

Ballou Maturin Murray

Aztec Land



Maturin Ballou

Aztec Land

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=23159995

Aztec Land:

Содержание

PREFACE	5
CHAPTER I	7
CHAPTER II	28
CHAPTER III	48
CHAPTER IV	67
CHAPTER V	81
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	92

Ballou Maturin Murray

Aztec Land

*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.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.