

The Knockabout Club



CORTEZ · IN · MEXICO ·


IN
Search of
TREASURE

Presented from Mrs and
Mr. [unclear] to Emily Culp.

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RUINED TOWER IN THE PALACE OF PALENQUE, THE PAINTED CITY.

THE
KNOCKABOUT CLUB

IN
SEARCH OF TREASURE

BY
FRED A. OBER,
AUTHOR OF "TRAVELS IN MEXICO," ETC.

FULLY ILLUSTRATED

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See page 100
A. M. ...
112 ...

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THE KNOCKABOUT CLUB IN SEARCH OF TREASURE.

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IN SEARCH OF TREASURE.

CHAPTER I.

WE MEET IN MEXICO.

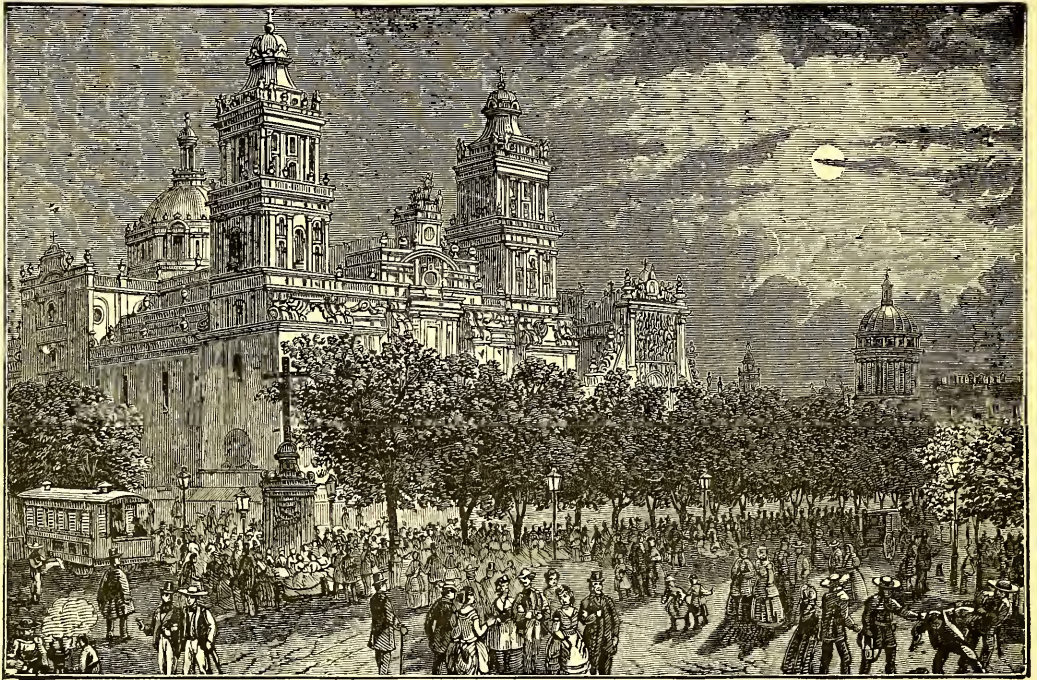
A GLANCE AT AZTLAN. — THE SNOW-COVERED MOUNTAINS. — PYRAMIDS AND TEMPLES. — WHERE OUR STORY BEGINS. — HOW WE GOT TO MEXICO. — THE PRE-ARRANGED MEETING. — THE HISTORIAN'S ADVENTURE BY THE WAY. — DOG OR CAYOTE? — THE PRAIRIE-DOG VILLAGE. — SEVEN CITIES OF CIBOLA. — ACOMÁ. — THE ENCHANTED MESA. — ALONE AMONG INDIANS. — MY BED UPON THE ROOFTOP. — MY RIDE WITH AN INDIAN MAIDEN. — HER FACE WAS RAINBOW-HUED, PAINTED LIKE THE SKY OF MORNING.



THE city of Mexico, capital of the Republic of the same name, is known to everybody, and we are not going to attempt to describe it; but there are a few prominent features that one who has seen it loves to dwell upon in memory. Situated as it is, the centre of a vast valley, enclosed within a wall of mountains two hundred miles in circumference, it occupies a position commanding and magnificent. Fifty miles away glisten the silver summits of Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl, those great volcanoes covered with perpetual snow. Who can forget the glorious spectacle presented of a morning when the rising sun illumines those shining snow-fields, and of an evening when its last rays gild their distant crests?

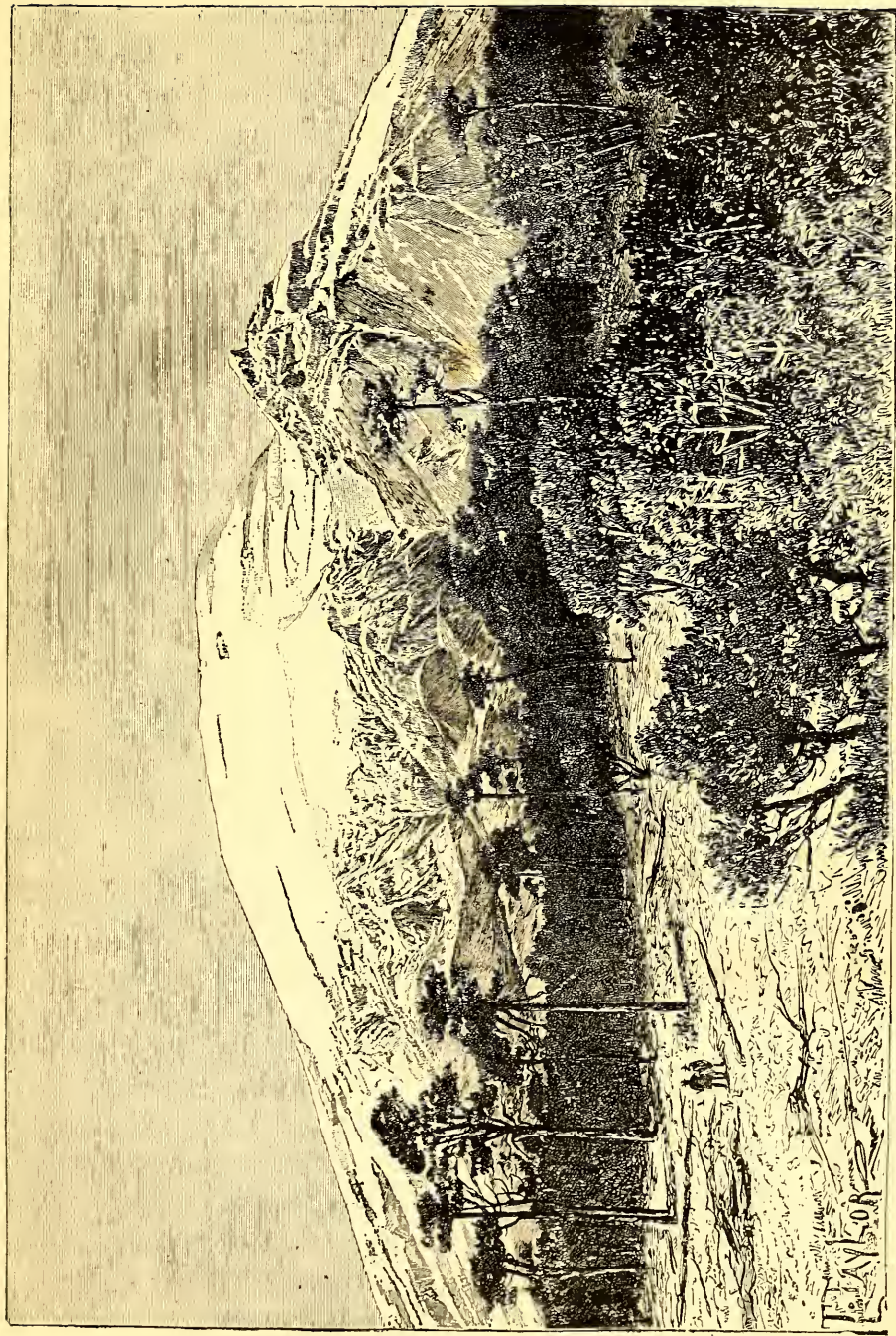
Although surrounded with the most magnificent of Nature's works, having in view an ever-changing panorama of her grandest productions, the city itself is well worthy its splendid environment.

In the centre of the city rises the great cathedral, the grandest on this continent, over four hundred feet in length, two hundred in breadth, and with towers two hundred feet high. It was nearly a



THE GREAT CATHEDRAL.

century in building, from 1573 to 1667, and cost nearly \$2,000,000. The interior, even to-day, reminds us of the departed glories of those times when priest and monk controlled the destinies of Mexico. It faces the great square, the Plaza Mayor, on another side of which is the great palace of the President, which is over twenty-eight hundred feet in length, and occupies, it is said, the exact site of the ancient palace of Montezuma. The cathedral itself stands upon the site of

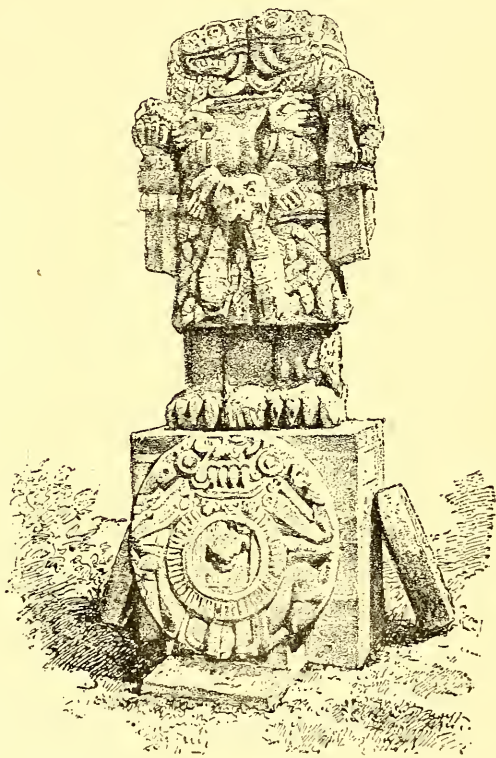


POCATEPETL.

the great pyramid which was erected here by the Aztecs, and up the terraced sides of which many a victim has been dragged to sacrifice. For upon its summit once rested the sacrificial stone upon which were stretched the captives taken in battle, and their hearts torn out and offered to the god of war. The sacrificial stone may now be seen in the court of the Mexican Museum, with its sculptured procession of conquering kings, and in its upper surface the very groove that carried away the blood of the mutilated captives. Near it and overlooking it rises to-day, even as four hundred years ago, the war-god, the Mexican Mars, Huitzilopochtli, before whom in times past have flowed rivers of blood.

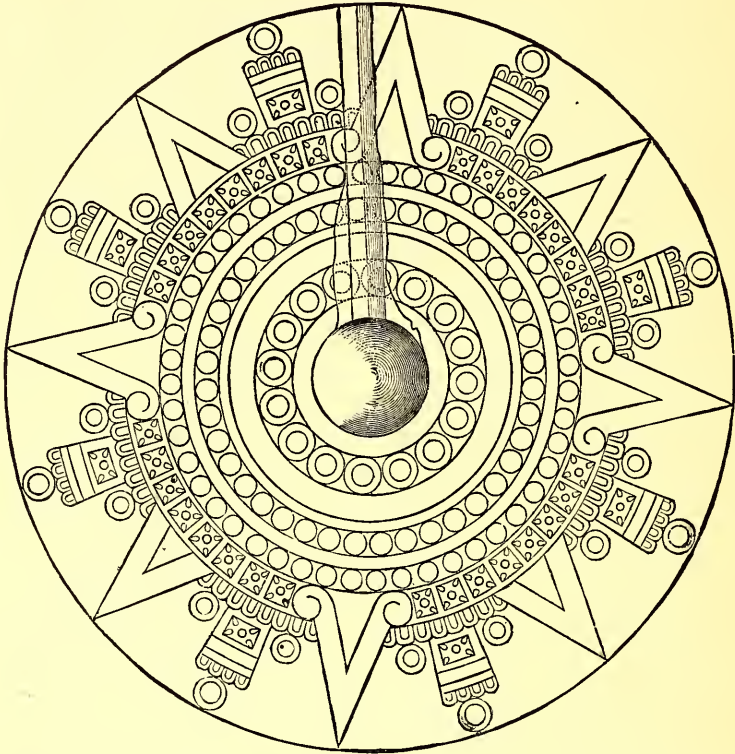
But, there, we are doing just what we said we should not do, — describing the capital of Aztlan. Let us return to the Plaza; for here it is, in the centre of this city of ancient memories, on the very spot once looked down upon by Huitzilopochtli from the summit platform of the temple pyramid, that our story begins.

In the middle of the Plaza is a pleasure-garden, thickly planted with tall eucalyptus-trees, running through which are marble walks,



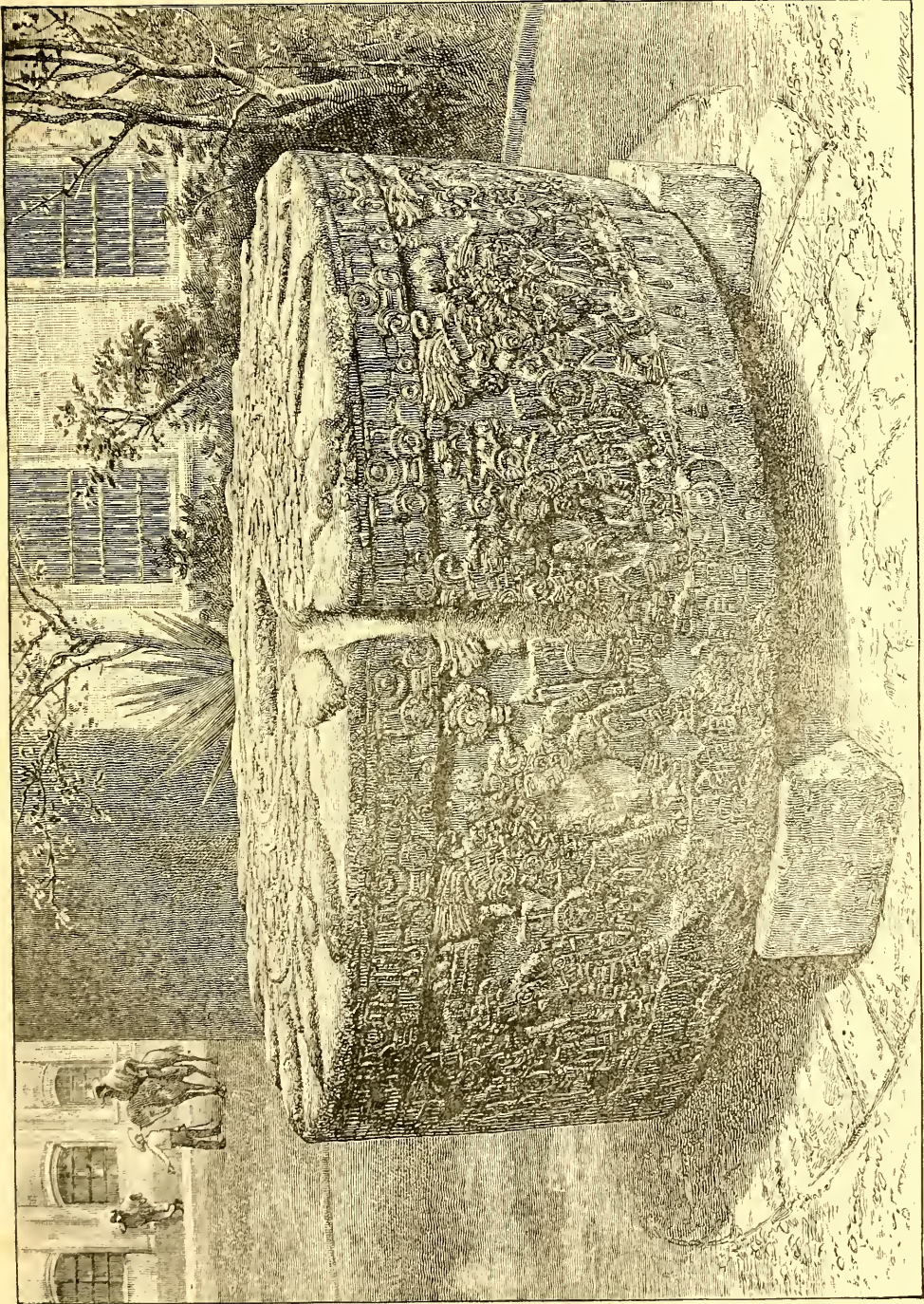
HUITZILOPOCHTLI, GOD OF WAR.

like white and frozen rivers ; statues gleam in the shade, and fountains send forth here and there their crystal spray. Altogether it is a most attractive spot ; and one is tempted to linger and to gaze upon the flowers, the birds, and the brilliant throng of passers-by.



TOP OF SACRIFICIAL STONE.

Had you, my dear reader, been in the city of Mexico and walking across its Plaza at noon, the first day of January, 1890, you might have observed a young man of about our age, sitting on one of the benches beneath the shade of the eucalyptus-trees. By his dress you might have noted that he was not a Mexican, perhaps an American, at any rate a cosmopolitan. His face wore an anxious expression,



THE SACRIFICIAL STONE.

and notwithstanding that he closely scanned the people passing, he kept one eye fixed upon the cathedral clock. The great minute-hand moved slowly across the dial, until at last it pointed to five minutes past twelve. The anxious expression on the young man's face deepened into a frown, and he muttered to himself, "This is really unaccountable; he promised to be here at noon, sharp, and here it is five minutes past. I wonder where he can be."



SCULPTURE ON THE SIDE OF THE SACRIFICIAL STONE.

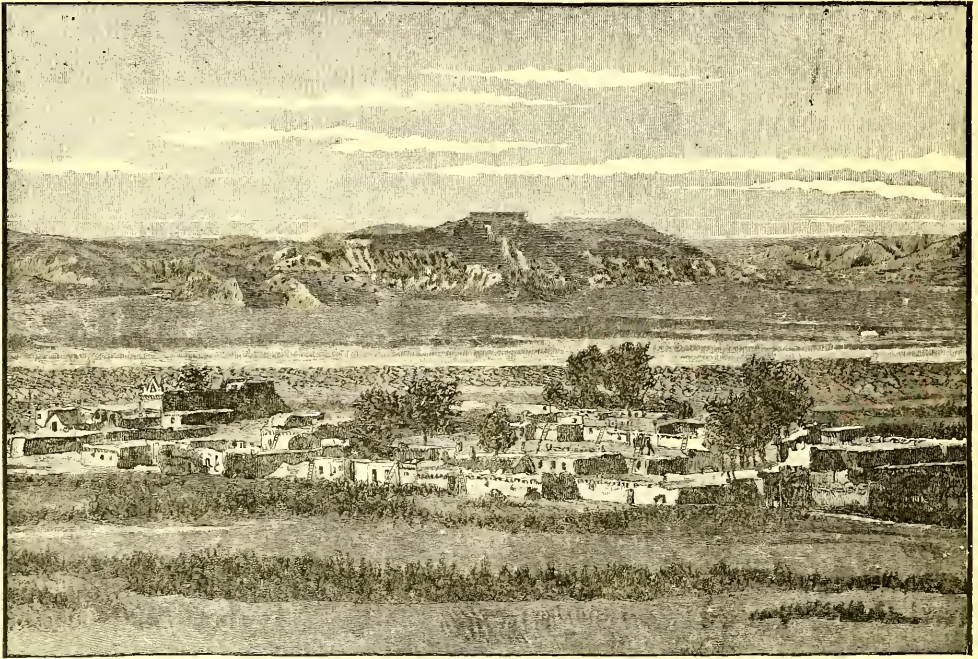
At this moment his meditations were interrupted by a slap on the shoulder from an unseen hand, and turning quickly, he saw standing by him the object of his thoughts. "Why, Doctor," he exclaimed, "then you are really here; but why were n't you on time?"

"On time, old man! why, I was. I've been behind that tree over there watching you for the last ten minutes. It was just fun to watch the different shades of expression chase one another across your countenance. You should n't get impatient, my boy, especially when, as you know, I've travelled three thousand miles to meet you here."

"That's true, Doctor; but you must remember, too, I've left some thirty-five hundred behind me, since last we met, and it was just as easy for you as it was for me. But how did you come?"

"Left New York a week ago; 'New York Central and Lake Shore' to Chicago, 'Missouri Pacific' down across Arkansas and Texas to the Rio Grande, and the rest of the way over the narrow-gauge. And you?"

“ Well, I came through Chicago also, but took the ‘ Atchison-Topeka and Santa Fé ’ across Kansas, Colorado, and New Mexico, stopped off to have a peep at the Pueblos, crossed the Rio Grande at El Paso, and over the ‘ Mexican Central ’ the rest of the way. I did n’t hurry, but took two weeks for the trip, stopping off at Chihuahua, Zacatecas, Guanajuato, Aguas Calientes, and Tula. That did n’t give

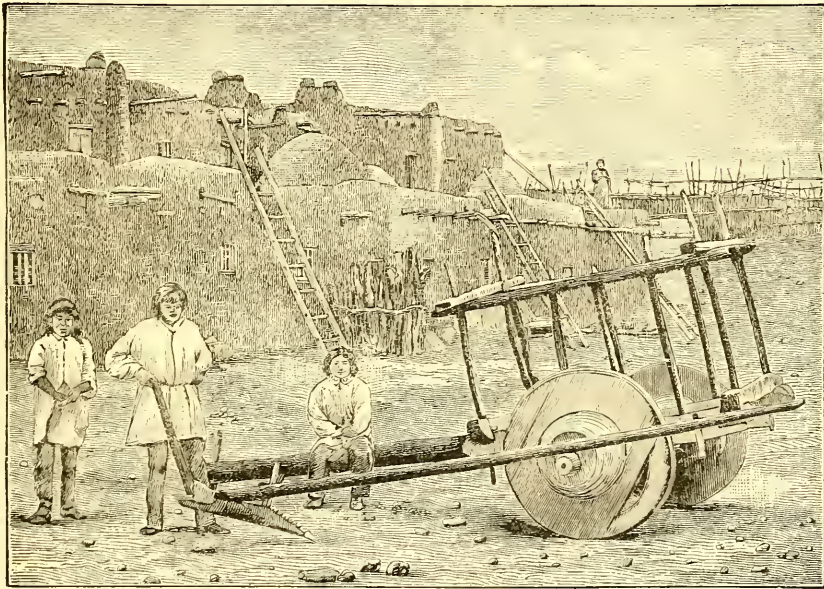


A PUEBLO.

me much time, of course ; but I got a glimpse of some of the great cities, two or three silver-mines a mile or so deep, and saw a thousand or more of the most picturesque people in the world.”

“ Yes, Mexico beats the world for that kind of people ; they may not be very clean, those Indians we see on the plains, and they may not be intelligent enough to write an unabridged dictionary ; but they are picturesque and peculiar. But, say, did n’t you have any adventures on the way ? ”

“No real lively adventures, but some very interesting experiences. You know, I visited the Pueblos to try to find out if those strange Indians who have lived so many hundred years all by themselves, had any knowledge of that treasure-trove the Professor was investigating last winter. The Pueblo-dwellers, as you know, are quiet and inoffensive people, devoted to their herds and flocks and agriculture. They have never made any trouble whatever for our Government,



PUEBLO-DWELLERS.

and are the nearest approach to the Mexican type of any in the United States. They were discovered some three hundred and sixty years ago, and in 1539 the Spaniard Coronado, made his celebrated expedition in search of the famous treasure-cities, the Seven Cities of Cibola. The most famous of those ancient cities was Acomá, which was built upon an almost inaccessible *mesa*, or a vast rock, and which was stormed by Coronado in 1541. The people, I believe, made desperate defence, rolling down great rocks upon the heads of

the invaders ; but they were soon conquered by Coronado. I wanted to see this wonderful pueblo, and so I left the railroad at the station about a dozen miles away. There was nobody living there but the station-agent, and the plain all around was filled with prairie-dog villages. Every hole had a comical prairie-dog sitting at the mouth in company with a feathered neighbor, the quaint burrowing owl. I succeeded in shooting one of the owls, which I skinned and stuffed ;



PRAIRIE-DOG VILLAGES.

but the 'dogs' were too wary for me. Toward sunset I went gunning for a troublesome cayote, or prairie-wolf, that the station-agent said was a nuisance he wished I would abate. At some distance away, I saw a gray, gaunt animal approaching ; but it looked so much like a dog that I asked an old Indian, who happened to be passing, what it was. 'Es cayote?' queried I. 'Si, Señor,' said the Indian ; 'es muymalo.' At that, I 'up and fired ;' and the animal dropped, howling in its tracks. As it lay on its back, kicking its last, that wretched

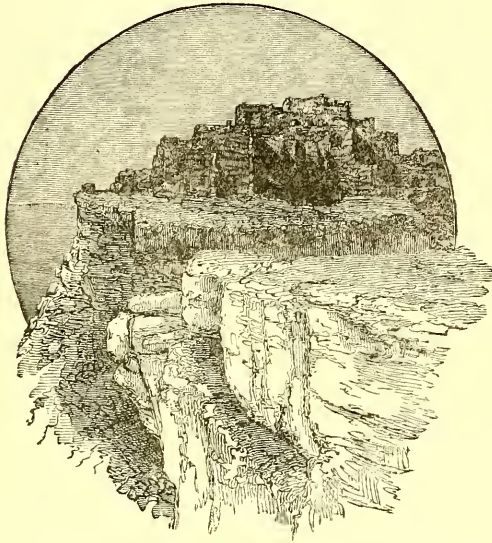
'Lo' came up and shook his finger warningly, saying, 'No es cayote, es perro,' — 'It is n't a wolf, it's a dog, and belongs to somebody.' I don't know to this day whether it was a dog or a cayote, and the agent even was in doubt; but said, anyway, he was glad I had shot it. I hired a horse of the station-agent, and started next morning for the pueblo of Acomá, some twelve miles distant. There was no road, hardly a trail; and this was crossed by tracks innumerable, so it was not strange that I missed my way. A straggling Indian set me right, and some six or eight miles out I saw the valley I was seeking. The only life along the trail was in the prairie-dog villages, with their quaint inhabitants, each head of a household sitting bolt-upright at the entrance to his hole. Then I had to descend a very steep bluff, from the brink of which the view was grand; a long and narrow valley lay before me, completely enclosed within steep-sided hills. In the centre of this green and level plain rose a congeries of great rocks several hundred feet in height, and upon the level summit of the largest was a long clay-colored structure (apparently but one), and this was the pueblo. On the plain, wandering among scant pasturage, hundreds of *burros*, cows, goats, and sheep grazed quietly. The *burros*, I found on near approach, were in excellent condition, — not one of them with raw or bleeding back, as would invariably be the case if they were owned by Mexicans or Americans.

