cottonwood-trees wherever a water-course is found. The mesquite grows to the height of ten or twelve feet. The seeds are contained in a small pod, and are used by the natives to make a sort of bread which is sweet to the taste. The wood is extremely hard and heavy. At long distances apart a native village comes into view, composed of low, square, adobe cabins. The treeless character of this section of country is not without a depressing influence, while the want of water is only too manifest everywhere. Sometimes one sees for hours a fairly good grazing country, and, where water is available, some cereals are raised. Corn, wheat, and barley occasionally form broad expanses of delightful green. Still, only the most primitive means of agriculture are in use, reminding the observer of the unfulfilled possibilities of the really capable soil. Where these fertile districts are seen, the results are brought about by the same irrigating ditches that the aborigines used more than three hundred years ago. The touch of moisture is like the enchanter's wand. In California, water is conveyed thirty, forty, and even fifty

miles, by means of ditch and flume; here the sources of supply are not usually half the first-named distance away. Grapes are grown, as at Chihuahua, in great abundance, the soil seeming to be particularly adapted to their cultivation. Many tons of the big purple fruit are regularly converted into wines of different brands, said to be fully equal to the product of California.

As the sea has its water-spouts, so the land has its sand-spouts, whereby the whirlwinds, forming on and sweeping over the barren plains, gather up the soil and rush circling along with it for miles, sustaining the mass in the air, two hundred feet or more in height. This phenomenon was often observed while traveling on the Mexican plateau. Sometimes, as has already been said, half a dozen were seen at a time. Between Chihuahua and Juarez they were again observed. The course of these dusty pillars of sand was generally towards the foothills of the high ranges. The moment any large obstacle is encountered, as is the case with a water-spout at sea, they are at once broken and disappear. Any ordinary cabin or other frail building which is struck by a sand-spout is pretty sure to be demolished. This might not always follow, as they move with different degrees of force, some being vastly more powerful than others. Trees are not infrequently broken and destroyed by them. We were told that horses and cattle exposed upon the plain were sometimes taken up in the suction of air caused by their progress, carried a hundred rods or more, and then dropped to the ground lifeless. Other stories were heard of the erratic performances of sand-spouts on the Mexican



plateau, but they were of a nature requiring too much credulity for us to repeat them in these pages.

As one approaches the frontier, a feeling of regret steals over the traveler that he is hourly leaving behind him a country in which so much delight has been briefly experienced. That discomforts have been encountered is very true, – withering heat, dust, fatigue, and indifferent food, but these quickly fade into mere shadows. Not the pains, but the pleasures, of such a journey remain indelibly fixed in the memory. No cunningly painted canvas is so retentive as the active brain. While we roll over the broad cactus plains, closing the eyes in thought, a panorama moves before us, depicting vivid tableaux from our two months' experience in Aztec Land. We listen in imagination at the sunset hour to distant vesper bells, floating softly over the hills, and see the bowed heads and folded hands of the peons. Once more we gaze delighted upon lovely valleys, dark shadowy gorges, far-reaching plains of cacti and yucca palms, bordered by lofty, snow-tipped mountains; we see again the exuberant fruitfulness of the tropics, and the loveliness of the floral kingdom in this land of the sun; once more we stroll through the dimly lighted aisles of grand cathedrals, listening to the solemn chant of human voices, and the organ's deep reverberating tones; or view again the suggestive ruins of a vanished race. Groups of the native population in many colors, long lines of heavily-laden burros, dashing caballeros and lovely señoritas, pass in turn before the mind's eye. Now a grand comprehensive scene comes before

us, a view from the battlements of Chapultepec, from the hill of Guadalupe, or the Pyramid of Cholula, and, above all, that presented from the towers of the superb cathedral of Mexico. This is not an enchanting dream, but the exquisite photography of memory, a store of glowing pictures for future mental enjoyment. It is such experiences and memories which render us never less alone than when alone.

Juarez is the northern end of the great railway line, the border town between Mexico and the United States, where we cross the Rio Grande to enter the city of El Paso, Texas, a town which promises in due course to become a grand commercial centre. At the present time the most remunerative business of the thrifty but ugly looking place, seems to be that of smuggling, which is carried on with a large degree of enterprise by the people of both nationalities. This arises from the excessive duties put on both the necessities and luxuries of life by the Mexican tariff. Juarez is an old settlement, dating from 1585, and is situated three thousand eight hundred feet above the sea. It is subject to great extremes of heat and cold, the thermometer showing 105° Fahr. at times in July, and 5° below zero in January. Snow falls here occasionally to the depth of two feet, while the Rio Grande freezes hard enough to bear heavily laden mule wagons. It is difficult for the place to cast off its former name, El Paso del Norte (Passage of the North), so called because of the ford on the river and the pass which nature here constructed between the mountains. The town extends along the west bank of the river

some three miles, and back from it about one mile. The Rio Grande water is passable for drinking purposes, and good for general use, though it is somewhat impregnated with alkali.

Juarez possesses many fine old trees and much attractive verdure. It has numerous modern and handsome edifices, and the place is sure eventually to be a large distributing railway centre. The Southern Pacific Company's line, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fé, the Mexican Central, and the Texas Pacific railways all diverge from this point. There is an ancient stone church here which will be sure to interest the stranger, dark and gloomy within, but full of votive contributions and quaint belongings, recalling the chapel of Notre Dame de la Garde on the hill which overlooks Marseilles, where the Mediterranean seamen have deposited so many marine toys, images, and curiosities.

At Juarez the narrow, shallow Rio Grande, with its bare quicksands, was once more crossed, and the Texas city of El Paso, shadeless and verdureless, was reached. Its population is what would be expected in a frontier town of this region, while an air of crudeness permeates everything. As the vestibule train which had been our home for the past two months crossed the iron bridge, and as we came once more on to the soil of our own country, the American flag on the custom-house station was dipped three times in acknowledgment of our hearty cheers, and to welcome the party on its successful return from a long, but delightful journey through the states of the Mexican republic.