"Crossing this narrow plain, the trail, now plainly defined, led me between two great groups of sandstone, above two hundred feet in height, and then among others, to the central *mesa*. I never saw such an assemblage of giants, single or grouped, standing carelessly about, like petrified Titans, and all guarding the approach to Acomá.

"By good luck, I selected the right approach, apparently the only mule-trail, which wound over vast sand-drifts and half-buried ledges.

"There were two other trails, I later learned, but available only for Indians on foot, as they led up the almost perpendicular sides of the cliffs, and by footholds cut in the face of the precipice.

“ The geologist describes this *mesa*, or table-topped cliff, of Acomá as lying at an altitude above the sea of nearly seventy-five hundred feet. It is an extensive polygonal bluff of sandstone, with walls nearly everywhere vertical or overhanging, from two hundred to two hundred and fifty feet high.



ON THE SUMMIT.

The surface of the *mesa* consists of about thirty acres of denuded rock. There are no springs in the immediate rock, but two immense reservoirs, of natural formation, hold the water that falls from heaven. The *mesa* stands on the southwest corner of a huge basin, open to the northeast only, four miles wide and ten long. High and almost vertical cliffs surround it on all sides. Over its surface are scattered isolated rocks, sandstone pinnacles and

columns; the whole looks like an enchanted valley.

“ After surmounting the sand-hills, I found steps cut in the living rock, up which I led my horse with great difficulty. Great shafts of sandstone, capped with grotesque head-pieces of larger blocks, guard this narrow trail. The only other trails are the ones I have mentioned, with footholds cut in the perpendicular faces of the cliffs; yet, night and morning, long files of Indian girls climbed up and down them, with huge water-jars nicely balanced upon their heads.

“ By good chance, I rode directly to the *Gobernador*, who received me cordially, and invited me to his house. The storekeeper, the only *Americano* (a Jew, by the way), had shut up shop that very morning, and *vamosed*, passing me unobserved on the road.

“ The Governor and I climbed a ladder to the second terrace, entered a low doorway, and took a seat. My horse was promptly unsaddled and cared for, while I was at once made ‘ one of the family.’ Some other men entered later, one of whom said to me, ‘ How-do, John? All light?’ ”

“ They all spoke Spanish; and we hobbled along quite gracefully, speaking a bi-lingual language most curious to hear. All at once lighted cigarettes; the tobacco and corn-husks being placed in the middle of our circle, and each one helping himself.

“ As night came on, the pastoral character of the people was brought to mind, as the herds of goats and cows were driven up from the plain and penned at the base of the cliff. Beneath the beetling rock, the impending cliff high over them, in great hollows and little dens, the goats and sheep are herded for the night, while the donkeys (more valuable) are driven to the summit of the *mesa*. Coming up the winding path over the sand-dunes, you see rude carts and wooden ploughs and other farming implements stowed carefully away in hollows of the rock.

“ They take life easily, these Pueblo people, yet they are measurably industrious. During the day, at intervals, a crier went about shouting for many minutes at a time, warning the men to work, to meals, and to retire.

“ At night I was taken around to several houses, by my friend who spoke English, José Josecito, or the Little Josey, who was the only one of them all who demanded remuneration for his services. His entire stock of English consisted in salutations, and the phrase, ‘ Gib me halluf dollah!’ the meaning of which he knew full well.

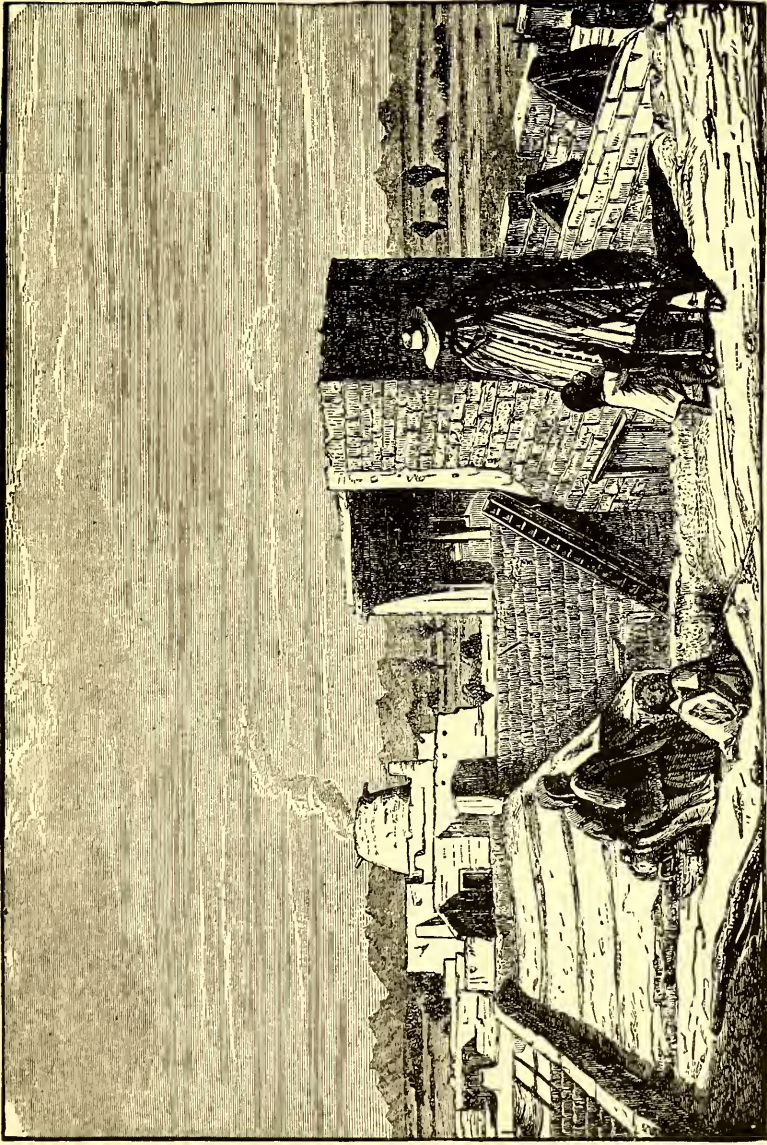
“ In one of the adobe dwellings, where the fire danced merrily on the hearth, and the firelight gleamed cheerily on the walls, I was treated to a nice, warm supper. The buildings on this *mesa* are in three long rows, containing ten large communal houses, built of rubble-stone and adobe, and with a population, all told, of about one thousand. The

back side, or higher part, of the first row is perpendicular, rising sheer from the summit platform of the cliff, a continuation of its face and fronting toward the north. The open, or terraced, part faces south. Narrow streets run between the rows, and narrower alleys cut the blocks themselves. Most of the blocks are three stories in height, the roof of each story forming a platform in front of the one above, and reached by rude and strong ladders.

“Sitting on the outermost angles of the fortress are single sentinels, motionless, wrapped in their blankets. Through the morning mist rises the shape of the ‘enchanted *mesa*’ (*la Mesa Encantada*), which frowns at Acomá, a mile away. It is a perpetual mystery, a siren without song, tempting the Pueblos to death. No one has looked upon its summit and returned to describe it. It rises four hundred feet above the valley, with perpendicular walls, its summit platform inaccessible. Yet the dwellers at Acomá tell of three young men of their tribe who were tempted to scale the cliffs, but who were unable to descend again, and perished there of hunger, their own beloved pueblo and their kinsfolk within their range of vision.

“A most sociable style of living these Pueblos have, where everybody is welcome to the house of everybody else, and one may climb from room to room of every block.

“At about nine o’clock I returned to my headquarters, the *casa* of the Governor, and found the entire family stretched out on the platform in front of the doorway. They saluted me, and observing that I must be very tired, gave a boy some sheep-skins and blankets, and told him to spread them for me on the roof-top, a story higher up. Then I climbed to my aerial bedchamber and ‘tumbled in,’ for I was tired and very sleepy. My bed was a sheep-skin, my covering a coarse blanket, my canopy the star-lit sky. I had the terrace all to myself, though in the morning I was awakened by a subdued chattering, and opening my eyes, saw a group of men, women, and children regarding me attentively, but who immediately looked away, seeing that I was



A PUEBLO PLAZA.

awake. I found, on rising, that if I had rolled over many times, or had walked in my sleep, I should have fallen near three hundred feet, quite to the base of the cliff; and I do not to this day understand why the Indians assigned me to sleep in such a precarious place. Perhaps they were wondering that I had n't rolled over the precipice, when I awoke and found them chattering around me.

“Finally all Acomá was astir, and in the courts below an unusual commotion. I was summoned down to breakfast with the Governor. Then I was informed that about thirty of the people were going to the station with me, — that they had taken my casual mention of the gathering of Indians at Santa Fé as an invitation, which they had accepted! I was struck aghast. How could I provide for the transportation of a horde of Indians over one hundred miles?

“During all the morning I was pondering this question, and my state of mind was not serene. But we left the pueblo at about ten o'clock, myself and twenty-four Indians. We filed down the cliffs, a picturesque cavalcade, all happy and excited, save myself. As we went along, I noticed anxious glances cast at my gaunt gray steed; so I 'did the dutiful' by inviting the prettiest of the Indian girls to mount behind me. This she did, after a little coy hesitation, taking a running leap, and landing astride. Her legs were bare; and, though shapely, her feet stuck out on each side of me in a manner decidedly ludicrous. I said she was the prettiest of the lot, but that is speaking relatively. She was plump and smooth-skinned, with that velvety smoothness peculiar to Indians and other thick-skinned peoples. Her eyes were black, of course, her mouth red-lipped, her hands and feet small, her bosom full, and her waist supple and slender. Half close your eyes and hold on to your nose, and perhaps she might appear tolerable.

“I was mounted double, and so was the whole troop, some even *treble*, the little jackasses grunting under their loads of humanity. As we reached the cliffs, the girls and women secured some white clay, which they masticated, and smeared their hands and faces. My own

particular maiden smeared her hands and arms ; but her face was a fiery red, most beautiful to see. She was at first quite shy, perhaps appreciating the delicacy of her position astride a horse, behind a white man to whom she had had no formal introduction, for our salutations had been brief. I had merely halted by her side, jerked my thumb behind me, and said, 'How?' then 'Montar usted?' that being the nearest approach I could make to 'get up behind,' in Spanish.'

"Her sweet lips murmured 'How!' She drew the back of her hand across her nose (for this unsophisticated maiden scorned a handkerchief), hesitated a moment, and the next had straddled my steed. Thus, you see, it was quite natural she should at first appear diffident; but as time wore on (as time will), she became accustomed to her surroundings, and dropped her dainty hands from my shoulders to my thighs, leaving a white streak wherever she touched me. Now and then, in the amblings of my horse, her velvety cheek caressed my ear, leaving a red mark; or her nose scraped the back of my neck, leaving a bright vermilion. She was a girl of infinite variety — of color; and when we parted company the back of my coat was adorned with a vermilion spot as big as a porous plaster, and my shoulders with white epaulets. We parted with regret, — at least, I did, — for it was a novel experience, and I decidedly enjoyed it.

"I had in my canteen some sort of a pleasant drink with which to refresh my inner self, and this she insisted on sharing with me; otherwise our journey would have been without an incident to mar it. As we approached the railroad, some section-hands espied me, and greeted us with such a shout that my little gazelle slipped off quietly over the horse's tail, and sneaked into the bush to still her agitated heart and hide her blushes. Thus we parted, without a farewell, my rainbow-hued damsel and myself; and the last I saw of her was her sweet face shining through a bush, like the red sun of morning through a bank of valley mist."

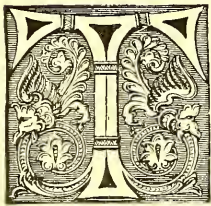
"Well," interrupted the Doctor, "let her shine on; perhaps some-

body has mistaken her for a glow-worm before this time, and has added her to an entomological collection. I suppose you got away safely; your presence here vouches for that; and the continuation of your story may be indefinitely postponed. Our first business now is to find the Professor. You haven't seen him yet, of course, or you would have mentioned it. I am willing to wager a hat that he's mooning around some miserable Aztec ruin, and that he has spent all his money for useless antiquarian rubbish. Come, now, let us hunt him up, before the police find him and run him into the calaboose."

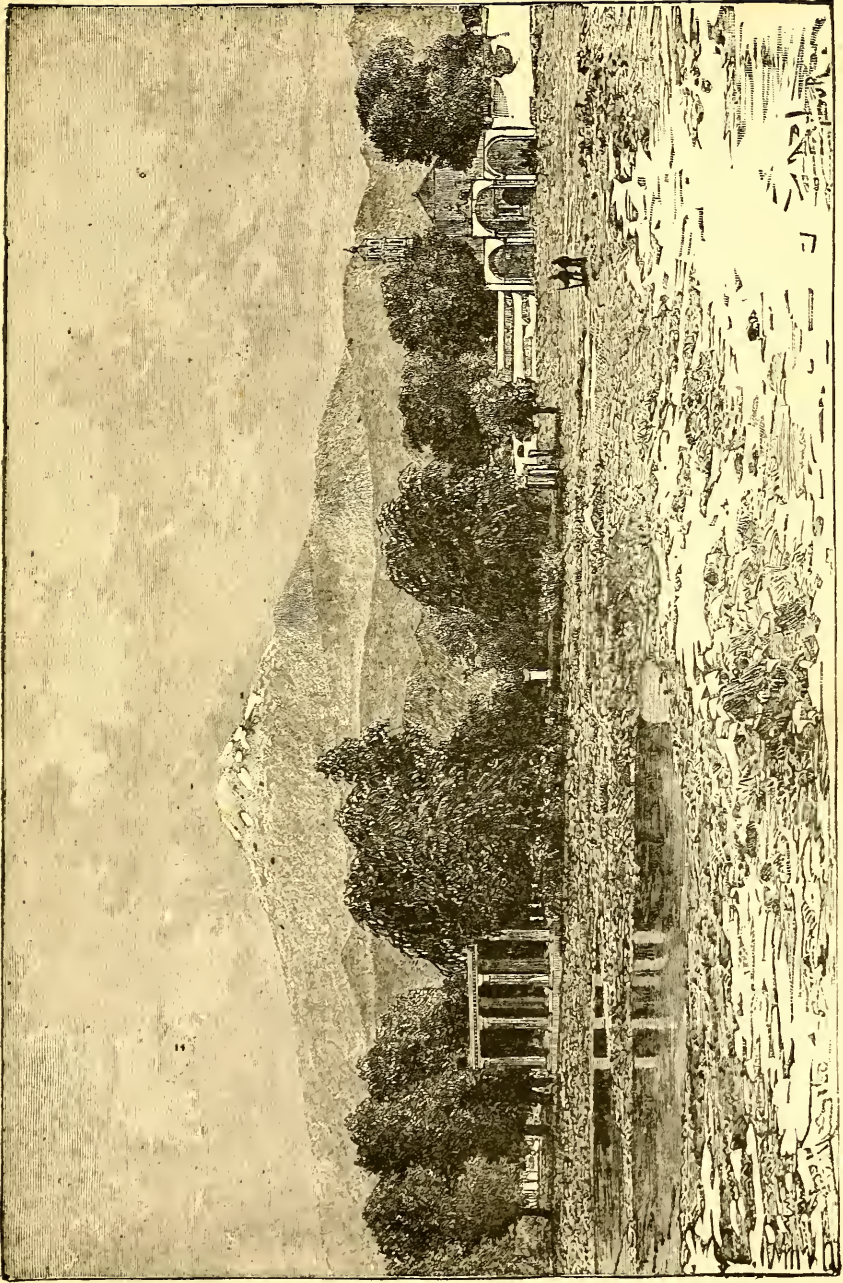
CHAPTER II.

A MAN-HUNT IN THE AZTEC CAPITAL.

THE PROFESSOR IN HIDING.—A SECRET TO BE SHARED WITH THE READER.—CLIMBING UP POPOCATEPETL.—THE DOCTOR'S ADVENTURE.—TAKING CARE OF A TENDER-FOOT.—A NEW CURE FOR DRUNKENNESS.—REFUSING TO SET UP THE DRINKS.—MONTEREY AND BUENA VISTA.—PADRE FLORES'S BONANZA.—MILLIONS OF SILVER MUSH.—THE CALIFORNIAN AND THE ENGLISH TOURISTS.



HAT was a weary week we had, the Doctor and I, hunting the Professor out of his hiding-place in the city of Mexico. We knew he was somewhere in the city, for I had bought a ticket for him nearly a month previous, and had turned his nose in this direction. In fact, I had seen him aboard the steamer at New York, and had arranged for his every comfort. Those of my readers who have made our acquaintance in other books of the "Knockabout" series are already acquainted with the Professor's peculiarities. They know him for a student and an antiquarian, with a vast fund of information on special topics, but destitute of that valuable commodity, common-sense, to a great degree. As his firm friend for many years, and as one who could appreciate his real worth, I have always sought to shield him from the hardships of the world, and to enable him to pursue his special line of investigation without interruption. I will confess he has often tried my patience to its utmost limits; and his failure to put in an appearance at our rendezvous at the appointed time was the last straw necessary to break the back



POPOCATEPETL FROM AMECAMECA.

of my indulgence. I should have abandoned the search altogether, had it not been for the fact that this time the recreant Professor was absolutely essential to the success of the scheme that had brought the Doctor and myself to Mexico. What that scheme was, will be related in due course, perhaps in the next chapter. Meanwhile the Doctor and I hired rooms on the Colle del Espiritu Santo, where we had a great roof-top all to ourselves, and possessed our souls in patience. We projected trips to the various points of interest around the valley, and even climbed to the peak of Popocatepetl, the great volcano, three miles high, that keeps watch and ward over the table-land of Mexico. It is the highest volcano on the North American Continent, and not many Americans have climbed it. It was a great feat, however, and we were rather tired for several days after. The Doctor parodied that celebrated saying about the doings of Peter Piper, or, rather, he made an addition to it, as follows: "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers on the peak of Popocatepetl. Where's the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked upon the peak of Popocatepetl?" and he challenged any resident of the city to repeat it rapidly without tripping. He said he was going to get his amendment copyrighted; but I don't think he went that far with his nonsense, and has probably forgotten it long since.

I have narrated my own experience *en route* to Mexico; but it seemed that the Doctor likewise had a little adventure, which he related to me one evening as we were sitting on the parapet of the *azotea*, or roof-top.

"It was at Piedras, on the Rio Grande, I thought I would stop off for a night for a rest. The train was due at midnight, but was twenty minutes late; and it hardly pulled into the station before it was off again, leaving a stream of sparks to mark its trail through the darkness. I was the only passenger left at Piedras; and when I reached the station I found there was nobody there but the sleepy

telegraph-operator. Of this operator, who was also ticket-agent, baggage-smasher, and switch-tender, I inquired the way to the nearest hotel.

“‘Hotel!’ he repeated, in apparent surprise, ‘there ain’t no such affair in this here place. Piedras ain’t reached that level yit. There’s a shanty there, over yander, where they put up miners and prospecters sometimes; but it’s a pretty tough place for a tenderfoot. Here’s the proprietor, though; he’ll take care of you. Here, Bob, here’s a tenderfoot wants lodgin’.’

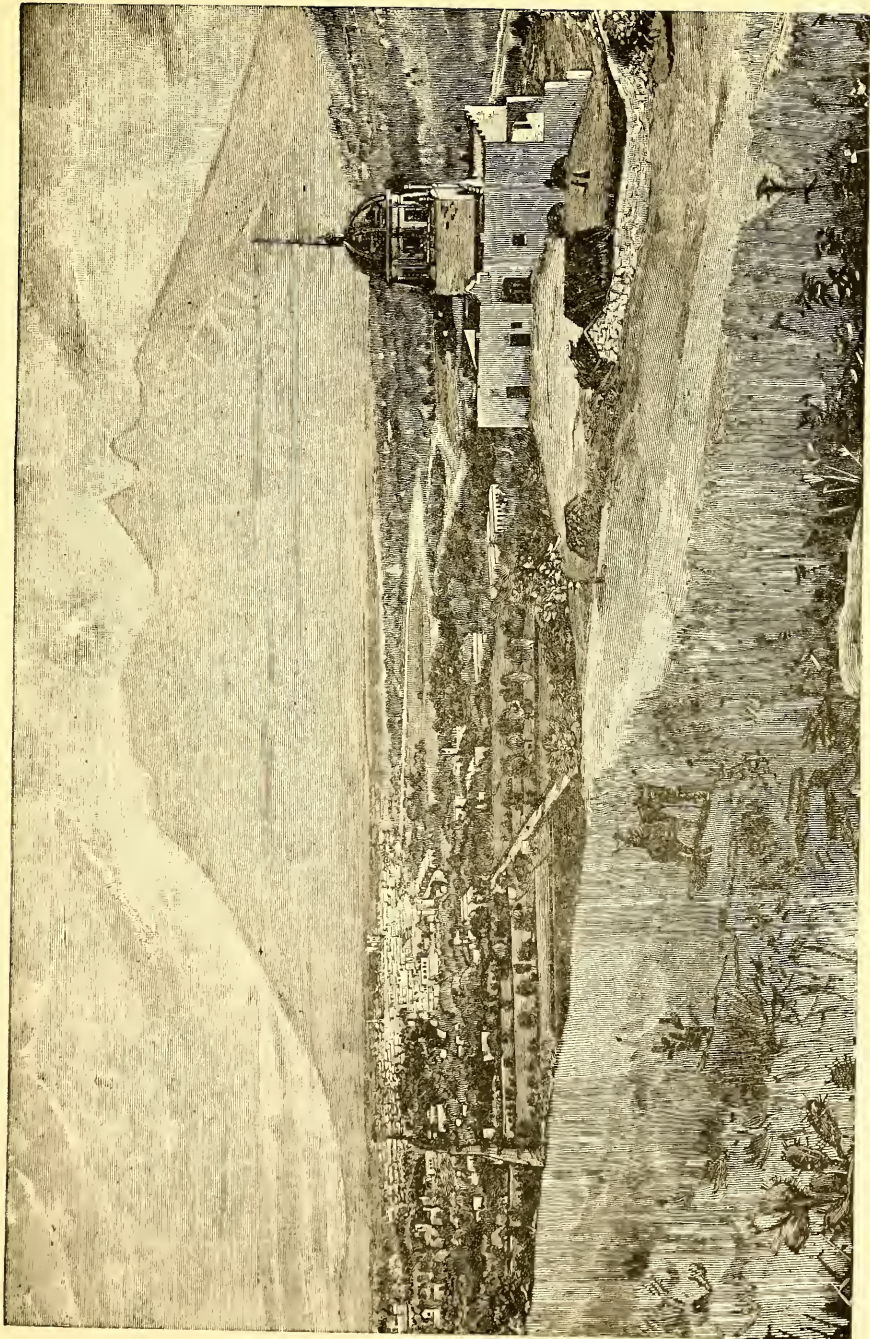
“‘All right,’ said a rough-looking individual, who lounged up on the platform with a lantern in his hand; ‘jest foller me, Mister, an’ I’ll pervide fer yer.’

“Accepting the situation, although I did n’t like the looks of it, I followed my guide into a rough shanty of pine boards. The whole lower floor was occupied as a bar-room, in which, even at that late hour, half-a-dozen men sat smoking and drinking. They looked up inquiringly as we entered, but did n’t manifest any surprise; and four of them resumed their card-playing, while two others shuffled up to the bar, and asked me if I did n’t want horses next day or the day after,—for it was pretty well understood in that embryo town that nobody from the outside world ever lingered longer than he had to. I thought I might want horses next morning; but I did n’t want to bargain with those red-nosed and shaggy-haired applicants in their then doubtful condition; so I turned to the ‘hotel’-keeper with a request to be shown to my room.

“‘Shown ter yer room!’ leered one of the red-eyed brutes in my face; ‘there ain’t much showin’ about it. Ye jest climb that ther’ ladder, an’ crawl keerfully over the seven sleepers stretched out on the boards, an’ take the fust corner with a sheet in front of it.’

“‘Oh, shet up, Jake Thomas!’ growled the landlord; ‘this man’s here fer a rest, an’ s’long’s he’s under my roof, he’s got to be treated squar’, an’ don’t yer forgit it!’

“‘Well, he might set up the drinks fer the crowd,’ whined the red-eyed man; ‘ther’ ain’t nothin’ mean about that, is ther’?’



MAIN PLAZA.

MONTEREY.

BISHOP'S PALACE.

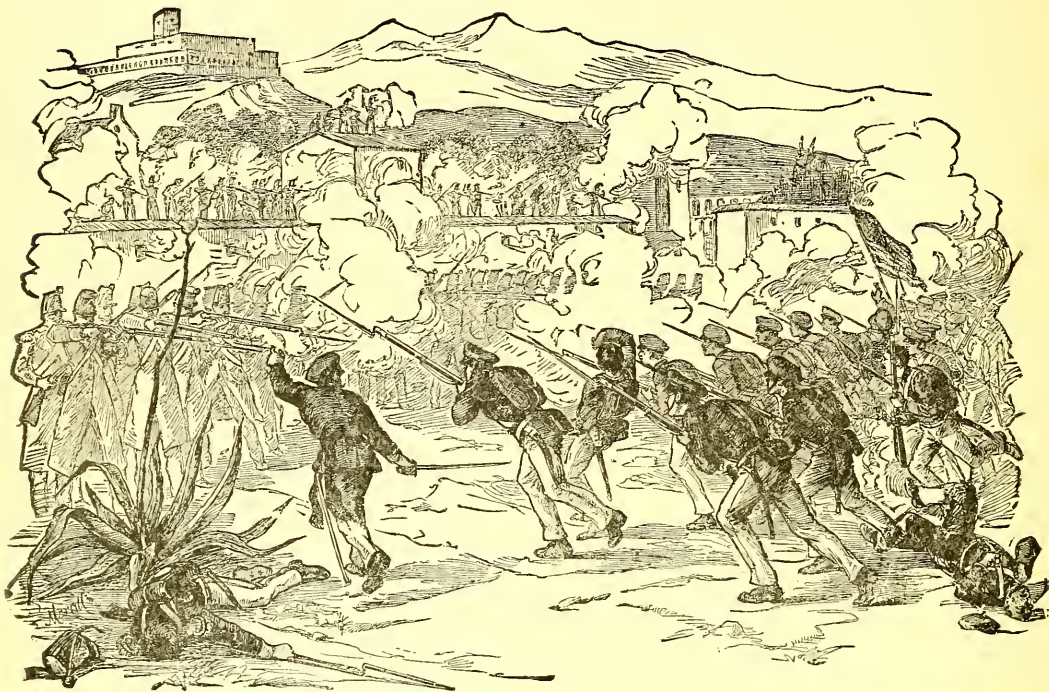
“Look here, Jake; this ere’s “Travellers’ Rest,” beds at low figgers, an’ drinks fer them that pays fer ’em. Ef it’s ag’in this gen’leman’s principles to drink, thar’ ain’t nobody goin’ ter fo’ce him to. Nor he ain’t goin’ ter set up for the crowd, either, ’less he wants ter do it.’

“‘I’ve no objection to treating,’ said I, looking the red-eyed man square in the face; ‘but I don’t believe in intoxicants, and I won’t help their sale. But if the gentlemen present will take a good warm supper with me, with tea or coffee, I invite them all.’

“‘Wall, now, that’s the talk. He’s a brick; I’ll fight the man thet says he ain’t. He’s got principles, an’ he sticks to ’em,’ were some of the exclamations that greeted me. They all came up and shook hands with me, and after a’ while we sat down to a good square meal. I tell you, my boy, I did enjoy that supper; not only because I was hungry myself, but because I felt I was doing good temperance work at the same time. All those men were hungry; they had half starved themselves to buy drink, and they enjoyed the meal as much as I did. It’s the true way, I believe, to put an end to the rum-shops; to furnish the drunkards with good food and light drinks at night, when they are seeking stimulants, which half the time are craved because their bodies are weak. The saying that the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach is more nearly true than most people believe; and when the temperance people have elevated this into an axiom, they will have accomplished half their work. Those men were my friends, all of them; and as soon as I had crawled up the ladder to my quarters they all ‘turned in’ themselves, and so far as they were concerned the night was quiet.

“But, unfortunately, these were n’t the only ruffians in Piedras. In the room with me was a drunken man who seemed suffering from tremens, who flapped his arms wildly about, knocking the bottle that served as a candlestick off the table, and who was cursing and singing all night long. I lay down on the board called my bed, with my clothes on, and tried to sleep.

“Soon I heard the report of a pistol; then another and another, in rapid succession; and a bullet came through the side of the house, between me and the drunken man, and lodged in a beam. I realized then that my surroundings were n't very pleasant, I assure you; but I could n't get away from them, so I pulled my revolver out of my satchel, placed it under my head, and tried to sleep. More pistol-



BATTLE OF MONTEREY, MEXICAN WAR.

shots, shouting, swearing, and a great commotion outside, kept up for two hours or more; then all was quiet, and finally I fell asleep. When I went down in the morning, I almost dreaded to go outside the door, fully expecting to see at least a dozen corpses on the ground. I ventured to ask the landlord what the row was about, at last; and he said, —

“ ‘What row? Oh, yes; the little poppin’ after you turned in. Why, a couple of bull-punchers came in from the ranch, filled up, an’ then jest locked arms an’ went araound shootin’ at everybody an’ everything generally. There they be now, sleepin’ peacefully under that fence.’

“ ‘And nobody hurt?’

“ ‘Hurt! of course there ain’t. Thet kind of cattle can’t hit anything when they’re drunk.’

“ I kept my own counsel, but made up my mind not to tax the hospitality of the ‘Travellers’ Rest’ any more that night. When the train rattled out again, at midnight, your friend the Doctor was one of the passengers, bound for the city of Monterey.”

“ Were there no other adventures by the way?”

“ No, hardly; but I visited some historic places. Monterey itself, as you know, was an important strategic point during the Mexican war; and I visited Buena Vista, where Gen. Zach. Taylor gave Santa Anna such a tremendous thrashing. But I suppose the place that interested me most was the ancient mining district of Catorce. It was discovered as a mining district a little over a hundred years ago. Among the settlers attracted by the fame of its riches was a poor priest, the Padre Flores, who purchased for \$700 a mine then

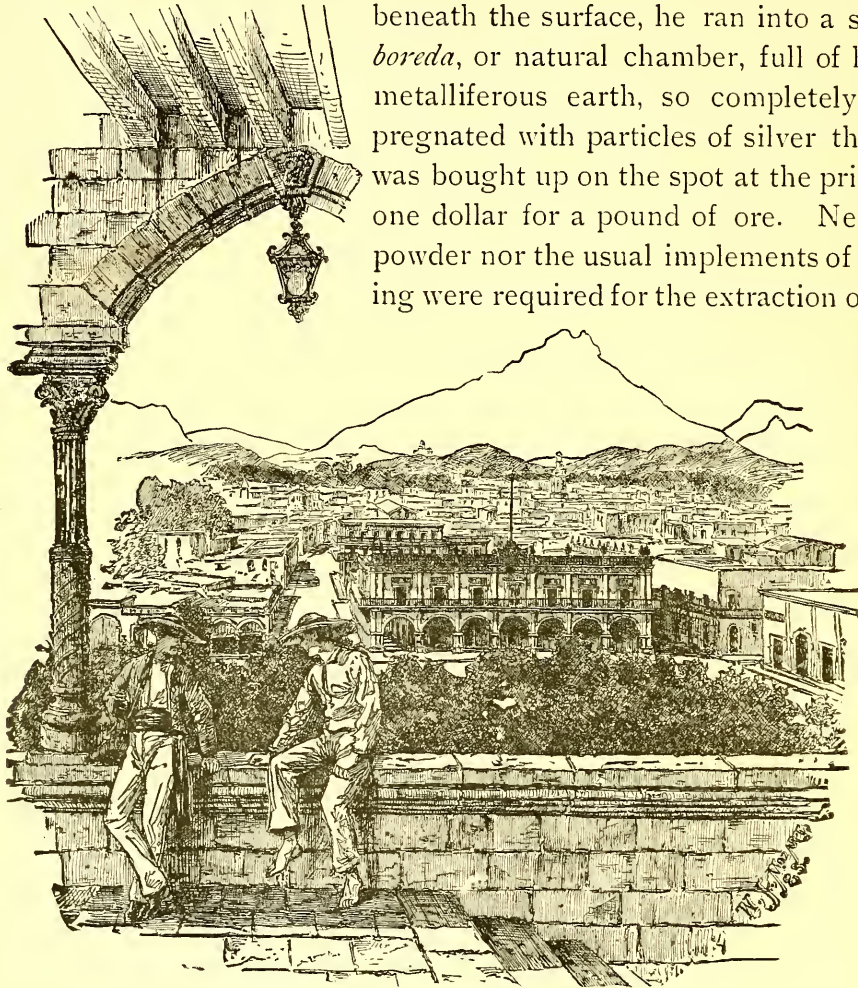


GEN. ZACHARY TAYLOR.



SANTA ANNA.

recently 'denounced' near the town, and began to work it. After following some little *hilitos*, or threads of silver, at about sixty feet beneath the surface, he ran into a small *boreda*, or natural chamber, full of loose metalliferous earth, so completely impregnated with particles of silver that it was bought up on the spot at the price of one dollar for a pound of ore. Neither powder nor the usual implements of mining were required for the extraction of the



THE PLAZA AND LA MITRA, MONTEREY.

earth, which was, in fact, nothing less than *silver mush*, which the Padre and his miners scooped out by the bucketful.

“But about sixty feet farther still they found a second *boreda*, full of the same metalliferous mush in yet greater quantity, and

which the miners scooped out with great horn spoons, carrying it to the surface in their *costales*, or miner's sacks. The Padre's *bonanza* commenced in 1781, and lasted two years, during which period he received for his share of the profits \$3,500,000. This was besides the shares of the miners and speculators, which probably raised the total amount to over \$6,000,000.

"Yes, there have been some big bonanzas in the Mexican mines, but they all occurred a hundred years ago and more. You remember the stories told us of the silver-mines of Batopilas, where the ore was dug out almost pure, with picks and bars; and of the rich yields of Pachuca, or Regla, where a poor muleteer made so many millions that he became Count of Regla, and when his children were baptized the whole procession marched from house to church over a pathway of silver bars."

The flowery days of Mexico's mines are past, and there are more fortunes lost than made in the working of them now. They tell you stories that remind one of the tales they tell, or are said to, in our Western country. Something *apropos* I found in a paper, the other day, which aptly hits off the traits of some of our English visitors, — their gullibility, especially. It is from a California paper.

As last Thursday's west-bound train passed Cape Horn, a large party of Englishmen, of the "direct-from-Lunnon" variety, crowded out on the platform and loudly expressed their dissatisfaction at the scenery, which was "not at all up to the guide-books, you know, by Jove!"

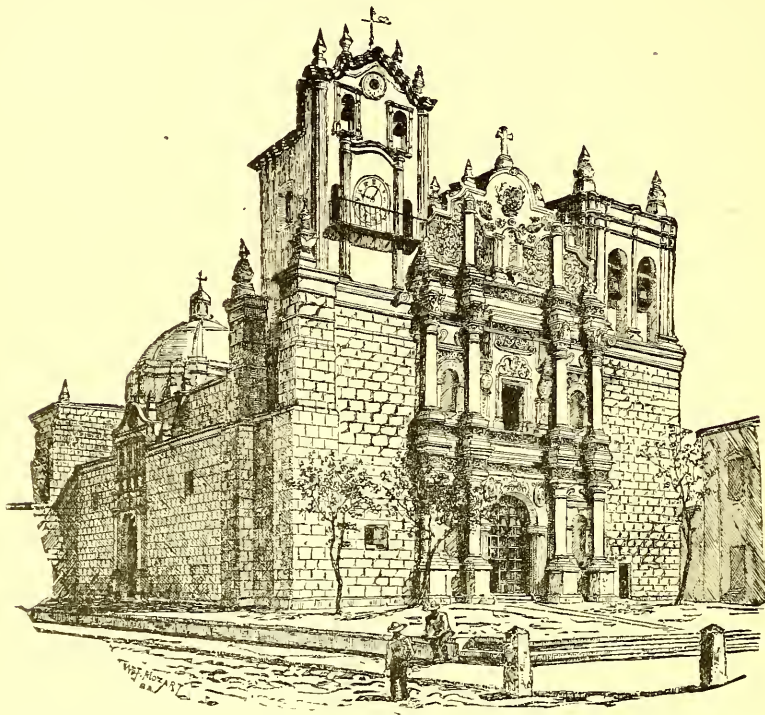
As they returned to their seats to enjoy a jolly good British all-around grumble, entirely oblivious of the indignant glances of the native passengers, a meek-looking, gentle-voiced journalist from 'Frisco approached from the other end of the car, and volunteered to give the tourists some valuable facts concerning the country. In an ingenuous and plausible way he answered their questions in a manner that reduced our critics from over the pond to a condition of profound amazement, not to say awe.

The next morning the journalist was informed by the reporter that a committee of gentlemen wished to see him in the baggage-car. As he entered the

latter, he found a dozen travellers, all natives and to the manner born, waiting to receive him, hat in hand. The spokesman advanced and said, —

“You are the party who was giving those Englishmen in the rear sleeper some points about the coast, I believe ?”

“I am, sir,” said the quill-driver, modestly.



THE CATHEDRAL, MONTEREY.

“You told them, I understand,” continued the chairman, “that Mount Shasta was seventy-six thousand feet high ?”

“The same.”

“You divulged the well-known fact that trains on this road were often detained four days by herds of buffalo, that they frequently have to use a Gatling gun on the cow-catcher to prevent the locomotive being pushed off the track by the grizzly bears ?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You further acquainted them with the circumstance that the Digger

Indians live to the average age of two hundred and one, and that the rarefaction of the air on the plains is such that an ordinary pin looks like a telegraph-pole at the distance of forty-two miles ? ”

“ I think I wedged that in,” responded the newspaper man.

“ And we are informed that they all made a memorandum of your statement that at the Palace Hotel on an average two waiters per day were shot by the guests for bringing cold soup, — eh ? ”

“ They did.”

“ And, finally, we believe you are the originator of that beautiful — that b-e-a-u-tiful-er — fact regarding that fallen redwood-tree up at Mariposa, — I mean the hollow one into which the six-horse stage drives, and comes out of a knot-hole one hundred and sixty-five feet farther along.”

“ I told them all about it.”

“ Just so ! just so ! ” said the committeeman, grasping the patron’s hand, and producing a well-filled buckskin bag ; “ and I am instructed by this committee of your fellow-countrymen to present you with this slight token of our appreciation of the noble manner in which you have vindicated the honor of our noble land.”

“ Gentlemen,” said the true Californian, much affected, “ I understand your feelings ; and although I blush to be rewarded for simply doing my duty, I accept the gift as a sacred trust to be devoted to the further exaltation of our common country.”

“ In what way ? ” asked the chairman, earnestly.

“ Why, I am going back to rope those fellows into a game of studhorse poker.” And as he left the car they gave him a cheer that nearly shook the train off the rails.

CHAPTER III.

AN AMERICAN HERO AND SOME MEXICAN GODS.

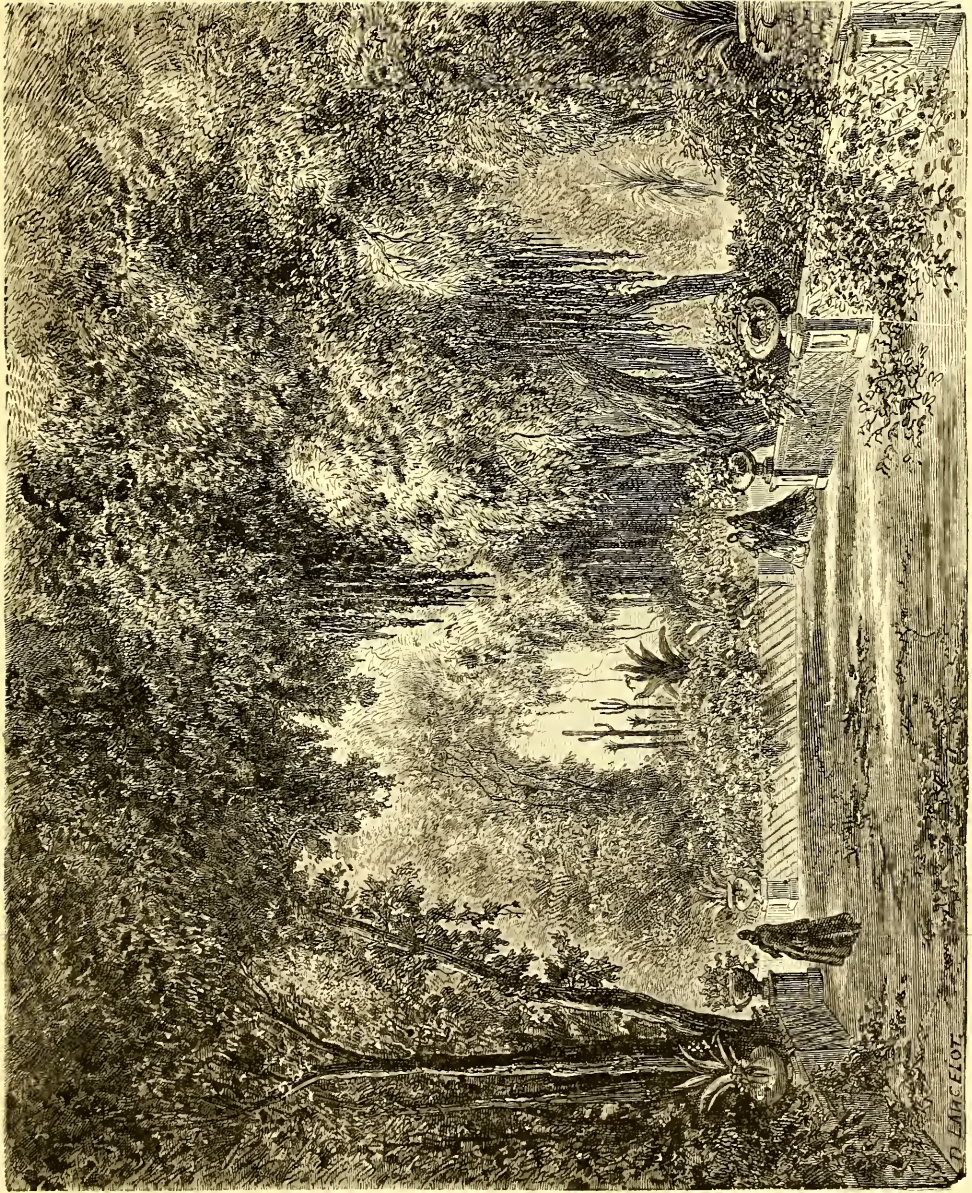
GENERAL GRANT'S VISIT TO MEXICO.—OUR FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE GENERAL.—A BANQUET TO NOTABLES.—A RAILWAY NEVER BUILT.—RAMBLES IN A MUSEUM.—LITTLE GODS AND BIG ONES.—AZTEC PICTURE-WRITING.—HOW THE INDIANS KEPT THEIR RECORDS.—SOME ABORIGINAL ARTISTS.—WE MAKE A GREAT DISCOVERY.—THE MAN IN THE CORNER.



HIS was not our first visit to Mexico, for we had been here ten years previously. I had the good fortune to be in Mexico during the third visit of General Grant, in 1881, and the additional good luck to attend a banquet given in his honor.

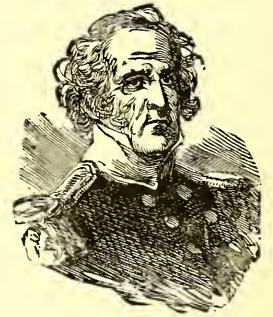
General Grant's first visit to Mexico was in 1846 or 1847, when he was plain Lieutenant Grant, of the American army of invasion, and before he had climbed the heights of fame; his second, just after his famous tour round the world; and his third, in the interests of some railroad affairs.

It is not my ambition to shine by reflected light, nor to shelter myself in the shadow of a great man; but although it may seem a work of supererogation to add to the fast accumulating reminiscences of General Grant, the few that I now recall seem to me not to have been already given. For Mexico our great chieftain seemed ever to have a peculiar liking, even affection. This may have been owing to the fact that he there won his first brevet and fought his first campaign, or it may have been owing to the reception accorded the



THE ALAMEDA, MEXICO.

American soldier by the common people of Mexico, who welcomed him as a savior rather than as a foe. For at the time of the American invasion ("el invasion Norte-Americano") Mexico was distracted by the sanguinary feuds of its own children, its various political leaders issuing pronunciamientos in every direction, and each party hesitated not to plunder the non-combatants. The arrival of the foreign foe generally put a stop to plunder and guerilla warfare, individuals and property were respected, and the Mexican citizens looked forward with apprehension to the time when the protecting arm of Winfield Scott should be withdrawn. Respect and admiration followed the American officer, of whatever rank, wherever he went, and the first families of the towns in which they were quartered united to do them honor. The Mexican women, whose hearts were ever on the side of justice, and could not but distinguish between Yankee valor and fairness and the pusillanimity of their own countrymen, were fairly captivated by *los gringos*, and showed them every attention the customs of their country would permit. To one acquainted with the Mexicans — the señors and señoritas, gentle of speech and nature, mild and loving — Whittier's eulogy in "The Angels of Buena Vista" will not seem unmerited: —

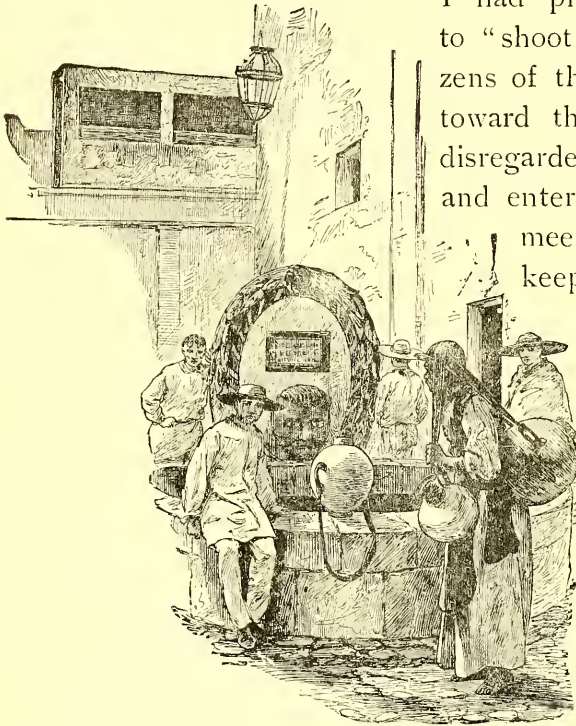


GEN. WINFIELD SCOTT.

"But the noble Mexic women still their holy task pursued,
Through that long dark night of sorrow, worn and faint and lacking food;
Over weak and suffering brothers, with a tender care they hung,
And the dying freemen blessed them in a strange and Northern tongue."

My first glimpse of Grant was in 1874. On my way home from Florida I stopped off at Washington. I had been for months hunting in the swamps of South Florida; and my hair, which I had allowed to grow long to protect my neck from mosquitoes, hung upon my shoulders; while the tan of a six months' residence in the "land of

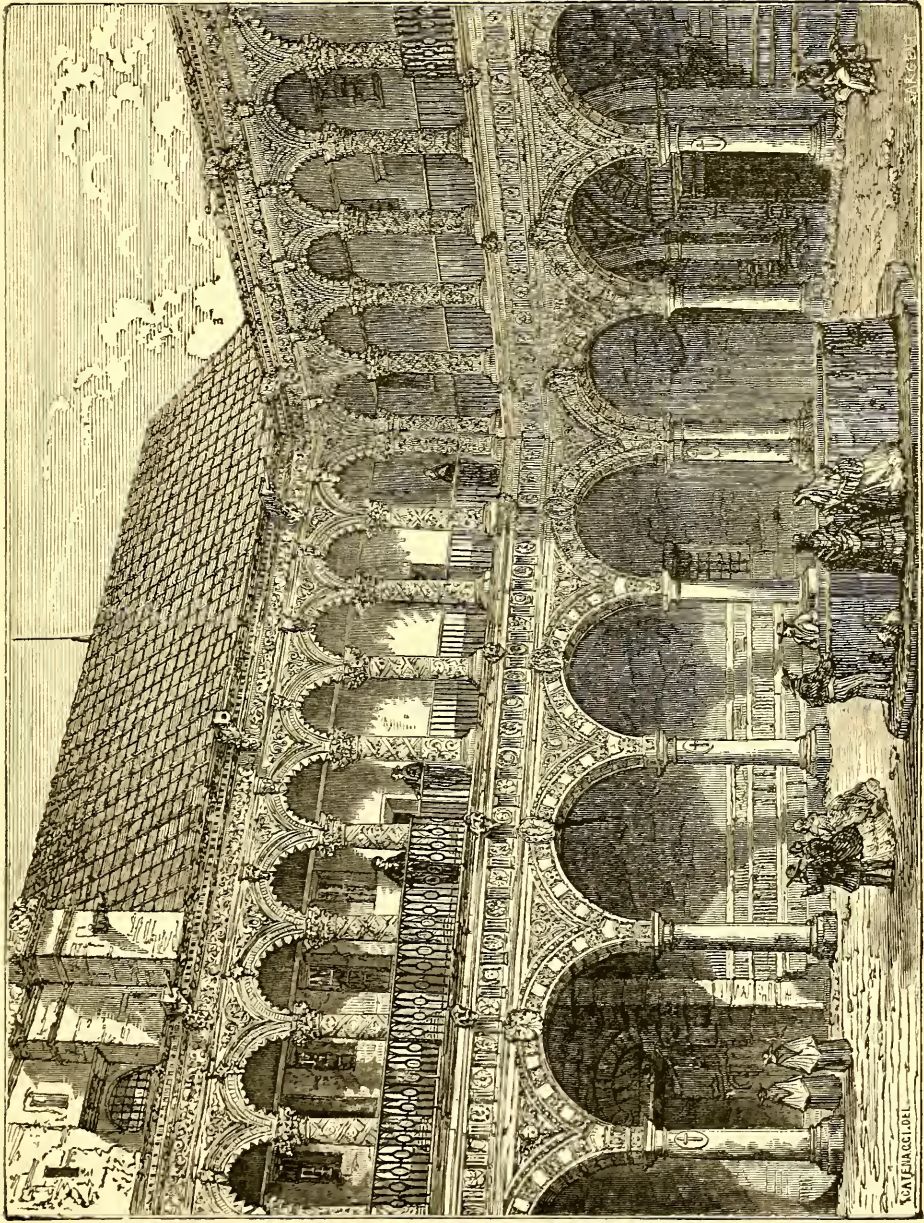
flowers" gave me nearly the color of an Indian. In Jacksonville I had purchased a palmetto hat, then first being manufactured, and known as "palmeeters." This I wore on my first visit to the White House, which I entered with the free and independent air of a backwoodsman who was not to be trammelled by the conventionalities of city life.



A MEXICAN FOUNTAIN.

I had previously been admonished to "shoot that hat," by various citizens of the capital, as I meandered toward the White House, but had disregarded their gratuitous advice, and entered its sacred portal, "palmeeter" in hand. The door-keeper inquired my business, and I told him I merely wished to see General Grant; and he, with ill-disguised suspicion written on his countenance, gave me a seat, with the information that the President would soon pass through the room. It was not long before he appeared, in company with Mrs. Grant and his daughter Nellie, then a

very pretty and graceful girl. Seeing me sitting by the window, with my long hair and bronzed face, giving me somewhat the appearance of an unpacifcated rebel, the President beckoned to an attendant, and, with a glance in my direction, whispered in his ear. I, of course, did not know what he said, but with the consciousness of one who yet had the moss of the woods still on his shoulders, I felt that his



CONVENT OF LA MERCED, CITY OF MEXICO.

W. H. WOODS DEL.

whispering referred to me. The person addressed nodded, and then fell back near me; while the Grant family proceeded to their carriage, in waiting at the door. I was impressed with the firm bearing and self-contained presence of the President; but a little incident at the carriage door left an indelible impression. Mrs. Grant had entered, and Nellie was about to follow, when the President touched her gently on the arm. She drew back apologetically, and gave way to a young lady with them, who, from her plain dress, I assumed to be a seamstress or some one employed by them, whom they were taking to her home. The unconscious performance of this lesson in politeness was with such quiet dignity that it seemed characteristic, and gave to the long-haired stranger sitting in the window an elevated opinion of the hero of Appomattox.

To return to Mexico. It was seven years later, in 1881, that I next saw the General's face. It was his third visit, and last. In the previous visit he had, unfortunately for himself, become interested in the development of Mexico, and had enlisted his name in behalf of a railroad to be projected into Southern Mexico, in extension of the lines from the North, which terminated at the capital. Señor Romero, an ardent, patriotic son of Mexico, was the chief promoter of the scheme. At least, he it was who seemed to have secured the confidence of Grant, and, on whose recommendation, probably, the General had embarked. It was currently reported about town that a great expedition was to be fitted out to explore the line of the proposed railway, and unusual facilities were to be afforded the General for an examination of the country. As this region was almost a *terra incognita* to Americans, I, for one, was wildly anxious to accompany the expedition, and hence sought an introduction to the great man, whose name figured so prominently as promoter of the scheme. This was accomplished through the kindness of my good friend, General Strother, Consul-General at Mexico, whose literary and artistic *nom de guerre* of "Porte Crayon" made him so famous a

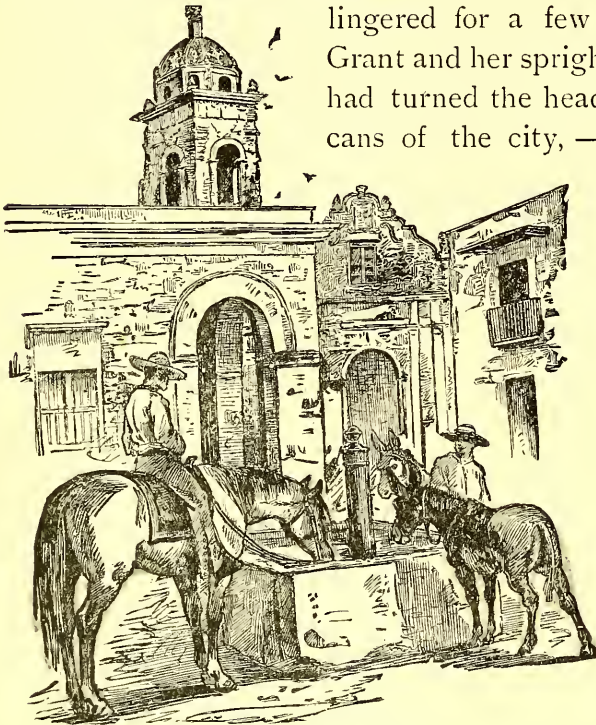
quarter of a century ago. With this genial and venerable man, who had fought under Grant in the Union army, I sought his apartments at the hotel. The General was not in when we called, but we

lingered for a few minutes' chat with Mrs. Grant and her sprightly niece, — whose charms had turned the heads of all the young Mexicans of the city, — and before we left the

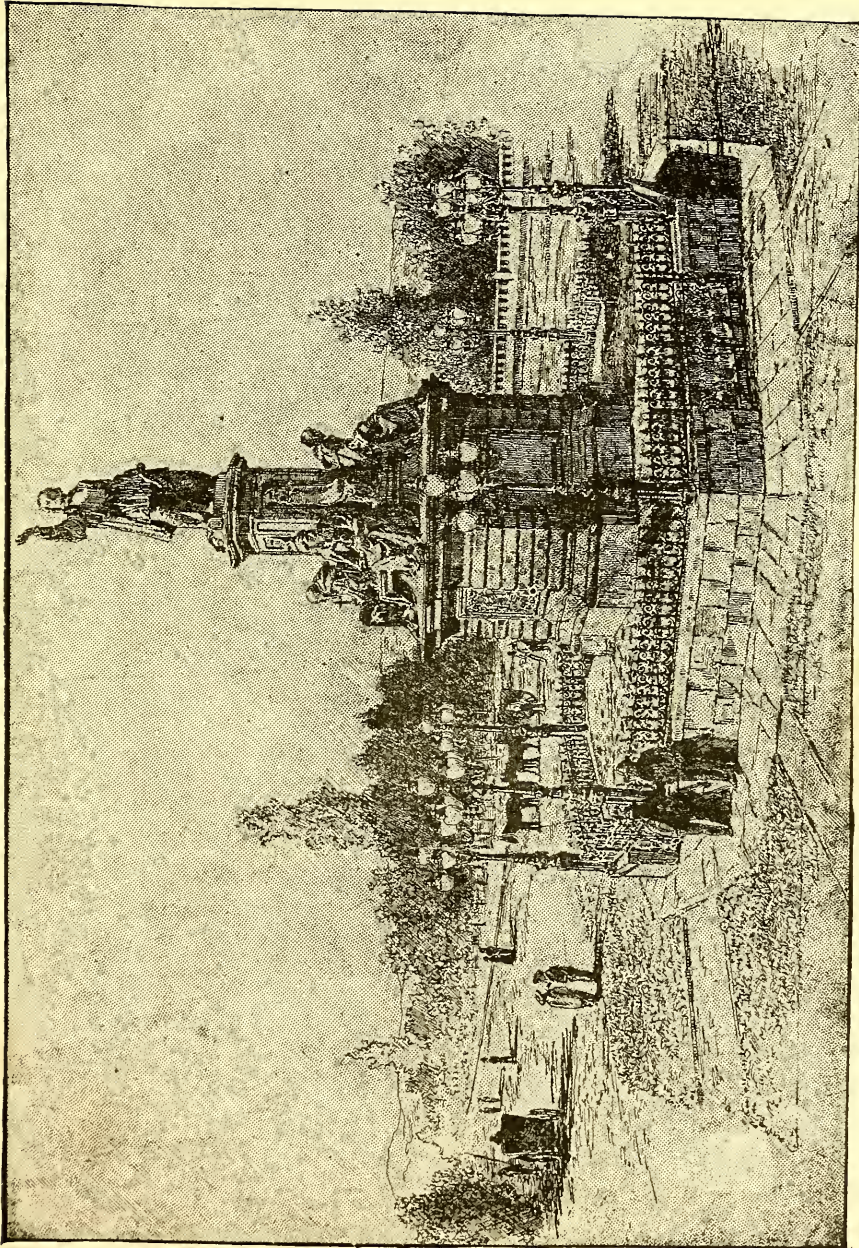
hero appeared. It was soon explained that I wished to accompany his party into the South, in order to obtain an accurate description of the country to be traversed by his road; but he, in a few well-chosen words, informed us that it was doubtful if he went on such an expedition at all.

We later learned that this projected exploration had originated in the minds of the rail-

way speculators merely, and was wholly gratuitous, so far as General Grant was concerned. In fact, he never viewed a single mile of that road, or of the region which it was to pass through, except such portion as might have been seen at or near the city of Puebla, which it was to enter. After a pleasant chat we left the apartment. I had then but just returned from an ascent of the volcano Popocatepetl, which was considered by my fellow-Americans something of a feat, and our conversation naturally turned upon that subject. The General remarked that he in 1847 had climbed the volcano; but Mrs. Grant



STREET SCENE IN MEXICO.



STATUE OF COLUMBUS, MEXICO.

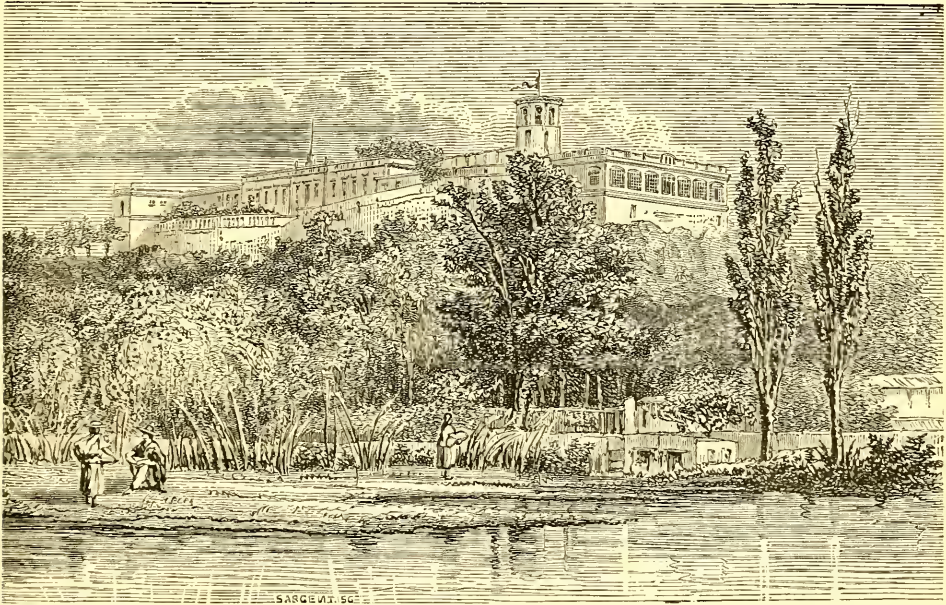
laughingly remarked that he did not reach the summit, as the air had been too thin for him. The General did not insist that he had accomplished the undertaking, but turned the conversation by remarking that the best view of the volcano, as he remembered it was to be obtained from the crest of the Sacro Monte, a hill in Amecameca, dedicated to sacred uses, adorned with chapels and shrines.

It was not long after this meeting that I again met the General at a banquet given him by the projectors of a railroad across Mexico called the "Topolobampo-Pacifico-Transcontinental Railway," which at that time had not laid rails enough to cover the length of its name. And I might, remark, in passing, that it has not more than doubled that distance yet, even at this date, ten years subsequent to the banquet, which took place in the Tivoli de San Cosme, in the city's suburb. The Tivoli is a sort of Mexican beer garden, but with a dining-hall attached, in which parties can dine or lunch other than *al fresco*. In the large hall, which was tastefully decorated for the occasion, tables were spread for a large party. Besides the General and his party, — which included his wife and niece, and one of his sons and his wife, — there were invited all of the prominent Americans of the city, as well as the leading Mexicans. The *ménu* was a mixture of French and Spanish, both in names and dishes, and which I still retain as a souvenir of that occasion, comprised nearly everything desirable to be obtained in Mexico, with the choicest liquors of two continents. The after-dinner speeches were excellent, and took their tenor from the few remarks of the General, who, having been introduced by the master of ceremonies, a young and enterprising Corko-Bostonian, who regulated the municipal affairs of Boston, but was now absent on sick-leave, said that he had no doubt the enterprise was one likely to prove beneficial to Mexico and the world at large, etc., and sat down amid great applause. As he concluded his speech, he nodded to the railroad man at the other end of the table, signifying that he had (as he

looked at it) done all that was expected of him; and that man immediately arose and spoke. Carried away by the prospective success of the scheme, this particular railroad-man had been conjuring with the *bedidos nacionales* — or, in other words, mixed drinks — of Mexico, and had gazed frequently at the wine when it was red in the cup. As a consequence, he got mixed up on the topography and geographical names of the country; and when he came to speak of the title of the particular enterprise he was concerned in, he forgot it entirely. After mentioning that the name of Grant was already pretty bright, through the achievements of its illustrious owner, he said that it would derive additional lustre from its connection with this gigantic enterprise, the Pacifico-Popocatepetl railroad. He then sat down, evidently in doubt whether he had made a deep impression or forgotten something of importance. His friends rallied to retrieve the error; but the best speech of the occasion was made by the agent of a rival enterprise, controlled by the great Californians.

A great deal has been said about the convivial habits of General Grant, and more about his habitual use of intoxicants. It has now been settled forever that he was one of the most temperate of men, both in eating and drinking; but at that time many of us were in doubt, and I watched him with curiosity that day at the feast. I noted that he ate very sparingly, and that his wine-glass remained inverted throughout the afternoon, and that he declined several offers of liquor as it was passed round. But the boys, engineers principally, then numerous in the city of Mexico, used to assert that he indulged now and then in the milder beverages. There was one restaurant especially favored by Americans and often patronized by the General. One day, as he was seated at a table in conversation, some one asked him if he could speak Spanish. "Certainly," he answered. "Mozo! una botella de corveza!" (Waiter! a bottle of beer!) But, if we may believe his friends, his knowledge of Spanish

did not extend much beyond this. It was a current joke in Mexico, when I was there, the year following his second visit, that one of the crowd gathered to receive him shouted out in Spanish, "Death to Grant!" and he, taking it as a compliment, rose in his carriage and lifted his hat. Another anecdote that used to tickle the Mexicans mightily was regarding an inscription that had been attached to a

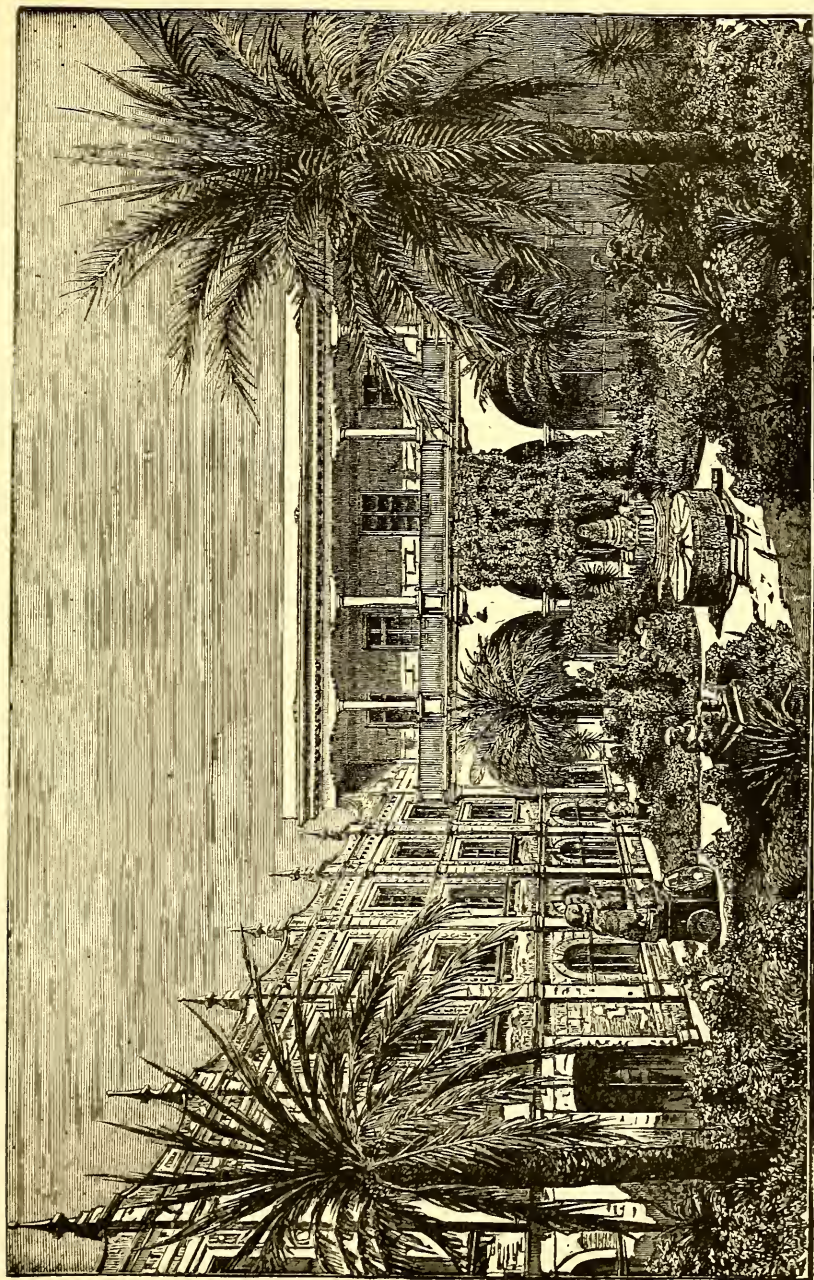


CASTLE OF CHAPULTEPEC.

large flag stretched across the street he was to pass through. It was to be "Welcome" in English; but the printer, either through design or ignorance, omitted the *w*, so that it read "El Comé" (He Eats). *Comer* is the infinitive "to eat;" *comé*, the present indicative. This joke spread like wildfire; and the poor peon who had been taxed for the festivities murmured sullenly: "Es verdad, el comé mucho!" (That is true; he eats a great deal), — "eats a heap," as they say in the South.

Although several points in Mexico are identified with Grant, — Buena Vista, Cerro Gordo, Contreras, Molino del Rey, Chapultepec, — yet those most persistently sought out in the future will be Chapultepec and Molino del Rey; for it was during the engagements at these places that he won his spurs, — was promoted for bravery on the field. On the occasion of his second visit, as the honored guest of Mexico, he was quartered in that immense building known as the “Mineria,” or School of Mines, not far from the centre of the city. This structure, which cost originally \$1,500,000, is rapidly falling into decay; but so long as it lasts, it will be visited by Americans anxious to view this relic of the vice-royal period, rendered more interesting to them through its connection with America’s greatest chieftain.

Most of our time was spent in the Mexican Museum, when we were in the city; for it is one of the most interesting places on the continent. We never tired of looking at the Mexican gods, big and little, which were scattered about in endless profusion. There was Teotle, the greatest god of all; Tezcatlipoca, or the Shining Mirror; and Tlaloc, the God of Storms, who was supposed to dwell in the crater of the volcano Popocatepetl. It is said that in ancient times each Mexican noble had half-a-dozen little gods in his house at once, and an old Spanish bishop once destroyed twenty thousand of these deities in a single day. You can see there the feather-covered shield once used by Montezuma, arrow-heads and spear-head of obsidian; but the most valuable things there are the celebrated picture-writings of the Aztecs, painted on deer-skin and paper made of the Mexican maguey. One of these specimens is over sixty feet long, and folded in leaves like a great clumsy book. The historians tell us that the most valuable of the Aztec manuscripts were destroyed by the first Bishop of Mexico; but some of great importance yet remain here, and in some other museums of Europe. The drawings herewith are reproductions of veritable picture-writings, fac-similes in miniature, except



THE COURT OF THE MUSEUM.

that we cannot give the coloring. In the original the first figure was made on paper made from the maguey, or Mexican agave, and is of great antiquity. It shows the course of Aztec migration, from the earliest annals to the foundation of the Empire of Tezcoco; and according to the picture and their traditions, the Aztecs came out of the far Northwest about a thousand years ago, and descended into Mexico. At first they lived in caves, and during their nomadic existence subsisted entirely by the chase,



FIG. 1.

as shown in Figure 1. When they reached the Mexican valley, they camped on a hill which they called Chapoltepec, or the Hill of the Grasshopper; and this is shown in the picture-writing by its totem, a figure of a grasshopper perched on a hill.



FIG. 2.

On an island in the centre of Lake Tezcoco they laid the foundation of the City of the Eagle Cactus, because they saw there, as their priests had predicted, an eagle perched upon a cactus plant. Figure 4 was taken from the *Codex Mexicana*, a chronological painting setting forth the complete history of Mexico,

from the departure from Aztlan to the Conquest. It is said to be the fullest and most accurate record extant. It was painted by aboriginal artists, up to the period of the Conquest, and thence carried on by less experienced hands to near the end of the sixteenth century. The circles, enclosing dots and other figures, represent the years; there were but four names for the years in the Aztec calendar, as follows: *Acatl*, the reed; *Tecpatl*, the flint; *Calli*, the house; and *Tochtli*,



FIG. 3.

the rabbit. These years were arranged in indictions of thirteen, each year and each indiction beginning with a different number.

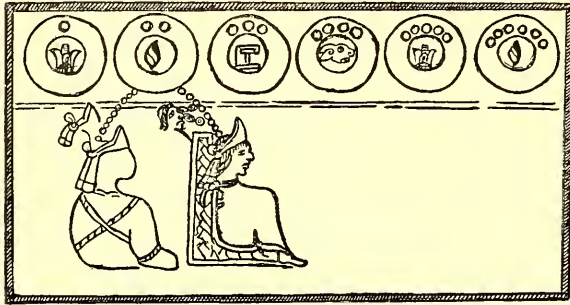


Fig 4.

The first one represented here is (1) *Acatl*, going on with (2) *Tecpatl*, (3) *Calli*, and (4) *Tochtli*; beginning the second series of four with (5) *Acatl*, etc., up to thirteen, when the next indiction began with (1) *Tecpatl*, the flint.

In the year (2) *Tecpatl* of this indiction, we see by the hieroglyph that the first Montezuma (called *Ilhuicamina*, or Archer of Heaven) died, as shown by the enwrapped figure of his corpse; and then succeeded Ahuitzotl, who is pictured seated upon his throne, his totem above his head.

In this manner the ancient Mexicans perpetuated the memory of their ancestors, and preserved a chronological record of events, by a system of combined hieroglyphs and arbitrary symbols as legible as it was ingenious.

But there, how dry and prosy I am getting! One would think it was the Professor writing, or rather talking, instead of your volatile friend the Historian.



CORTEZ.

The Professor, you will remember, was lost, — at least, we could not find him; when, as we were strolling through the Museum one afternoon, we saw the old recreant behind a pile of idols. He was securely

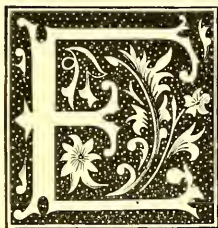
intrenched in a corner, with a breastwork of antiquities in front of him shoulder high. He merely looked up, as we approached, nodded absently, as though he had met us before that very day, instead of having kept us hunting for him for weeks, and then resumed his reading.

Peering over his breastwork, we saw that he was intent upon the translation of an old Spanish book, bound in vellum, and entitled "Cartas de Cortes" (Letters of Cortez), date 1522. He was so profoundly interested in his reading that he took no notice of us as we crept nearer and nearer, and did not look up until we jumped upon him and seized him by the shoulders.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TREASURE SYMBOLS OF THE AZTEC KING.

THE CLEW TO TREASURE-TROVE.—THE PROFESSOR AND HIS DEN; ALSO HIS TALE OF TROUBLE.—THE OLD, OLD BOOK,—TOWNS THAT PAID TRIBUTE TO MONTEZUMA,—GOLD, SILVER, FEATHERS, TIGER-SKINS AND MOTHER-OF-PEARL.—THE SCHEME UNFOLDED.—MONTEZUMA'S MONEY.—THE READER AS WISE AS THE WRITER.



WHEN then the Professor did not move, and we were so exasperated that we fairly shook him. What did he mean by such strange indifference to our anxiety on his account? Why had he been in hiding all this time, and why did n't he appear more like a civilized being and less like a miserable old stick?

Carefully placing a thumb at the place on the page he was reading, he at last responded. A strange light glimmered in his spectacles as he gazed up at us and said, —

“I can afford to receive your reproaches, for I have *found the clew!*”

“What! the clew to the treasure?”

“Nothing less than that, — the treasure of the Aztec King!”

“Then that was the reason for your hiding?”

“Yes; I felt that I must work in secret and carefully, not to excite suspicion, and I have purposely refrained from making my presence known. The director of the Museum is an old friend of mine, and he gave me a little room just off the inner court, where I have made a good use of my time.”



(1)

“And you are sure you have the key to the mystery?”

“Yes, sure; in two days we will start for the ancient mines.”

Now that he was a captive, the Professor yielded with a very good grace, and even conducted us to his den. It was a dismal den, indeed, lighted by only one window, the walls hung with spears, arrows, Indian shields, and many other warlike instruments. We seated ourselves, and awaited the story we knew the Professor had to tell us. We knew how slow and prosy he was, and prepared to pass several hours before the gist of the whole matter should



THE CAVE PERIOD (AZTEC PICTURE-WRITING).

be revealed. He began, as we knew he would, away back in the dim ages of antiquity, and traced the history of the Aztecs through all their wanderings, giving dates, and the opinions of historians, and historical references, until he had safely brought them into the valley of Mexico. Then he paused for breath, and I asked him what all that had to do with gold-hunting in Mexico; and he answered:—



(2)

“Well, I’ll tell you. It has everything to do with it, in bolstering up my assertion that I relied upon Aztec tradition and picture-writing to guide me to the mines. First, I have shown that there were Aztecs; then that they had traditions and native historians, who were preyed upon by foreigners; that their history has been considered of sufficient importance for historians of all nations to give their lives to it during nearly four centuries; and lastly, that there has been an acknowledged system of pictographic writing. And this, the kernel of the nut, I am about to crack! A little more patience, and I will get around to it.

“First, let me prove that the Mexicans were well provided with

precious metals. Let us accept the story of the vast amounts sent home to Spain as tribute from Montezuma, and the treasure that dazzled the eyes of the *conquistadores* at the capture of Aztlan. There is sufficient evidence to prove the truth of all these accounts.



The mountains of Mexico, says Clavigero, abound in ore of every kind. The Mexicans found gold in the countries of the Coahuixas, Miztecas, and Zapotecas, chiefly in the sands of rivers; silver from the mines of Tlachco, Tzompanco, and others. Of copper they had two sorts, — one hard for axes, instruments of war, etc.; the other soft, for basins and pots. Tin they got from the mines of Tlachco. Corn they had, of several sorts and colors; it was carried from America to Spain, and thence to the countries of Europe.

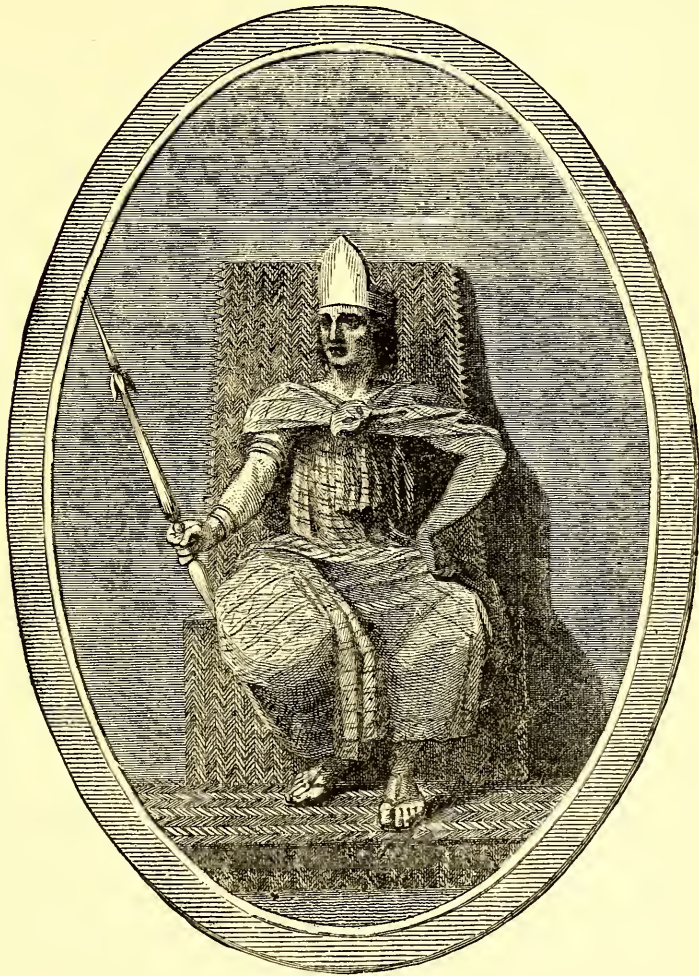
“Regarding the rich and expressive names of the Mexican vocabulary, there, for instance, was the *lozcaguauhtli*, or king of the *zopilotes* (buzzards). When the two species happen to meet about the same feast of carrion, the zopilote never eats till the king has satisfied himself. Then there is the *huitzitzilon*, or humming-bird, called by the Spaniards *chupamirto*. The *cent-zontli*, or many-voiced, is the delightful mocking-bird. Every word is expressive, comprehensive.



“Now, with this roundabout introductory, having husked (5) the nut and divested it of excessive layers, the kernel lies open to our view.

“In an old and musty library one day I found an ancient volume in vellum, containing an equally old and yellow map. This map was the work of ‘Domingo del Castillo, Piloto, fecit en Mevico, año del nacimiento de N. S., Jesu Cristo de MDXLI.’ It was further entitled: ‘Fragmentos de un Mapa de Tributos, o Cordillera de los Pueblos que los pagaban en que genio, en que cantidad, y en que tiempo, a el Emperador Montezuma, en su gentilidad’ (a map of tribute, or a chain of towns that have paid tribute to Montezuma, with the char-

acter and quality of the tribute, expressed by tribute-symbols, and the date, of payment).



MONTEZUMA.

“ This tribute-map is on very thick paper of the *mcttl*, or *magney*, called *pita* in Spanish.

“ The Indians (the forgotten author goes on to explain), in their ignorant paganism, did not know how to write; and their method

was to draw or paint that which they wished to express in various characters or figures.

"If war was to be represented, it was by painting streams of blood, signifying destruction. Even the doctrine of Christianity it was necessary, at first, to teach by means of characters or pictographs. The mode of writing or picturing of the Indians was to begin at the bottom and proceed upward; the first figure in a sheet, on this plan, is the principal pueblo, capital of the province, dominating those on the border, and which are subject to its jurisdiction.



(6)



(3)

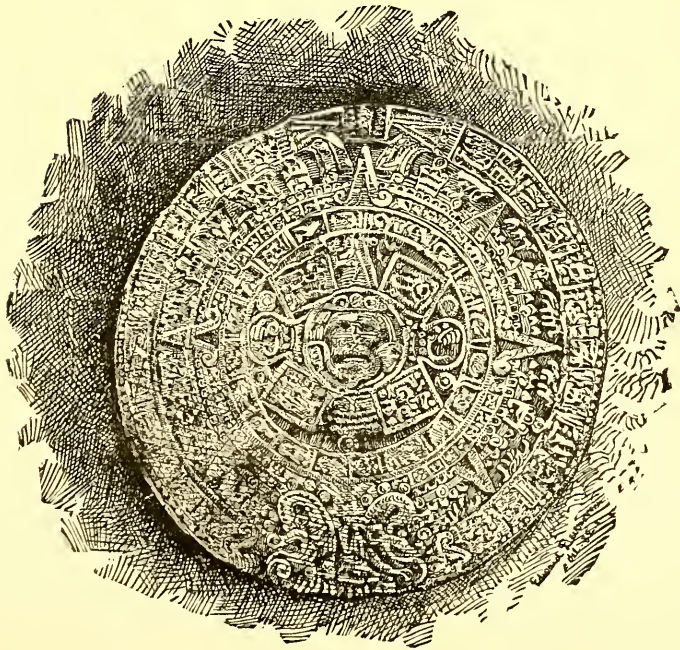
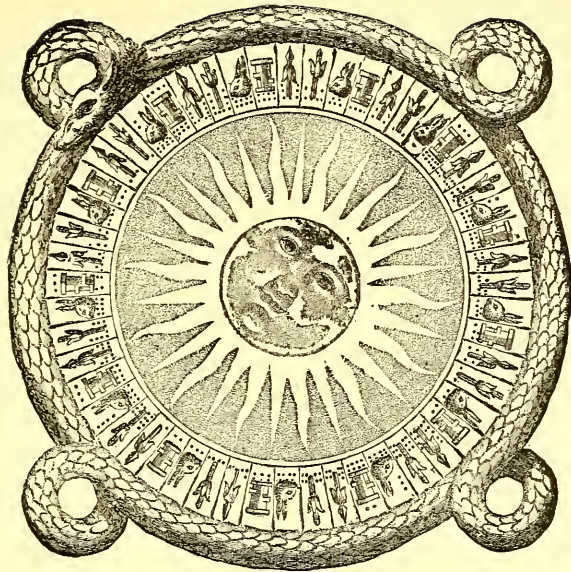
"The original of the pictographs collected by Don Lorenzo Boturini were printed in colors. The military orders were distinguished by their different dress; the highest (the prince) wore plumes of eagle feathers; another a lion (puma) skin; another an ocelot

(tiger) skin, etc.

"It seems quite incredible,—the great number of mantles, garments, etc., contributed annually by the Pueblos to adorn the dependants at the palace of Montezuma.

"The principal towns and cities shown in this map are as follows:

- I. Tlatelulco, a suburb of Mexico, in which was a great temple.
- II. Tepetlatlalco, which contributed corn, cotton cloth, and garments.
- III. Acolman, maize, mantles, and also garments.
- IV. Cuernavaca, maize, cotton, paper, gourd cups, etc.
- V. Huastepec, the same.
- VI. Quaulitiltan, palm-mats, cotton, and maize.
- VII. Huipuxtla, maize and cotton cloth.
- VIII. Atotonilco, the same.
- IX. Xilotepec, cotton, mantles, frijoles or Mexican beans.
- X. Quahuacan, maize, fine woods, cotton, etc.
- XI. Toluca, the same.
- XII. Ocuila, salt, maize, and cotton.
- XIII. Malinalco, cotton and maize.
- XIV. Tlachco, virgin honey and aromatic gums.
- XV. Tepequaquilco, copal and precious stones (!).



AZTEC CALENDAR AND CYCLE.

- XVI. Huanthla, cacao, fajoles.
 XVII. Tlalpan, bars of gold (!).
 XVIII. Tlacoquantitlan, arnatto, metal.
 XIX. Chalco, maize and mantles.
 XX. Tepeaca, fine stones, aromatic gums,
 XXI. Coahuataca, or Oaxaca, gold and cochineal.
 XXII. Coyaltapan, gold, cochineal, etc.
 XXIII. Zoconusco, cacao, fine stones, birds, tiger-skins, and feathers.
 XXIV. Quatochco, cacao.
 XXV. Cotaxtla, precious stones, cacao.
 XXVI. Tlapacoya, clothing, mantles.
 XXVII. Tlanuquitepec, liquid amber.
 XXVIII. Tuxpa, precious stones.
 XXIX. Axtla, cotton, breech-clouts, etc.
 XXX. Cotton, chile and clothing.

“ This chain, or *cordillera*, is incomplete; but it shows the vast amount poured annually into the Aztec capital, as tribute, by Montezuma’s subjects. Picture, if you can, the long stream of Indians from every part of Mexico subjugated to the Aztecs, plodding their weary way toward Aztlan. That this tribute-book accurately shows the article contributed is proven by the fact that the provinces herein mentioned produce the same things to-day, and are still known by their native names.



(9)



(8)

“ Now, as to the tribute itself, and the symbols, or totems, of the towns :—

(1) Is the pictograph of “ Aztlan [or Atlan] lugar de Agua,” or “ Place-by-the-water-side ;” Mexico itself. Fire and water are here portrayed, indicating the lakes Texcuco, Xochimilco, etc., near which it lay, and the proximity of the great volcano, Popocatepetl, the fire-mountain. Note the name *Atlan*, and the similarity of those exotic words in our language, *Atlantic* (ocean), *Atlan-tis* (the traditional country said to lie beneath the waves of the ocean). A whole volume of speculation is here suggested, as to the connection of the people who founded Aztlan with those semi-mythical Atlantides! .



(10)

(2) Is the token of Quaulititlan, the district that contributed palm-mats and cotton. To this day its products are similar !

(3) Tepequaquilco, which gave its stores of copal and fine stones.

(4) Xilotepec, bearing the same name to-day.

(5) Zoconusco, with its figure of the cactus.

(6) Is a pot of honey, contributed from a place famous for its honey-pots and Xicaras. The flag indicates the number of pots sent as tribute, always standing for the number forty.



(7) Is a string of *chalchihuitls*, or jade stones, resembling emerald, and highly prized by the Mexicans as one of their most precious products.

(11) (8) Represents pieces of wood, eight hundred in number, as we know by the feather, that being the symbol for eight hundred.

(9) Here we have two figures, — one representing a shell, and the other a flat bar. The shell indicates mother-of pearl, and the feather the number brought in. It is expressed in Aztec as follows:—

Ontzontli Tepachtce, in Spanish eight hundred *conchas de nacar*, or eight hundred shells of mother-of-pearl.

The flat bar represents gold; expressed in Aztec, *Teocuitlatl coztic matlaactli*; in Spanish, *Diez barras de oro*, ten bars of gold.



(10) Cotton,— a bale of cotton, — eight hundred *algodon* (Spanish) or (Aztec) *Ontzontli cargas de tlama-malliyzcatl*. (12)

(11) Feathers, — *Ontzontli quetzalli*, eight hundred *plumas ricas verdes*, or eight hundred rich green plumes of the *quetzal*, the royal trogon of Guatemala, probably from Zoconusco.

(12) *Huypilli*, — a kind of garment still worn by the Indians. The Maya Indians of Yucatan still have the *huypilli*. The feather shows that eight hundred were sent as tribute.

(13) Military uniforms, — *Vestidos adornos militares* (Spanish). This is a good representation of the military uniform of the Aztec warrior; the grotesque casque, or helmet, the body-apparel, and a feather-ornamented shield.



(13)

(14) A measure of maize. Maize, or Indian corn, was doubtless indigenous in Mexico, and has been used there from time immemorial.

(15) *Ompoali Ocelotl-yeuatl*, or forty *pieles de tigres* (tiger-skins). The "tiger" of the Mexicans is the ocelot, or leopard-like animal that still prowls the forests of the *tierras calientes*, or hot lands, of the coast region.

“ Have I not proven my case, — that is, that there were among the Aztecs men who possessed a coherent system of hieroglyphics, or rather of ideographs; that Montezuma received vast tribute from many Indian tribes; that the record of those contributions is still extant; that you have had a fragment; that these tribute-symbols indicate the *locales* of those Indian treasures; that one may take them as a guide and go find those treasures for himself? That is the case I began trying to make out.”



(14)

The Professor paused, took off his spectacles and polished them carefully, and waited for his remarks to be approved.

The Doctor and I accorded our hearty approval. The secret had been a long while unfolding, and we were not even now sure we understood it. But we did understand that the Professor knew, or thought he knew, where Montezuma kept his treasure, and that he had asked us to join him in Mexico with the object in view of finding it.

And did we get this ancient treasure-trove?

That is something that will be revealed in due time; and if you will join us you shall share in our adventures, even though you do not in the treasures.



(15)

CHAPTER V.

ZTLAN TO ZAPOTLAN.

DON SANTOS, THE GUIDE. — ANCIENT FORTIFICATIONS. — SEAT OF THE ZAPOTEC KINGS. — THE CURA OF CUILAPAN. — DESERTED CONVENT. — GRAVE OF MALINCHE, MISTRESS OF CORTEZ. — GUERRERO, A MEXICAN PATRIOT. — A MOUND OF SKULLS. — VALE OF EJUTLA. — WHERE ALVARADO FOUGHT.

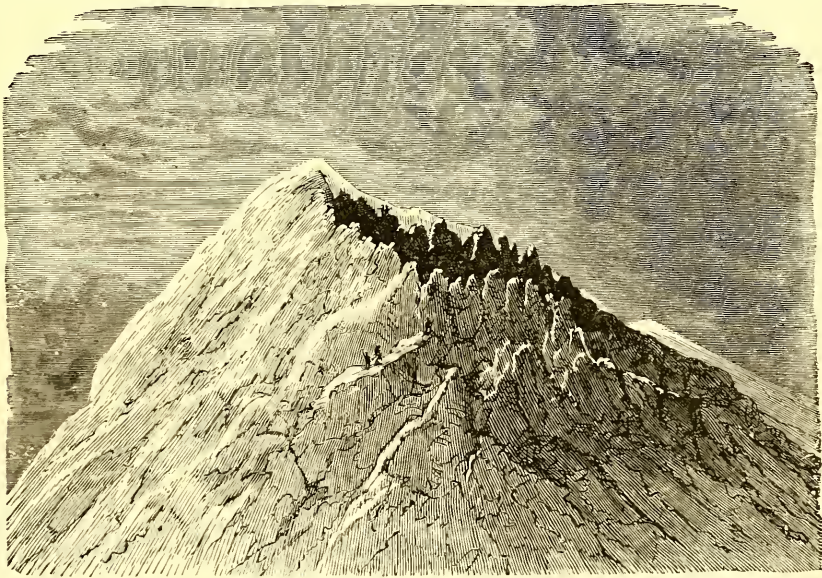


At last we were off. The Doctor and I did n't mind much where we were going, for we sniffed a good time in prospective, — weeks in the saddle; camp-fires in unexpected forests; and a misty lure of gold and silver mines, when other things should fail. Three days' travel due south from the line of the Mexican railway at a point where the volcano of Orizaba rises nearest it, brought us to the capital city of Oaxaca, the ancient Antequera. Oaxaca was once the seat of that famous tribe of Indians, the Zapotecs, whose civilization raised them to be equals of the Aztecs when at the zenith of their power. The Zapotecs comprise the greater portion of the population of the Indian city, and, in a wilder state, of the residents of the country. They dwell now chiefly in the hill-country, and are known as *Serranos*, or mountaineers, — unconquered freemen, who have never yet felt the yoke of bondage. Our chief the Professor had set out with the determination of wresting from these *Serranos* a secret, a sacredly kept tradition, which had been guarded by them with jealous care for three centuries and a half.

As we went along, he divulged to me further details of his researches. One day, at the noonday lunch, he gave me more par-

ticulars about the book which had given him the information that mainly guided us.

Sitting beneath the pines of that Southern slope, with an ardent sun beating through the pine-needles above and stamping upon the leaf-carpeted soil a varied pattern in flickering shadow, our chief produced his cherished volume. It was truly a treasure of itself, bound in antique vellum, and bore upon its back in faded letters of gold the words "Cartas de Cortes." "These," said the Professor, "are those famous letters from Cortez, fifteen in number, to his sovereign, Carlos V., written in the field and at intervals during the siege of Mexico. In his second letter, written in the year 1521, you will find



PEAK AND CRATER OF ORIZABA.

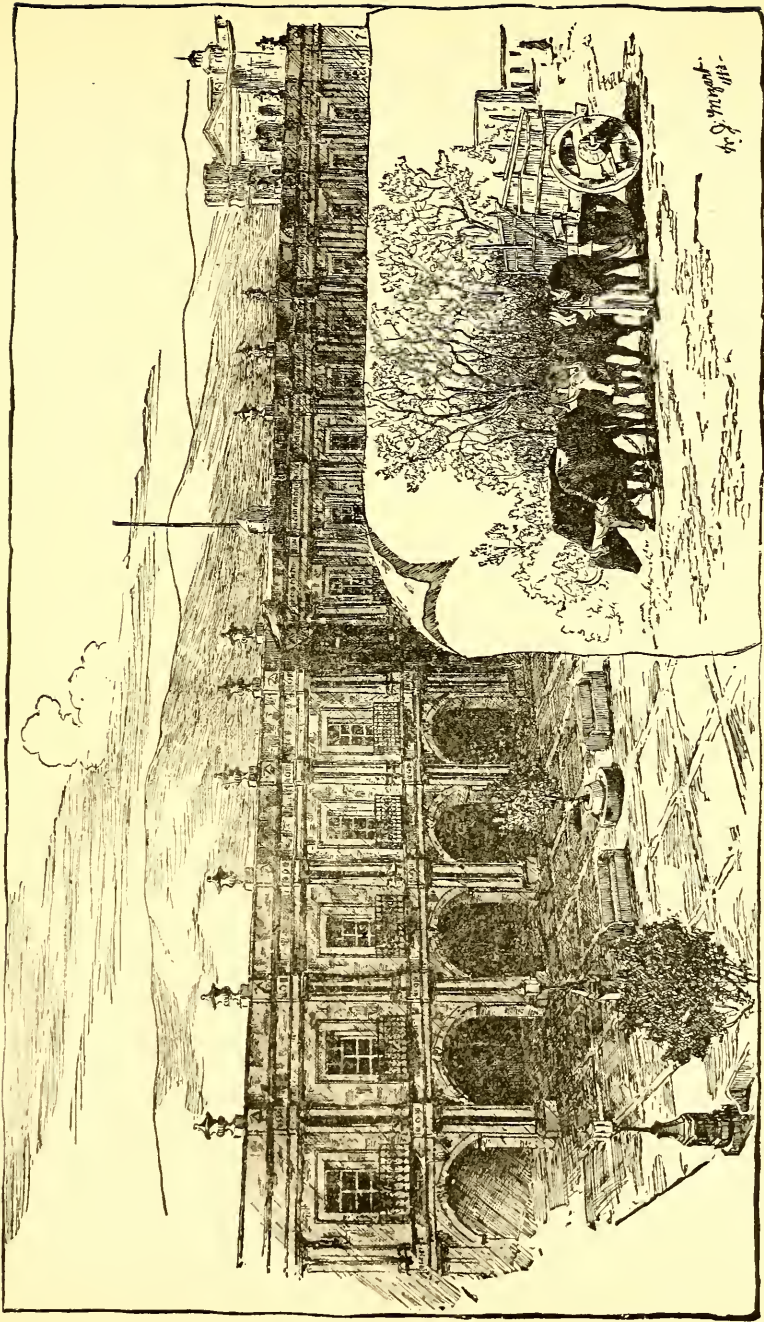
the information which guides me. Herein he relates the story of the capture of Montezuma, and the manner in which, after having taken him prisoner, he proceeded to extort from him information regarding the sources of his wealth. A roomful of treasure was divided among

the Spaniards, when they obtained possession of Montezuma, — gold, wrought into beautiful images, hammered into vessels of fanciful shape, and cast in bars. This was chiefly the accumulation of warrior kings who had preceded Montezuma, and particularly of Axayacatl, his royal father, the dreaded 'Water-face,' who had led his armies far south of Tehuantepec, even to Guatemala. All the Aztec treasure was in gold, since they knew not how to extract silver from its hiding in the rock; and, moreover, it was mainly obtained from the rivers, in grains or in nuggets from placers.

“With supreme contempt for the cupidity of Cortez and his band, Montezuma, seeing that the Spaniards valued gold so highly as to be ready to shed blood for its acquisition, offered to show them the localities where it could still be obtained in abundance. Following the suggestions of the captive monarch, Cortez sent two soldiers with each guide furnished by Montezuma, who went directly to the places indicated by him, and discovered mines rudely worked and streams glistening with golden sands. Four parties went out, in as many different directions; of two of these but little account is given. One, however, brought back gold from the since famous province of Tasco (now still known, in the State of Guerrero); but in the southwest, in the distant province of Malinaltepec, were found rich washings of gold; and the soldiers and their guides returned well laden with the precious metal. Now, this province,” continued the Professor, “I have exactly identified and precisely located; it is yet called Malinaltepec, and coincides in distance with that district (as given by Cortez), eighty leagues (Mexican) from the Aztec capital.”

Reading on through the quaint old Spanish, the Doctor and myself found, indeed, that our leader's statement was correct, and that at a distance of only twenty-eight Mexican leagues, or seventy miles from Oaxaca, lay the province of the same name as that ancient district of gold.

I remember that when it became noised abroad that we were



GOVERNOR'S PALACE, OAXACA.

going into the distant hill-country, we received from the Oaxacans repeated warnings of the dangers attending such a venture. All admitted that the ancient gold-mines and the river with yellow sand were in that region; but the inhabitants of the only settlement in possession of the secret had sworn to protect it with their lives. Furthermore, they had, said rumor, over a hundred rifles, with which they drilled weekly, and with which they were determined to defend the Aztec treasure-trove from all invaders.

We were undeterred, however; but as there was great delay in procuring permission from the authorities, and letters of introduction and command to the *jefes* of the native hill-tribes, we set out for a side exploration of a near valley, rich in mounds raised by the Indians of antiquity.

“We will first gorge ourselves with ruins,” said the Professor, “and then, having thrown the authorities off the track, will return and strike out for the gold-mines.”

Mounted upon three fine horses, and under the leadership of Don Santos Gomez, a well-known character in Southern Mexico, we forded the broad but shallow Oaxaca River, one morning in August, and climbed the hills of Monte Alban. After riding up a sloping, fragrant pasture, wet with dew and delightfully odorous, we reached the top of the Sierra, crowned with a series of gigantic earthworks which the French archæologist, Charnay, declares the most precious in Southern Mexico, and containing now and then a sculptured stone of a pattern which Viollet-le-Duc deems different in type from all others of Central America, but similar to the Egyptian.

It was a most delightful spot, this ancient seat of the Zapotec kings, with its extensive views adown the triple valley of Oaxaca; and from it we could trace other forts, on other hills, and behold almost countless mounds swelling the bosom of the beautiful vale of Ejutla, which extended southward, and into which we were to penetrate. Judging not only by these physical remains, but by tales and

traditions wafted to us from those days of long ago, I believe this valley to have been fully as populous as that of Anahuac, even at the period of Aztec supremacy.

It was rather dangerous work to descend from the forts to the southern valley; but our horses were safe and our guides trustworthy, and so in safety we reached Cuilapan, formerly a great city of the Miztecs, but now a wretched little Indian town. We inquired for *mescal*, — a fiery liquor distilled from the maguey plant, — for our chief was sinking beneath the fatigues of the journey; and learned that the only persons having any were the judge and the *cura*, or parish priest. The latter we sought at once, and found him in the ruins of the convent; an immense structure, — the largest of the kind, we were told, out of Mexico City, — with a vast central dome, flanking towers, long ranges of cloisters about the enclosed and pillared *patio*, and groined arches springing to the airy roof. Beneath the high dome, and directly in front of the altar, is an ancient and massive slab carved in quaint devices, and with an iron ring in each corner. “This slab,” said the *cura*, “covers a grave to which tradition points as that of Malinche, the Tabascan princess who served Cortez so faithfully throughout the Conquest.” There is an air of probability about this, as this old convent, said to have been begun by him, is in one of the three Indian towns given him by the King of Spain, when he was created Marquis of the Valley. But if there be a shade of doubt hanging over this antique slab, and if indeed Malintzin — Marina, the beloved of the Spaniard — sleeps beneath some other stone, another name is linked with this ancient convent of Cuilapan which should create of it a shrine to be visited by every patriotic inhabitant of Mexico.

Guerrero, the lion-hearted defender of Mexico, was shot here; murdered by his countrymen, even while fighting for their own independence:

If there be aught that is base in the Mexicans' character, it shows



OBTAINING PULQUE FROM THE MAGUEY PLANT.

itself in the readiness with which they will turn upon a friend for policy's sake.

Santa Anna and Bustamente, — two *pronunciadores*, — having defeated Guerrero, the elected president of the republic, caused him to be pursued like a wild beast until captured off the southern coast and brought here. By some grim freak of fate he was tried by a court-martial presided over by General Montezuma.

See how intimately connected are these four great names which have played so important a part in Mexico's history! In the court of the convent begun by Cortez, within a stone's-throw of the grave of Malinche, — who was more potent in the Aztec overthrow than the whole Spanish army, — a council of chiefs, with a Montezuma at their head, sentences to death the noblest and purest of Mexico's defenders! History, truly, brings about its avenges!

The *cura*, who had made us welcome and stabled our horses in the deserted chapel, took us to the spot where Guerrero was shot, in February, 1831. Here is a tomb, erected to his memory by his grandson, though his remains are interred in Mexico, in the Pantheon San Fernando. From the *cura's* reception-room, a well-furnished apartment on the lower floor, a narrow doorway gave entrance into his sanctum, — a curiously arched cell, with an alcove in which was his bed, and with scant room to spare. In this cell Guerrero was confined previous to execution, and through one narrow, grated window, through walls at least three feet thick, he looked out upon the spot where his captors subsequently shot him.

Before taking leave of the good old *cura* and his ruins, we clambered over the vast and broken brick dome, whence we viewed the valley, counting twenty Indian mounds in sight, and numerous modern villages. In a long wing, all out of order and falling to decay, with all the sacred images dropping to pieces, is a fine oil painting of Santiago, patron saint of Cortez, who appeared on his famous pale horse at the battle of Tabasco (A. D. 1519) it is said, and frightened

the helpless Indians even more than the cavalry and cannon, which they that day saw for the first time.

Riding over by-paths through somewhat sedgy corn-fields, we entered the little village of Quachila about noon, where we breakfasted with the priest, to whom we had a letter. There is an immense adobe mound here we fain would have dug into, for many idols have been taken from it, and a tomb was opened here containing several tiers of metal platters, each with a skull on it; but the authorities frowned upon us, and we did not persist, for we were told that the natives once set upon and drove away the would-be desecrator of this most ancient of burial-places.

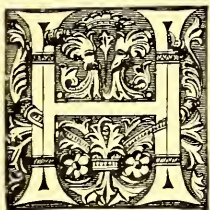
This town was once the site of a Zapotec city, where the king resided; and not far from here is a conical hill, called the Pap of Maria Sanchez, where not only was a great battle fought, between Miztecs and Zapotecs, in ancient times, but it was besieged by Alvarado, on his march to Guatemala, in 1522, for seven days, with desperate fighting each day.

The vale of Ejutla is a peaceful region now, — a delightful one to tarry in, with its interesting Indians, descendants of the very ones who had crossed swords and pikes with Alvarado's host, and with its sweet air made balmy by drifting over fields of sugar-cane; its soft landscape of cultivated fields embossed with mangos and other trees of darker green, with white stone houses on the *haciendas* and huts of brown bamboo in the Indian villages. On our return to the city, we rode through miles of straggling gardens planted with the cochineal cactus, where patient Indians assiduously tended the insects that brought wealth to their ancestors, but whose crimson blood is now superseded by the cheaper aniline dye.

CHAPTER VI.

MEXICAN MOUNTAINS AND MOUNTAINEERS.

THE GALLANT CABALLO.—INN OF THE LOST SOULS.—FACTORY IN A DESERT.—
BROTHER FORTUNE-SEEKER.—BIRTHPLACE OF JUAREZ.—THE CABILDO, OR
KING'S HOUSE.—CAÑADA OF OCOTE.—A SQUABBLE WITH INDIANS.—BREAKFAST
IN THE MUD.—ON THE GOLDEN TRAIL.—DON CELESTINO.—OUR NEW PARTNER.—
THE HAMMOCK BRIDGE.—GRAPE-VINE CABLES.—ALCALDE AND HIS SILVER WAND.



OW gallantly our horses bore us throughout that journey, and the long one following upon its heels! In the South of Mexico we may still find horses with almost pure Arab blood; gentle, yet spirited; as bright of eye and clear of limb as those the Spaniards brought to Mexico with them in the first years of the Conquest. The best of them are trained in that peculiar and enjoyable motion called the *paso*, in which, while the fore legs are prancing gayly in the air, the hind legs seem scarcely to leave the ground, and the rider is hardly moved in his seat. It is a difficult pace for an all-day jog; but our horses fell into it readily at a peculiar motion of the bridle-rein, and would maintain it for a long distance, at a gait of about six miles an hour.

Shortly after our return to Oaxaca, the promised letters to the *Serranos* were delivered to us, and on a January morning we set gayly forth.

Don Santos had everything in readiness, even to the *mangas de agua*, or rain-cloaks, strapped to the saddles; and an intelligent and sedate mule of the female sex — an *hembra* — carried in a mountain-

heap upon her back the numerous articles thought indispensable during three weeks' absence, and immediately the cavalcade started took her place as leader of the procession, unguided by bit or bridle. After leaving the valley, our trail lay through the foot-hills, where never yet wheel had passed, — save, perhaps, a cannon-wheel in revolutionary



THE SPANIARDS IN MEXICO.

times, — and at noon we reached the *cumbres*, or hill-crests, where the level fields of the lower country were exchanged for beautiful woods of oak and pine. A billowy sweep of wooded hills lay before us, and far in the distance we saw the vale of Ixtlan, in the centre of which lay the town where we were to sleep that night. For an hour or so we rode through fragrant woods, emerging from which we halted at a

mud hut known as *el meson de las almas perdidas*, or "the inn of the lost souls," because one of its plastered walls was covered with a painting representing the burning of souls in the flames of hell.

We got a wretched breakfast, or *desayuno*, here, consisting of cold and clammy *tortillas*, or flapjacks, and soup hot with *chili*, served on the earthen floor of a low stone house. Descending yet farther, we left behind us the forest lands, and wound our way down a steep hill, strewn with flints and agates, reaching at the bottom the *fabrica de Xia*, a large and handsome cotton-factory, run by water-power from a very small stream. Wonder succeeded to astonishment when we learned that every pound of the machinery in this large factory and every ounce of cotton used in its looms had been brought over two hundred miles, on the backs of mules. The chief engineer of Xia, Daniel Whittaker, had spent all his life looking for mines, and had a heap of rich specimens to show us, and an equally rich store of information. He had heard of the mine we were in search of, and we thought seemed disappointed that we should visit its locality first. He had spent months in fruitless search of the "robbers' treasure" on the great slopes of the majestic mountain volcano Orizaba, finding all the signs of proximity, — the old fortifications, and the *red cross* on the wall, — but no buried money. He it was who first informed us how the ice was made with which he cooled the beer he gave us. In the *cumbres* the natives dig shallow pits, where the water freezes at night in thin sheets, which are stored in straw houses in some gloomy ravine until quite a thick block is obtained.

The jolly engineer had made it so agreeable for us that it was late when we left for Ixtlan. A broad river ran below, spanned by a bridge of round poles covered by a single roof, crossing which we climbed to the little hamlet of San Pablo, as the increasing coolness of night brought to a close a day that had been exceedingly hot. There was, in truth, hardly any town at all; gurgling streams ran by the roadside, flowers bloomed in every crevice of the rough stone-walls,

little gardens of maize lay tilted up amongst the rocks, while the sweetest of wild pasture-lands ran up to the great cliffs on the west, and to the high hills that hemmed in the valley. It reminded us of a New England hill-town, this obscure village of Indian farmers; and there was born here, in 1806, as great a man — if we consider his surroundings and the eminence he rose to — as any New England has produced; for Juarez, the “Washington of Mexico,” first saw the light in this place. A small stone church and the *casa municipal* are the only buildings not made of mud, and this latter was pointed out with pride and affection by the Indians as standing on the very spot once occupied by the hut in which “Don Benito” was born. The parents of Benito Juarez were in humble life, possessing only the simple habits and slender means of other Indian peasants and herdsmen of Ixtlan, and were quite unable to educate their son. He lived at home until the death of his father, and at the age of twelve could neither read nor write, and spoke only his native tongue, the Zapotec; for



JUAREZ.

Benito was of pure Indian blood, descendant of ancestors who were in possession of these hills at the coming of the Spaniards. Many of the youth of the hill-towns had gone down to the capital city, and engaged in domestic service in return for the privileges of an education; and when a little more than twelve years old, young Benito, the ignorant Indian boy, followed in their footsteps. Here he found a patron, who taught him to read and write, and eventually

aided him through the institute where he studied law and theology. Having left the hills, he passes beyond the range of our vision, and we care not to interrupt the narrative of our journey to trace his subsequent career as governor of his native State, general of the forces, cabinet minister, and finally president of the Republic, and the acknowledged savior of Mexico.

One might well expect to learn that a great man had been nurtured here in youth ; the fields and rocks, the fragrant pastures covered with bushes and flowering trees, are all suggestive of sturdy youth. The Indians of these hills, warlike and with the prestige of an unconquered people behind them, have often left their homes to fight in revolutions. It was sunset when we turned our backs upon this sweet hamlet, and quite dark when we rode into Villa Juarez de Ixtlan, two miles farther on.

The scenery about this town is very striking as well as pleasing ; great cliffs surround broad and pleasant pastures ; the village has a good church and *plaza*, some nice stone houses, and a charming little fort perched upon a great rock with perpendicular sides.

The district abounds in silver-mines, there being scarcely a householder there that does not own one, which he works just enough to supply the necessaries of life, and no more, no matter how rich the veins.

We were much troubled to find a place to sleep in and something to eat, as the *cura* and the *jefe politico*, to whom we had letters, were both away. Having ridden seven leagues in the morning upon only a cup of coffee, and seven in the afternoon after a slight lunch, we were much fatigued and very hungry. Fortunately we encountered a widow who kept a shop, — a *tienda*, — and we ultimately fared very well, having a hearty supper, and sleeping upon some wooden benches with straw mats spread over them.

As we left Ixtlan, very late in the forenoon, delayed by an unfulfilled promise of the *jefe* to furnish us with a guide, the widow poured into our ears fresh stories of the hostility to strangers of the people of Yolos and Malinaltepec, who had sworn eternal enmity to miners and silver-seekers, saying they destroyed their property and ruined their rivers. Tradition has handed down to them that all the troubles of their race arose from disclosing their gold to strangers. But while we mentally acquiesced in the wisdom of these people in adopting this

course, and thanked the bright-eyed *viuda* for her cautions, still we headed our horses toward the unexplored country, and laughingly rode away.

The crests and ridges of these hills were crowned with forests of oak and pine, and their sides covered with gardens. We zigzagged up and down, crossing tinkling streams with butterflies hovering over them and Indian children playing in them, ever climbing and descending, until we reached a great wooden cross set up in a gap, and looked down upon the village of Analco, just as a terrific thunder-storm broke over us, and the trail down the steep was a rushing brook, down the bed of which we picked our way carefully.

There we first made acquaintance with the *casa real*, or king's house, called also the *cabildo*, a house erected for the free lodgment of all travellers in all towns unprovided with a hotel. The *cabildo* exists in accordance with an ancient law, which also provided that the *alcalde*, the chief man of the village, whose emblem of office is a long silver-mounted stick, and his *topiles*, who bear wands a little plainer, shall alone purchase provisions for the traveller. It may be owing to the fact that the *alcalde* was absent that we fared so hard, being unable to buy anything at all. The doors of this *cabildo* were wide open, and we marched in and took possession, though no one bade us enter.

The bell-tower of the church is on a near mound, and commands a grand view of the opposite side of a vast amphitheatre of hills which enclose two villages, and is cultivated in immense fields of corn from the river-bottom clear to their crests, where great trees stand up against the sky. Riding three leagues farther, over infernal trails, but through most beautiful woods of pine and deciduous trees, we found a solitary hill-farm called Ocote, or Pine Ranch, where we had hoped to find rest also; but seeing that only the mud floor of a miserable hut, thatched with grass and with walls of poles, between which we could look in any direction, was available, we hastened on to Lavina, a



IN THE MINES OF THE MONTEZUMA.

settlement two miles farther down a tremendous *cañada* and across a foaming river.

Hidden in a vast corn-field was the village, but there was no shelter open to us except an empty hut of mud and thatch. Two large houses that we had seen here from a distance, and which looked inviting, were found to be the one a jail and the other a church, and both alike inhospitable. Some very obtuse Indian women set about preparing some soup and toasting some dried beef on an ox-goad, which occupation held them two hours; and it was not until we had taken turns several times around in growling at the cooks, that we finally had the satisfaction of seeing the food spread out on the clay floor. Meanwhile we were much exercised by a drunken Indian, clad in cotton drawers and *sarape*, who claimed to be secretary of the municipality, and insisted upon our showing our passports, declaring stoutly that all strangers must have written permission to pass through the Sierras. This relic of revolutionary times had been long abolished; but this illiterate had not heard of it, and becoming wrathful and turbulent, he was beguiled by our chief into the corn-field, where he was tripped up and laid upon the ground, and fell at once into quiet slumber. Other Indians, now gathering in numbers, were rude and of independent bearing, and each one carried either a gun or a sabre; but after we had spread straw upon the ground and essayed to sleep, it was very quiet all through the night, — only a dog barked and a horse broke into the corn, — and we had no use for the revolvers, which lay thickly around us.

In the delicious coolness of the following morning we climbed the hills to Macuiltianguis, where we got breakfast, squatted on the dirt floor of a mud hut, fighting away hens, dogs, and pigs, while we devoured with avidity *huevos duros*, or hard-boiled eggs, *tortillas* and *frijoles*, cooked over an open fire, after the usual style. Beyond this town, from a high spur on our road, we looked miles ahead over a vast amphitheatre of forest and corn-fields, in which were set the white

and mud-colored walls of three towns. In the first we reached, Comaltepec, a surprise awaited us, — something to cheer our hearts and to revive in us the memory of the mine we had set out to find. A familiar figure stood in the road, a squat little Mexican, with a ferocious grin on his face, whom we recalled (after he had reminded us) as the proprietor of Ocote, a rancho we had passed the night before. He greeted us effusively, then asked us to his town house, close at hand, where he showed us specimens of gold and several bars of silver, which he said came from veins he had discovered.

In an outer room we found a forge and implements for smelting metals, and while we were examining them he told us that he had been experimenting for forty years, and offered, for adequate consideration, to conduct us to veins, the richest in the country, — not veins only, but *pockets of gold*, which were known only to a few Indians and himself.

“How long have these veins been known?” demanded the Doctor.

Our new acquaintance glanced around, with suspicion gleaming from beneath his shaggy brows, closed his door against our guide and another Mexican outside, and whispered huskily, —

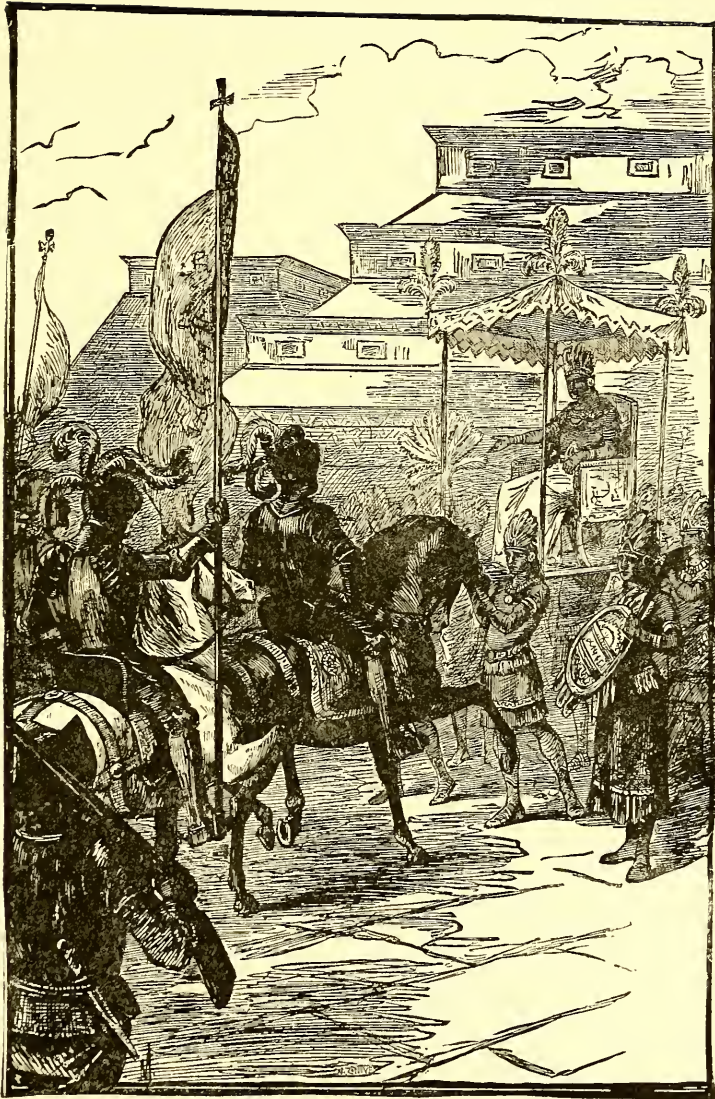
“They are the mines of the great Cacique, Montezuma!”

“Great Scot!” ejaculated our chief. “Do you know the tradition regarding those mines?”

“*Si, Señor*, they lie near Malinaltepec. The great captain, Cortez, sent two soldiers to examine them, many, many years ago; I can myself show you whence the soldiers dug the nuggets that were taken to the *conquistador*!”

“Heavens!” said the chief to us, in English, “this man is a God-send to us; he can doubtless take us to the very spot. I wonder what sort of trade we can make with him.”

And how we hugged ourselves, at the thought of this valuable man, so luckily thrown in our way! and our eyes opened wider and wider at



CORTEZ RECEIVED BY MONTEZUMA.

his recital. He told us that he had known of these ancient deposits forty years; three others, who had shared the secret with him, were now dead. Too poor to work the mines, too suspicious of his own countrymen to intrust the business to any one else, he had remained inactive till this time. It seemed that after we had left him the night before, he lay awake, speculating upon the chances that could have brought strangers and white men to this region. There was not another of his color — this was a doubtful compliment to us — in the whole country beyond; we were the first he had seen that way for years; and at last he concluded it was *mines*, and nothing else, that brought us here. And at one o'clock that morning he got up and saddled his *burro*, telling his wife that he had dreamed that we were the men he had waited for so long, and that he must overtake us, for the oracle at Ixtlan, whom he had consulted so late as the week before, had told him that strangers, whom he could trust, were even then on the road to him; that he had a fortune already, and why did n't he avail himself of it? So he resolved that the Lord had sent us, and the time had come to reveal the secret.

We assured him that he was, beyond a doubt, correct; the chief told him to mount his beast and come along, promising to treat with him if he had anything valuable, and he promptly followed us. After descending a steep ravine we came to two broad and rapid streams, crossed by a single great log each, over which our horses carried us safely, though with some fear and trembling on our part. At Yolos, the town beyond, the *cura* was absent; so we left our compliments with a pretty girl, who seemed to stand him instead of a wife, and rode on yet farther. The grandest hill scenery of Mexico lay before us; we were completely isolated from all of our own speech, yet riding peacefully through the very heart of the Indian country, where cultivated plants lined the road at times, and in places blackberries in clusters drooped over us so that we could eat them as we sat in our saddles. It was the rainy season, and that afternoon, while climbing a crest

of the ridge above, leading our horses among great rocks, a fearful storm came down, that threatened to wash us over the precipice, — after scaling which we saw another town, completely buried in corn-fields, Quiotepec, to the *comandante* of which we had a letter. He came in, after dark, — an Indian, about five feet high, with a sparse beard, active and amiable, and clad, like all the rest, in shirt, drawers, and sandals. He provided us with beds by spreading straw matting on some benches, and the next morning gave us a letter ordering the *presidente* of Malinaltepec to show us every favor. Malinaltepec was our objective point, the region named in the letters of Cortez, where Montezuma is said to have built a pleasure palace for the King of Spain and to have laid out gardens planted with cocoa and tobacco. According to tradition, then, the letters of Cortez, the reports of the Governor of the State, and the asseverations of our friend, Don Celestino, of Ocote Ranch, rich mines were in the vicinity of Malinaltepec. It lay deep-buried below the hills in a stifling hot valley, with the climate of the *tierra caliente*, as well as its fruits and flowers. It was a terrible trail that led down the hillsides from Quiotepec, steep and stony, and with innumerable twists and doublings upon itself. The hills and cliffs, and in particular one great isolated rock called the “Convent,” were red in color and shot up hundreds of feet, and at their bases flowed a swift and turbid torrent, the Rio Grande. The yellow flood was spanned by an aboriginal bridge, one of the most ingenious I have ever seen, constructed without rope, nail, board, or iron bolt. It was a “hammock bridge,” and made entirely of *grape-vines*. From high poles on either bank, braced and stayed by vine cables, were stretched great cables twisted of grape-vines, nearly three hundred feet in length. Suspended from these ropes was a network of vines, forming a V-shaped passage-way, like a great hammock, stretching from pole to pole. It hung at least thirty feet above the stream, and the vine-ladders that once led up to it from either side had been carried away by floods; but the Doctor and the chief determined to cross upon it,

though it was necessary to climb up, hand over hand, by a single vine. The bridge was so high above the water, and shook so alarmingly at the slightest breath that I concluded to ford the stream, with Don Santos, and towed over the horses of the other two while they essayed the bridge. They climbed bravely up, the chief leading, for about twenty feet, when their strength failed them ; they could get no farther. Don Santos and I were in mid-stream, with all the horses ; and we nearly laughed ourselves out of our saddles at the futile efforts of our luckless companions, dangling helpless twenty feet above the ground. At last, disgusted and crestfallen, they slid down the grape-vine, and shouted for Don Santos to return and swim them across on their horses.

We were not far from the Indian village ; but the trees were so thick about it that we could see no houses, and all were laden with fruit, — oranges, plums, peaches, limes, and mammie apples. In the first field we found some Indians breaking up the soil with a crooked stick ; and to one of them, who was pointed out as the *presidente*, but who was clad simply in shirt and drawers, we gave our letter from the *comandante*. After standing over it half an hour, unable to read it, they left the plough and furrow and led the way to the village, knocking off the trees for us, on the road, more plums and oranges than we could eat.

Near the middle of a dense orange-grove, golden with fruit, was the *casa* of the *cura*, to which we were conducted. The worthy priest pays only monthly visits to Malinaltepec ; so his house was damp and mouldy, its thatch leaky and grass-grown, its clay floor slimy ; its one room, containing a table and three wooden benches, — not a stick of furniture else, — anything but inviting. Into this, after a great deal of ceremony, we were shown ; the *alcalde* coming to receive us at the head of a procession, and bearing his silver-tipped wand of office. Every house in the village was of mud or wattled sticks, thatched with grass. Their church, once a beautiful structure of stone, was toppled over by an earthquake many years ago, and a thatched

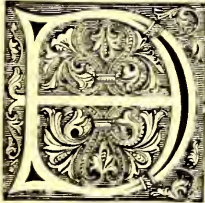
shed propped up with poles covered the altar, where a dingy Virgin sat in ragged finery, which long had been the sport of the elements. Three bells, which once had hung in the church-tower, the oldest bearing date 1702, were suspended beneath a rude scaffold covered with a roof of grass.

Don Celestino was now in his glory, for few of these Indians spoke Spanish, and we needed him as interpreter. As we retired to the bare benches that night, he assured us that the morrow's sun should glint the gold in our hands, — the precious metal we had come so far to seek, — that is, unless the people resisted us by force of arms, when they should see us departing for the mineral gulch.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW WE BECAME MILLIONAIRES AND LOST \$40,000,000.

THE BANDIT AND HIS BURRO. — PERRITO, THE DOG WITH AN APPETITE. — AT THE MINE'S MOUTH. — THE PENSIVE TORTILLERA. — CLIFFS OF HORN SILVER. — FORTY MILLIONS IN SIGHT. — THE TABLES TURNED. — A SCUFFLE IN THE DARK. — A MODERN ABDALLAH. — A HORRIBLE SUSPICION. — HOW WE LOST OUR MILLIONS. — THE HERMIT WE DISCOVER. — THE ROBBER'S CAVE. — THE STOLEN SPECIMENS. — THE VAGRANT VEIN. — VAMONOS !

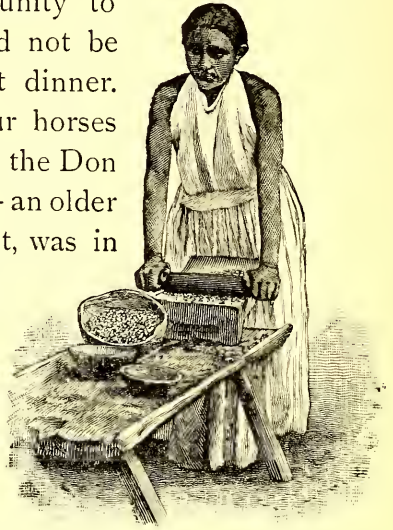


ON CELESTINO the next afternoon mounted his pensive *burro*, and led the way west of the hamlet, across a stream that tumbled noisily over great boulders, to a hut on a hill all alone by itself.

The Don was a comical old man; he was not an inch over five feet in height; his iron-gray hair was pulled over his eyes, which twinkled devilishly, and a stubby head hid the greater part of his shrewd old face.

On horseback — or rather, astride his *burro* — he was a most laughable figure; for he kept in perpetual motion his short, scantily draped legs, each naked heel armed with an enormous spur. Whether he was bandit or no, did not concern us; but the appetite he carried did, for it threatened to consume all the resources of our commissary, and gave honest Don Santos a fit of the sulks. A disgraceful little dog followed close at his heels, to which he gave the choicest morsels from our table. This must be taken as a figure of speech, since it was not often we had a table, our spread being usually on the ground,

where the cur could help himself. Perrito, the pup, stood so high in his owner's regard that we dared not express our opinion regarding him to the Don, since, as our chief put it, there was a possible gold-mine in the Mexican, which we must not jeopardize by kicking a paltry puppy. But one morning I met the Doctor coming from the rear of the church with a smile that broadened as he told me he had improved an opportunity to kick Perrito so earnestly that we should not be troubled with his presence that day at dinner. At the solitary hut on the hill we left our horses and descended to the bed of a deep ravine, the Don in mysterious confab with his *compañero*, — an older Indian, who, if he did not share his secret, was in some manner connected with his early history. Once in the ravine, they scraped aside a loose heap of stones, which had been thrown there for a purpose, and exposed a ruin, which our mineralogist examined and pronounced, not gold, but silver. Two hours later, the Doctor and I, having nothing to do but watch the sportive flight of more blue and gold dragon-flies above a pool of water, left the Professor and the Don to continue the search, and returned to the hut. A comely Indian girl was preparing corn for *tortillas*, kneeling on the mud floor and throwing all her strength into the crushing of the softened maize between the stone *metalpille*, or rolling-pin, and the flat rock called the *metatl*. A small but brisk fire burned beside her, above which was an iron dish, which she frequently covered with the kneaded meal, turning it over and suddenly whisking it off, a crisp and palatable *tortilla*.



LA TORTILLERA.

No thought of gold disturbed her equanimity; even the presence

of *los Americanos*, who consumed her corn-cakes and forced upon her this silver, hardly caused her to raise her head. But what a shapely head it was; its black, lustrous hair neatly coiled about it in shining braids! Her supple arms were bared to the shoulder; through the loose texture of her single garment, as she leaned over her labor, her maidenly bosom showed its twin half-globes of golden bronze. Such gentle eyes she had, such little hands, she seemed a child; pathetic was the picture that she formed in that rude hut, with its scant and primitive furniture. Life could have but little amenity for her; the highest enjoyment she could look forward to would be the journey to the capital, — a trudge over the hills of a hundred miles, a day spent wandering open-eyed in the city, and the weary return. Labor was her lot, from dawn till late into the night; her life would be chiefly spent in kneeling before that stone idol of her ancestors, — the *metatl*. Yet I never beheld more of serenity expressed in any human figure than in that of this child-woman, doomed to a life of unremitting toil.

The shadow of the hill had lengthened itself beyond the ravine and was crawling into the forest, where it would lose itself and never appear again till to-morrow; and the chief and I proposed to depart ere the sun, then near the horizon, should have set, with no light by which to thread a somewhat perilous path. But we were delayed by the appearance of our companions, — the mineralogist, who was laboring under great excitement, and Don Celestino, whose countenance bristled with a certain ferocious glee.

“We have struck it at last!” gasped our optimistic *compañero*, — “struck it rich! The Don and I have discovered a *cliff of horn silver*, with at least \$40,000,000 right in sight!”

“Es verdad!” (It is true!) chuckled the Don; “nada mes o’ menor!” (not a dollar more nor less!)

I gasped, and turned in astonished silence to our worthy chief, who remarked calmly, and with the air of one who had expected

nothing else: "Then we are all millionaires! Let's go down; the sun is setting."

"And I?" said the naturalist, — "do you include me? You know I came along only to hunt butterflies and beetles; am I a millionaire too?"

"Yes, I include you," he answered. "You have in a sense assisted at this discovery, and you may consider yourself a millionaire."

It was bewildering. We all mounted and rode back in a daze. We were now — in prospective — millionaires. Our chief — I know what he was thinking of — would now take that journey into the Orient, for long years held in contemplation; the mineralogist loudly proclaimed that he would ransack the entire Republic of Mexico, and bring to the light of scientific investigation every ruin it contained, known and unknown; while the naturalist whispered softly to himself that he would perhaps accomplish that exploration of the mysterious continent, and bring thence what his soul yearns after, — a new bird.

The mineralogist asked permission — which was joyfully granted — to name the first shaft in the new mine after his wife, and to have the hammer with which the precious specimens were chipped off gilded and hung up in the office of the company, which is to be formed immediately, — that is, as soon as we can get back to a region civilized enough for companies to flourish in, and "denounce" our property, and place the stock on the market. We now saw in Don Celestino an heroic example of constancy to an ideal, and belief in himself truly pathetic. He was no longer a small and scraggy "greaser," with capacity unlimited for concealing our "grub;" he was now Señor Don Celestino de Ocote, a *cabellero* of undoubted Castilian lineage; and so he gorged himself without exciting even the lifting of an eyebrow, and fed tidbits of our precious canned meat to Perrito, that ill-favored cur we had hitherto kicked and cuffed at every secret opportunity, who actually leered at us, as he trotted about, and snapped viciously at the Doctor's heels without causing remark.

Though our couches were hard that night, our dreams were golden. Our chief had all to himself a table, a foot too short; the naturalist, a bench, which caused him to lie half awake all night, thinking himself in the clutches of a modern Procrustes; while the mineralogist and Don Celestino slept feet to feet upon a long bench, their knees bent double to afford sufficient room.

Somewhere about the middle of the night, when the bats were softly whirring about the room, the cockroaches rustling on the floor, and the centipedes crawling out from the rotten woodwork and thatch, the naturalist heard a sudden rasping sound in the direction of that double couch, followed by a heavy fall, and a wicked exclamation in the Don's gruffest tones.

We all had retired, as usual, with our garments girt about us and our arms at hand; the naturalist (that is, myself), in fact, slept in his *sarape*, his head through the central slit, and a belt, containing revolver and carving-knife, drawn tightly round the waist. He had grown so accustomed to feeling the pressure of the revolver on his loins that he would have been uncomfortable without it. Hearing the strident snore of Celestino interrupted by his harsher oath, he instinctively clapped his hand upon his belt, where he could grasp the ivory handle of the *cuchillo* and have a thumb and finger on the *pistole*.

Scuffling ensued, which might have been the Doctor and the Mexican in deadly strife, but which a hastily lighted candle revealed to be the stranger trying to regain his feet. Profuse apologies followed from the Doctor, who had been the cause of the mishap; for it seems that he had gathered up his legs in his sleep and had suddenly straightened them out, thereby shunting the noble Castilian off the bench upon the floor with a velocity that nearly drove his head through the mud-plastered wall of the hut.

Like Abdallah in the "Arabian Nights," he had been building castles — of horn silver; he had been elected president of the Mali-

naltepec-Montezuma Horn-Silver Gold-Washing, Mining and Smelting Company; he sat in the inner room of the New York office, at a rosewood desk, above which hung the hammer he had nicked the cliff with, gleaming in a gilded coat; a man approached with a proposition to water the stock of the company to ten millions; and it was at this moment, filled with an indignation more than virtuous, that the Doctor drew back his foot and let it fly, with "I spurn your base offer!" and projected our haughty Don into space. We feared that, following out the Abdallah simile, he had smashed our wares in kicking Celestino; but that worthy cared not for kicks, so his stomach was filled, and at breakfast satiated himself with good things until his little black eyes fairly stood out beneath his beetling brows.

It was cool every morning, though hot at mid-day, and rainy afternoons and evenings, in that anomalous Malinaltepec. As the sun rose, the chief and I wandered down to the river and bathed in a quiet pool at the base of a cliff, without even a word of our newly acquired fortune. Being a millionaire is n't such a very oppressive fact, after all, provided you are not burdened with the care of the money!

We followed the Don, that forenoon, into another secluded district, several leagues away, where he said the precious metal was abundant, but where we saw neither trace nor sign. But while he was otherwise looking for gold, I secured some fine butterflies; so our journey was not wholly profitless. On our way back a rabbit crossed our path, which the Don declared an excellent sign, — a sign of gold; and this led him on to whisper to us, in a casual way, of a robber's cave beneath the cliffs of the "Convent," containing without doubt at least a million dollars. As he was the only person possessing that secret, also, our confidence in him began to cool. A suggestion that he may be a fraud acts as a little leaven in the mind of the mineralogist, and he thinks and thinks, all to himself, but at last imparts to us the result of his cogitations.



INDIANS AT WORK IN THE SILVER REGION.

“Boys,” he at last broke forth, “I have a *horrible suspicion* that the ore we discovered yesterday may not be horn silver, but —”

We rein up our horses with a jerk, and await with suspense his concluding words, —

“—but only *hornblende*, which, if verified, reduces us at once from affluence to comparative poverty. In fact, if so, we are just forty million dollars out of pocket!”

Alas for the vanity of human hopes! one moment a millionaire, the next — all through the whim of a fellow-creature — toppled down from the pinnacle of ambition and grovelling in the dust of poverty!

That same “horrible suspicion” had entered the brain of the naturalist the day before; but as he was ever being hooted at as a pessimist by the rest of the party, he allowed them to revel in the pictures their fancies painted unmolested. But he was in no whit disappointed, — perhaps he even took a grim pleasure in the lofty tumble of his brother optimists, — and he gayly swung his butterfly-net, as they rode down the steeps on their sure-footed horses, gathering in many a specimen, which he laid away in its paper tomb, without a sigh for the *golden butterfly* that had fluttered for a moment before his eyes, and then passed out of sight forever.

We began to look upon Don Celestino as a traitor, who clave to us for no reason except for the pleasure of our society; but he repeated and asseverated that he had once assayed that ore and it “panned out rich.” Then the *jefe* of the village came secretly and told us that there was a man of our color, over behind the “Convent,” — *un hombre blanco*, — who had a furnace for smelting the lead ore he dug out of the hills; and by going to him we could verify our specimens.

The trail to the valley where resided the only other man of our complexion in this region lay beneath the great red-walled *mesa*, under a high, isolated shaft of rock called the “Chimney,” and down a steep descent to a narrow pass filled with acacia shrubs, half the

time in the bed of a noisy stream, and at the base of vast perpendicular cliffs, full of caves, which might have been formerly the homes of the robbers whose plunder Don Celestino had offered to show us. Two hours after leaving camp we passed over a sharp spur of the hills, and plunged into a valley with green slopes and a river cleaving it in twain, which had left a strip of alluvial soil on one side, where the owner of this secluded spot had built a house and rude reduction works. The proprietor was a Frenchman, who welcomed us warmly, despite his amazement at the sight of strangers; and when he learned that we wished to test the quality of ores, he ordered an Indian to pulverize a portion carefully and then wash it in an earthen dish. We gathered anxiously around, as this process was going on; and when the stolid Indian's verdict of "Nothing" (*No hay nada*) was given, we demanded another washing, and still another, until four successive trials had been made, with the same discouraging result. But to convince us finally, our good friend started the fires in his furnace, and tested our "find" in the crucible, with the same result, — *nada* (nothing)!

The long strain over, we had time to examine our surroundings. We found our host to be an ingenious man, for he had utilized the wind generated by the rushing of the water over the dam to work the furnace bellows; and enterprising, for he had lost all his works by fire, six months before, and had constructed new ones.

At dinner, which was finely cooked and served, he told us something of his life. He had come to Mexico with the French army, had become separated somehow from his comrades, when they returned, and had lived in this place eighteen years, hemmed in from the society of his kind by those inexorable hills. It was then ten years since he had visited the only city in the State, and we were the only strangers who had reached him, save the *cura*, who had been there once. He had, he laughingly told us, improved upon poor Robinson Crusoe, by taking to his bosom a fair Indian maid, when he came here,

by whom he had several children, — graceful, tan-colored youngsters, who sported in the stream, and shyly approached us only as we — the first strangers they had ever seen — were ready to depart. We were charmed with the old man's simplicity; and the mineralogist especially, who was of French extraction, or rather of mingled Gallic and Celtic blood, was so delighted that he seriously proposed to us to abandon the world, induce the hermit to share with us his charming valley, and here rest. He capered about like a kid of the mountains, singing, —

“I will take some savage woman, she shall rear my dusky race.”

“Come, old man,” he said to our chief, “let's settle here; the Malinaltepecanos have in their tribe many fair though dusky maidens, whom it were an honor to bestow upon us.”

The pseudo-millionaire checked him sternly, —

“‘Mated with a squalid savage! — what to me were sun or clime? —
I the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of time?’”

As for you, would Mrs. A. take kindly to such an arrangement?”

The mineralogist's jaw fell; he sat down on a rock and buried his face in his hands. When it emerged, it had a hopeful look.

“At all events, old fellow, let's one of us be a recluse. An unkind fate has deprived me of the opportunity, but either you or the naturalist could do the thing up brown; and I have an idea that in no other way can we get at the secret of the hidden mine: it is the only way left, — marry a daughter of the *presidente*, get adopted into the tribe, and gradually, in the course of years, obtain the whole story. On second thought, the naturalist's the man; he's young, vigorous, devoted to pursuits that he can follow right here; and moreover he has a sneaking inclination toward the nut-brown maids. I saw him, yesterday, viewing that supple-jointed *tortillera* with more than a critic's gaze. Let him take the savage woman, and let *him* become the recluse.”

But the naturalist protested. He did n't want any savage woman, and was n't yearning to rear any race, dusky or otherwise; he was willing to follow the chief even to the uttermost parts of the earth, taking his enjoyment as he went along from the novelty of the shifting scenes; but when the panorama ceased to unroll and the music stopped, he knew he should feel utterly miserable; so the mineralogist could plan for himself, — stay if he liked, — and he would take any message he chose to send to his wife.

The chief looked his approval, and by the time the horses were saddled the Doctor had conceived another notion; so the matter was dropped.

I do not think our eremite took more pleasure in his valley than Crusoe on his island, for he admitted that the solitude was at times oppressive; yet he claimed to be perfectly happy — for when he was thirsty he drank, when hungry he ate, when sleepy he slept, and when he wanted money he ordered the Indians to dig in the mine for the ore, which he smelted and sold.

He may have been happy, he seemed contented; but I observed, as we rode over the ridge, on our return, and halted a moment to wave an adieu, that he looked after us very wistfully, and brushed his sleeve across his eyes before his hand fell from the salute he was wafting us.

As we reached the hut allotted to us in the village, and while Don Santos was removing the saddles from our tired horses, the chief said to me, standing with bared head beneath a giant walnut-tree, —

“We will now depart; traditions, chronicles, threats even, and omens have signified nothing at all. The mine can't be found, — at least, not here. Possessed of but small store of the world's goods, we came into this valley; we leave it even poorer than we came. *Vamonos*, — let us go!”

Still, we all were loath to part from these people of Malinaltepec, whose only fault was that they held a secret of priceless value which they refused to divulge. Many of the three or four hundred Indians

living here were camping in their fields, in their *milpas*, in little huts, until the harvest-time. They own their land in common, as do most of the Mexican Indians, cultivating it together, and sharing the fruits of their toil. It was owing to a reactionary Spanish law of some two centuries ago that the Mexican Indian was secured in possession of a little of the soil once held by his ancestors. As the Spaniards at first feared to settle in regions remote from cities, and the forest and the mountain lands were left to the Indian, he has held virtual possession of them since the Conquest; even as the West Indian Negro claims the hill and woody section of plantations for the cultivation of his yam and banana crops. And so these *Serranos*, with more land than they care to till, with few desires they cannot gratify, and only burdened by light taxes, seem as contented as it is possible for human beings to be.



CHAPTER VIII.

THAT GOLDEN BUTTERFLY.

DON CELESTINO DISAPPEARS. — A VESPER STROLL. — A DISAPPOINTED DOCTOR. — THE GOLDEN ANT-HILL. — FALL FROM A CLIFF. — DON FENOKIO'S DAUGHTERS. — WHERE NATIVE GOLD IS FOUND. — MINES OF SANTA AÑA. — IN A HOTEL ONCE MORE. — MEXICO A HORN OF PLENTY. — ON THE WRONG TRACK ALL THE TIME. — ANOTHER JOURNEY PROJECTED.



WHEN the villagers learned we were going, they seemed very sorry, and sent us pressing messages to remain, with presents of plums and oranges. As evening approached, an Indian in a ragged frock came and rang the big bell hanging underneath the thatched scaffolding, for *oracion*, or evening prayer; and a woman placed a fresh bunch of flowers before the Virgin's image. Then, in peace and quietness, the day went out, and deep darkness settled about us all, buried in the orange-groves of that bit of *tierra caliente*.

Our recreant guide, Don Celestino, departed before we were awake, in the gray dawn of the ensuing morning. While we were rubbing our dim eyes and wondering what his motive was, a friend appeared, — no less a personage than the worthy *comandante* of Quiotepec, Don Augustino Castillo, — and supplied material for another chapter of the romance. He had heard of our unsuccessful assays, and had mounted his jackass in hot haste, riding down from his eyry and swimming the yellow-flooded Rio Grande just as daylight broke. For he had found out at last that though all the people knew of the mine, but one family knew its location. With the head of this family, a stalwart young Indian, Don Augustino wrestled manfully, until he



IN THE MINES.

promised to take us to the place, if the people were willing. At first they were not; but the *comandante* assembled them and harangued them long and earnestly, in their guttural language, telling them what fools they were for denying to these *señores Americanos* the region of gold, when the working of the mines, for which they had not capital enough, would not only enrich them, but the last mother's son of them, down to the tenth generation. This brought them around, and we gradually got at the discovery of the mine, and Celestino's connection with it.

The grandfather of the present possessor of the secret made the discovery of the vein while working in his *milpa*, planting maguey, some fifty years ago; and a few years after took specimens of the ore to Don Celestino, who was then working at his trade as a silversmith at Ixtlan. The Don took the specimens to Oaxaca for assay, giving out that they had been found by his servant; at which the Indian took umbrage, being a free and independent man, refused to show him the mine, stopped it up, and obliterated all traces of his workings.

But the Indian was superstitious, being a good Catholic, and placed some of the richest lumps before the wooden image of the Malinaltepec Virgin, to gain her approbation; these Celestino stole, and with them had gladdened the eyes of various prospecters, including ourselves, for at least twoscore years. He it was who gave such information to the Governor of Oaxaca and to General Hernandez as led them to invade Malinaltepec, twenty years ago, with a force of soldiers, and threaten the president until he conducted them to a vein; but it proved to be not the right one, — not good for any thing at all. The secret remained with the old Indian, who fled to the forest and stayed there while the soldiers were searching. When he died he described the place in his last testament, and his son likewise handed it down, without further examination, to the young Indian.

Thanks to Don Augustino, this man now stood ready to conduct

us to the spot, provided that Celestino should have no share in the spoils; for the Indian of the Sierra hates treachery, and all the people, after a long palaver, finally gave their consent.

During negotiations we had remained in hiding at Quiotepec; and when Don Augustino returned with tidings of victory, we hied ourselves to the valley again. It was Sunday, quiet and serene; for every head of a family in the village was busily engaged in getting himself into a state of inebriety. The president himself — a small and ill-conditioned Indian, but rejoicing in a name long enough to make up for his lack of personal attractions, even the chief of the village, Señor Don José Maria Incarnacion Salinas de Garcia — was already unsteady on his pins, as he invited us into his hut to speed us on our way with a drink of fiery *mescal*.

Gladsofly we urged our horses up the steep to the hut on the far hillside where lived the widow of the man who once knew, with his son and daughter. The maiden proved to be the same one we had seen before, grinding corn in the twilight; and she was wearily grinding now, — this heiress to the undeveloped mine. With an alacrity that was in itself suspicious, the Indian guided us to a hole in the ground in the near forest, shielded by an overhanging rock from curious observation, and indicated that as the opening to the vagrant vein. And while my companions dug and delved, and chipped off pieces of the rock, I sat on an outcropping ledge in the shade, and looked out over the valleys and hills and the distant mountains of Vera Cruz, and thought upon the past, — of the gold that the comrades of Cortez undoubtedly obtained in this region, and of the *buen retiro* that the great captain ordered to be constructed here, with its pleasure-house, its artificial ponds stocked with fish, and its gardens of cacao-trees.

As the red sun dropped down upon the blue hills toward the Gulf, like a meteor, falling directly upon the Tabasco region, — the home of Malinche, Indian princess and mistress of Cortez, — the

miners emerged from their cavern with sacks full of specimens, and we slowly walked down to the hut and the horses.

As the chief and I took a vesper stroll among the ruins of the church, I took occasion to ask him, "What luck?"

He replied moodily, "We can tell better when we find a genuine miner and get the rock tested."

"Another 'horrible suspicion'?" I questioned carelessly, making a swoop with my butterfly-net at a large humming-bird moth hovering over some purple night-flowers.

He nodded his head gloomily.

"It might be better for us if the mineralogist knew a nugget from a lump of iron pyrites, might n't it?"

He nodded again; then said after a pause, "We'll saddle up tomorrow, and take the back trail."

It was just before retiring-hour that the mineralogist recollected a commission he had received from the Governor of the State. He had been told that the people of Malinaltepec were acute sufferers from chills and fever, and had brought along two hundred quinine pills, enough to bombard the whole community. Luckily remembering his charge, he summoned the *presidente* early next morning, and persuaded him to announce to the people that a physician was among them, a renowned *medico*, who could cure all their ills, and urged him at once to trot out all his sick; he would cure them for nothing,—for the universal love of God (*por el amor de Dios*).

And so they came, as we were at breakfast,—an old woman with a graveyard cough, a girl with an incurable ulcer, a man with sciatica, another with paralysis of one arm, a boy with a sore arm, but never a one with fever. As he had no medicine for anything but fever, our physician acquired no prestige among those people; he was furious, in truth, and denounced them before their faces as a set of ingrates, becoming mollified only at the very last, when an old, fever-smitten man appeared, whom he stuffed so full of pills that there was little danger of his having another shake this side the other world.

We departed amid the lamentations of the people, who were just beginning to appreciate our worth. They would have given us the Padre's hut as a permanent position if we would have stayed; but though the temptation was strong, we did not yield to the inclination, and slept that night on the familiar benches of the house of Don Augustino, at Quiotepec.

A cloud hung above us on the journey back, though we put on our best faces; for we were not only leaving behind us what had promised to be Eldorado, but were parting forever from genuinely honest friends, many of whom had crept into our hearts. Don Santos and his horses seemed the only happy ones, for they were worn thin with hard work, and looked forward to a happy week of rest at Oaxaca. The chief's call for *tequilla* and *mescal* exhausted the supply along the route, and it was in a dejected condition that we rode up to the widow's door in Ixtlan one night, and requested permission to rest there till morning. Her sympathy was unbounded, and she did everything in her power to alleviate our distresses of mind and body. She still had faith in the hidden mine, and declared that we had been duped, that the Indians had conducted us to the wrong spot.

"*Señores*," she said to us that evening, "there *is* gold there, indeed; you must return and find it. Rest awhile here, recuperate, take with you a miner who knows the yellow metal in the vein, and return. Gold *has* been found there, *Señores*, I give you my word. In the archives of this town is the sworn statement of a Spaniard who has visited the place himself. Many years ago, one of our citizens befriended an Indian of Malinaltepec; he took him into the Sierras, blindfolded, and when they returned it was with four *burro*-loads of sand containing gold. The Spaniard took it to Mexico, to the capital; and it assayed so rich that the Government sent a squad of one hundred cavalry in search of the locality. But the Indian hid himself in the mountains till they were gone, and the secret still remains with him. And did I tell you of the Indian Socorro, over here in the next valley, who lived

a lifetime—yes, more than forty years—on the grains of gold that the ants, those little insects of the earth, brought to the surface? This is true, my friends, and you must go to Socorro and see the gold-mines that were brought to light by the little ants.”

As Socorro was but a day's journey out of our road, we concluded to pay it a visit, and reached it the next noon, travelling over a rugged road. The mines were closed, and the manager was engaged in celebrating the marriage of his son, a stupid-looking youth of twenty, with a pretty *Mestiza* about seventeen years old. The festivities were at their height, and we were cordially invited to join them,—an invitation which aroused the hitherto lethargic mineralogist, who at once assumed full direction of the wedding-feast.

Further search the next day revealed to us that the mines were not then working, that they had been run at a loss for a year or more, but that we could get more information from a gentleman who lived beyond the valley, Don Pascual Fenokio, the owner of several mines. This was all a hill country we were in, and the trail beyond was narrow and difficult. This I particularly remember from a fall I got, the first one of the journey, from my horse. It was not the poor *caballo's* fault, nor altogether mine. We were riding along a shelf cut out of a high cliff, a narrow ledge, beneath which a precipitous bank fell straight to a brawling stream, perhaps sixty feet below. My black mare seemed to think the path insecure, and crowded me against the



A MESTIZA GIRL.

perpendicular wall, jamming my leg so severely that without a thought as to consequences I pulled her head savagely to the right. I had not counted upon the cruel Mexican bit in her mouth, — a veritable instrument of torture, with its crooked tongue-piece and pendent bits of iron. The pain was such that she jumped sidewise instantly, and I found myself aground at once. The mineralogist yelled; the chief halted as if stupefied; but the mare and myself regained our composure after the first shock, and soon righted ourselves. As she had jumped into a hole just level with her back, I had not far to fall; but another foot to the right would have carried us rolling down the bank.

“You chose a good spot for your exhibition,” said the chief, as he spurred past. “There is n’t another place in the trail so wide as this. But the next time you light, get off on the left side; that is the customary one taken in Mexico.”

My good beast was uninjured, and, remounting, I followed my companions to the house of Don Fenokio, buried in a little valley formed by a lateral tributary to the principal river of the district.

The Don, a stalwart man of about forty-five, with a kindly face half hidden by a beard, more resembled a Scotchman than a Mexican; he spoke English with a correct accent, being the first *gente de razon* (man of reason) we had found in a fortnight’s ride who addressed us in our own tongue. His father, in fact, was an Englishman, — one of a colony planted here fifty years ago, sent out to work the mines. He had with him a most charming family of daughters, neat of manner and gentle-voiced, who entertained us delightfully with music and conversation, until we were more than half persuaded that we had found at last the fair *señoritas* about whom the poet perpetually raves. Don Fenokio frankly informed us of the condition of the mines of the State of Oaxaca, the richest of which were clustered almost in sight of his house. There is comparatively little gold in Mexico; all the great mines of the central region and the northwest — those of Tachuca,

Guanajuato, Zacatecas, and Chihuahua — being of silver, the ore of low grade, and very difficult and expensive to work. In very low localities — such as the desert region of Lower California, certain exhausted placers in Señora, and perhaps in or near the old district of Tasco, State of Guerrero, which were worked by the Aztecs, before Spanish possession — as well as in Oaxaca, has gold been found. And while the silver lies in masses, or is disseminated in fine threads that ramify the vast chain of the Sierra Madre, — veins that have been followed, some of them, for over three hundred years, — the gold is found in pockets in the granite rocks of Oaxaca, without any superficial indications that can be positively relied upon.

On the borders of the great State of Oaxaca, which is many leagues in extent, the Sierra Madre is depressed, breaking up into various cordilleras which sink, at the isthmus of Tehuantepec, into insignificant hills. These Sierras, situated mostly in Oaxaca, yield more gold than any other section of the country; and it is to them — hallowed as they are by traditions of Eldorado, ancient and modern — that Mexico looks for her future supply of *el oro* (the yellow gold).

A mile above Don Fenokio's reduction works are those of a formerly famous mine, the Cinco Señores, poor now, and not paying expenses. When the French soldiers were here, during their invasion of Mexico, plundering everything they could find, they espied a heap of litharge, — which was, of course, a perfectly useless product for them, — and mistook it for gold. Packing their knapsacks full of it, they are said to have carried it to the city of Mexico, above two hundred miles, before discovering their mistake.

Leaving with regret Don Fenokio and his interesting family, we posted on for the cotton-mills of Xia, which we had first seen in our first day in the hills. We rode along the hill-crests; beneath us we could see the ruins of an old settlement, the reduction works of Santa

Aña, the headquarters of the English company that ventured in this region nearly sixty years ago. All is in a state of decay, bananas and sugar-cane growing where once the circling mules trod the silver paste in the *patio*; yet the company that erected the massive walls and sank the shafts in the mountains expended \$500,000 in this State alone. We met one of the old miners, a few days later, who told us of those flush times with a sparkle in his eye:—

“ Ah, gentlemen, those were rich times, indeed; money in plenty, and little labor. Gold? *Si, Señores*, in abundance, and without the trouble of digging! Oh, no! we did n't get it out of the mines, we poured it *into* them. No, indeed, all our gold came from England; we never sent any back. Somebody in England must have lost money in that venture; but it was n't the miners.”

It was dark by the time we reached the ridge above Xia valley, and we lost the trail leading into it, groping our way through thick scrub in a terrible thunder-storm. The barking of some watchful dogs, who would have caused it to fare hard with us had we been afoot, guided us to the factory, and we arrived there in a drenched condition, notwithstanding our *mangas de agua*, or rubber cloaks. The jolly engineer— he who had described his adventures in gold-hunting on Orizaba Mountain— entertained us that night, and in the morning we rode over the hills to Oaxaca. Not a man we met on that journey have I seen since, though we later heard that the fair Soledad was awaiting the photographs of the *Americanos* with impatience.

Don Fenokio, it is true, as representative to Congress, visited the city of Mexico (narrowly missing the naturalist) three months later, and left a request for a book the latter had written, which was forwarded to Oaxaca, with the author's compliments.

“ Do you know,” said the chief to me one evening in the Plaza, “ the configuration of this country, Mexico, coincides most remarkably with that of a cornucopia? ”

“ True; I have never thought of it before, but it does.”

“ And if we believe native traditions, it is a veritable horn of plenty.”

“ Yes.”

“ Well, it ought to be.”

“ Why?”

“ Because the United States and England alone have poured money enough into it to make it one,— sixty millions in railways, thirty millions in mining investments, and perhaps ten millions or more in other speculations.”

“ The big end of this horn of plenty,” interpolated the mineralogist, “ is opened toward the United States; the money goes in that end, but the investors always come out of the *little end* of this Mexican horn.”

“ Too true!” sighed the chief. “ We have individually contributed something toward swelling the ultimate aggregate,— not less than \$500; but we must not let this discourage us. I have a ‘horrible suspicion,’ ”— the mineralogist let his ears droop at this; the naturalist prompted him, as he hesitated,— “ a horrible suspicion that we were on the wrong track all the time,” continued the chief.

“ Wrong track,— all the time?”

“ Yes; I have been reading the ‘ Letters of Cortez ’ over again carefully, and I can now positively locate the site of the ancient mine, without a doubt.”

The naturalist and the mineralogist looked their incredulity.

Ignoring them, the chief went on: “ I am so firmly convinced that I can find the locality that I will defray all the expenses of the expedition. Our course will be farther south than the first trail; and as we saw on our other trip no carriages of any kind, nor track wide enough for wheels, in this we shall not see the imprint of a horse’s hoof even.”

“ No horses! How, then, shall we travel?”

“Mules,” replied the chief, “or *burros*, just as you may elect.”

“How long shall you be gone?”

“About two weeks.”

“And the distance?”

“Don’t know; perhaps three hundred miles. It is somewhat beyond the region we have traversed, in that section described by Cortez as being inhabited by Indians having spears sixteen feet in length. They would n’t allow the Spaniards to enter their territory, but sent out presents of gold that made them wild to do so. Though they and their descendants have kept this territory inviolate, we will be the first strangers to explore it and discover its fabulous wealth.”

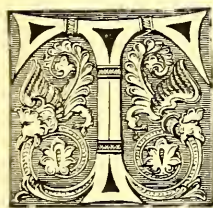
“It is now my turn,” said the naturalist, “to have a ‘horrible suspicion’ that we shall return — if we *do* return — without a grain of gold or hint of the mine.”

“Hear the pessimist!” retorted the chief; “but, notwithstanding, he will start with us to-morrow.”

CHAPTER IX.

AN INTIMATE ACQUAINTANCE WITH A MULE.

THREE HUNDRED MILES A-MULEBACK. — MANANA. — A CITY OF THE DEAD. — THE LARGEST TREE IN MEXICO. — A GAIT WITH A HITCH IN IT. — RIDING PICK-ABACK. — MUSIC ON THE JARANA. — PRIMITIVE PEOPLE. — A BRONZE VENUS. — MEXICAN HIGH-WOODS. — DEER AND WILD TURKEY. — COMALTEPEC AND CHOAPAM. — RIDING A MULE DOWNSTAIRS. — THE HAMMOCK 'NEATH THE HEN-ROOST.

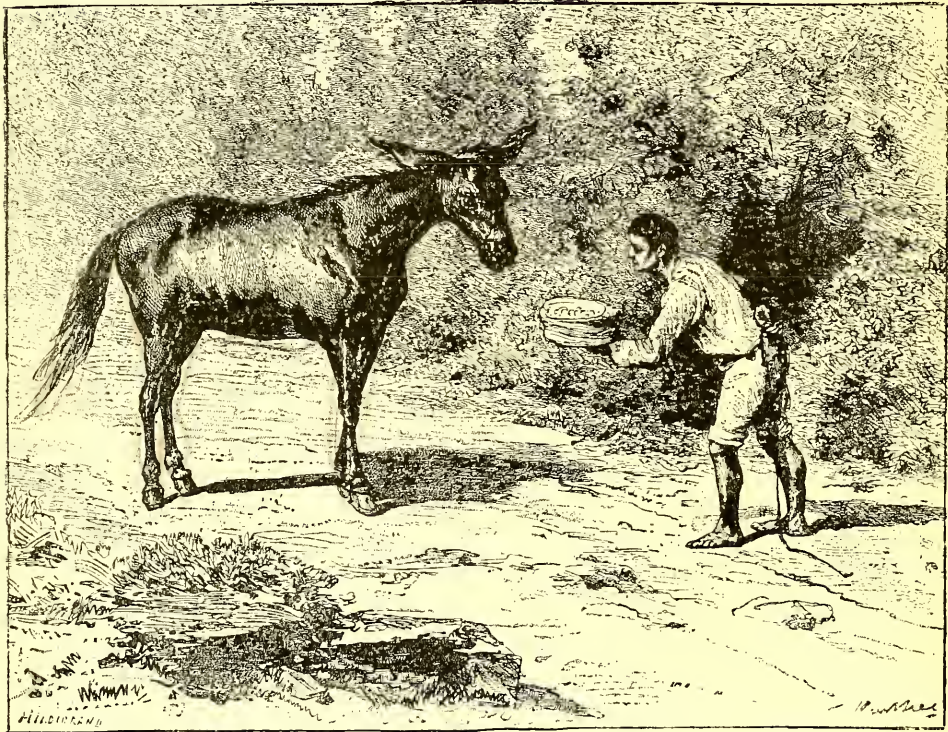


T O-MORROW — *manana*, the day we were to leave Oaxaca on our second expedition in search of the lost mine — came and went, and several other to-morrows with it; for our chief had lived long in Mexico, and never did to-day what could be postponed till to-morrow.

The city hotel, with its open court surrounded by rows of stone pillars, its cheerless great chambers with brick floors and narrow iron bedsteads, was not an attractive place of abode. But its *frijoles*, — its fried beans, — which the naturalist preferred *refritos*, or re-fried, were so rich, and the city sights were so interesting, that it required more than the combined energies of the party to turn our backs upon it and penetrate anew the forest wilds. Hence we took a week of preparation; for instead of the easy-going horses with their suggestions of Arab pedigree, which carried us safely and easily, we should be compelled to straddle stiff-jointed and unsympathetic mules; and instead of the gentlemanly Don Santos as guide, we were to be conducted by a surly *arriero*, a muleteer, with dark and villanous countenance, who celebrated the first three days of his engagement by

getting (and remaining) drunk upon *mescal corriente*, a sinful species of Indian "tangle-foot."

The *mescal*, or native whiskey, is made by macerating the "heads," or central bulbs, of the maguey (*Agave Mexicana*) in water, fermenting the resultant liquid, and then distilling. It is a most insidious drink,



ONE WAY OF CATCHING A MULE.

very intoxicating, limpid, sweetish in taste, and fiery. The true "fire-water" (*aguardiente*; literally, "burning water") is the product of the sugar-cane. But the Mexican Indian does not confine himself to a narrow range of beverages; for more than fifty are enumerated by the native statisticians, extracted from maize, honey, barley, maguey,

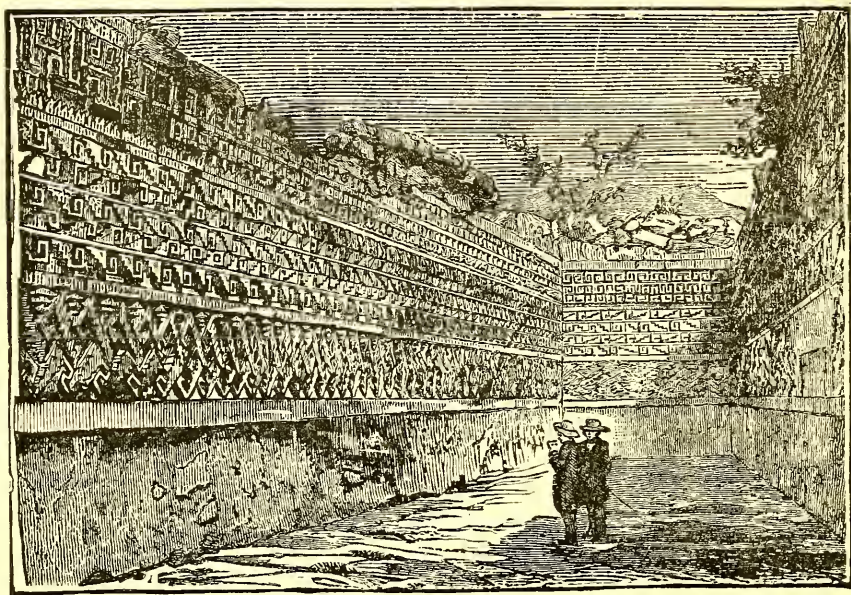
sugar-cane, cocoa-palm, and various seeds and plants. The *atolli*, or corn-gruel, spoken of by the early conquerors, is the favorite beverage used in the field and when on long journeys; but *mescal*, *tequillo*, and *aguardiente* are the preferred strong drinks.

One Saturday morning, the first on which our *mulero* was sober enough to saddle and load our mules, we rode through the *garita*, or city gate, of Oaxaca, on our last and most desperate attempt to discover the Indians' treasure. It was a delicious morning, with that all-pervading sweetness in the air which delights the senses of the traveller on the slope of the Mexican *tierra templada*. Early as it was, we were met by troops of Indians trotting into market, with towering loads on their backs from their distant mountain gardens, — Indians of the Sierras, all of them, but of several different tribes, — the Mijes, Zapotecs, and Zoches, — but all civil to us, doffing their hats or greeting us with smiles.

With our pack-mule trotting gayly ahead and our guide closing the rear, we filed through the fields of cane and pasture-lands, taking the hills at the town of Tlalistac, famous in the local history as the birthplace of the celebrated painter Cabrera, whose best work now adorns the walls of the art gallery of San Carlos, Mexico City. Climbing the hills, we were delighted with the views of the valley, yellow with sugar-cane and bathed in golden mist; the vale of Tlacolula, once the home of a most civilized race of Indians, as attested by the numerous mounds containing buried vessels of exquisitely moulded clay and implements of copper. Within fifteen miles of us, at a point where a wall of hills intersects the valley, lay the wonderful "City of the Dead," Mitla, with its palace walls (still standing), ornamented with those arabesques that have puzzled antiquarians since their discovery, and which are distinct from every other group of ruins in Mexico or in the world.

The valley and the hillsides were almost destitute of large trees, but a few notable giants cast the shade of their huge bulks far over

the fields; and within sight was the largest and perhaps the oldest tree in Mexico, the vast-bodied savin-tree of Santa Maria del Tule, nearly fifty feet in diameter; so prodigious that it is described by Humboldt as one of the vegetable wonders of the world. We had visited and measured this *arbol de Tule* several weeks before, making a special side-trip to see it. The stony trail wound along the banks of a



GRAND HALL, MITLA.

little stream, which it crossed many times, beneath wild mangos and overhung by flowering shrubs, above which and over the shallow water at the fording-places hung clouds of butterflies.

Our mules carried us well, but awkwardly, their gait being made unpleasant by a peculiar hitch in it, which twitches the rider about most uncomfortably. How we lamented the loss to us of our horses! — the best in the world, as I can myself testify, having bestrode many others, as in the West Indies and Florida. Regretfully I

recalled the good qualities of my black mare, who was so careful and sure-footed on the steeps and so eager for a gallop on level ground. I well remember, even now, the entreating look in her large, soft, and brilliant eye, as she would turn around to me beseechingly whenever we reached a smooth bit of road, and how joyously she shot forward, at the faintest pressure of leg or arm, and slightest shake of bridle-rein, cleaving the air like a mad creature, yet obedient to my every motion. The voice of my cautious guide, who was extremely jealous of *caballito*, yet rings in my ears: Andale! andale! pero, poco à poco, Don Federico!" (Go it, Don Federico! but gently, my son, gently!) My old guide is dead, as, perhaps, is his gentle steed; and my sole memento of them is the bridle, which I begged of him at parting.

But to return to our mules, from whom I should not have galloped away. In the afternoon they were bearing us through a grand oak forest, some eight thousand feet above the sea, where the sub-vegetation was the wild maguey, and a hundred strange plants we could not even name. The third group of huts we saw in this day's journey was a wretched place called Cauzimoloya, which we reached at dark, at such an altitude above the sea — probably ten thousand feet — that no plants were cultivated here except the potato and maguey. The inhabitants were surly, and only with reluctance gave us permission to shelter ourselves beneath the roof of the principal hut, where there was not even room to swing our hammocks, and we slept on the table and floor. A wide fireplace yawned in the centre of the room, and into this we constantly threw pine-knots, and watched them flame and smoke nearly the whole night through. We clambered into our saddles in the morning, so happy in getting away from Cauzimoloya that stiffness and fatigue were lightly thought of, and rode for half a day through a noble forest of pines, with sheltered glades at intervals, ever descending toward the east and south. After the sun had reached its meridian, we obtained occasional glimpses of the open country

beyond, the great "department" of Villa Alta, occupied almost exclusively by Indians, and where, we were assured, no American had ever before travelled. Hills and vast slopes, cut athwart by *barrancas*, stretched away toward the Gulf for many a league; a fair and beautiful country, with Indian hamlets profusely scattered over it. As we emerged from the forest skirts, we rode into cultivated grounds, passing that afternoon the villages of San Miguel, San Pedro, San Francisco, and Cohonos. We had overtaken in the forest, the previous afternoon, a party of *Mestizos*, who had with them a little girl borne in a *silla*, or chair, strapped to the back of a stout Indian. The moans of the little one and her pallid countenance had inspired us with sympathy, which we expressed in a few words of cheer, as we rode by.

To our surprise, as we reached the deepest part of the first valley, — where we crossed a rapidly flowing stream, over an arched bridge of stone scarcely two feet in width, — we found the party at home, in a little *hacienda*, where they entreated us to tarry awhile, and gave us our saddle-bags full of oranges and delicious draughts of native wines.

Climbing the opposite hills, in the deepening shadows of the coming night, through narrow lanes hedged in part of the way by garden plants, we halted for the night in the quaintest of Indian towns we had yet seen, Zochila-Tabaa. The *cabildo*, or "king's house," was thrown open to us, the *alcalde* purchased for us some chickens and wine, and while we devoured our supper by the light of *ocote* torches, some of the simple people gathered around, and played sweet melodies on their aboriginal harps, or *jaranas*. We stretched our hammocks in the guest-chamber of the *cabildo*, which lies just back of the great stone church, and slept soundly the night through. We were astir early the next morning, for the great red sun shone straight against the eastern walls of this adobe hamlet, calling out the *alcalde*, who brought us coffee and *tortillas*, and set us on our way with a hearty *buen viaje*. Most of the Indians were already astir; the women,

naked from the waist up, were crushing corn at the *metall*, the men collecting their sheep and goats for their day afield. It was a primitive people we found here, living out a paradisiacal existence, whose quiet was rarely disturbed by strangers, — as we were a little later reminded.

In the elasticity of my spirits that cool morning, I had vaulted into the saddle, and was urging my mule up the steep acclivity, through narrow paths meandering among gardens, cane-fenced, and among hedgerows of cochineal cactus. I had outstripped my companions, and was alone, saving the presence of my mule, and fell to musing upon the blissful state of things here, where even man partook of the serenity of Nature, and was gentle and courteous, as in those far-away days preceding the advent of the Spaniard. Musing thus, I dropped the bridle-rein upon the pommel, and my beast jogged sleepily onward, with footfalls scarcely audible. Suddenly he stopped; I instinctively prodded him with the spur, and he moved on again; but as I looked about me for what had halted him, I too was startled. The trail had left behind the huts and gardens, and entered a ravine, where it hugged a steep, fern-hung bank, over which dropped, in a leap of a dozen feet, a sparkling thread of a stream. And beneath this rivulet, falling musically into a little pool a few feet above the trail stood what appeared to be a statue of glistening golden-bronze, half veiled in the silver spray, — a bronze sculpture of a female figure.

I wondered where the artist had got his model, if from some maid of the village below, and resolved to make a search for this unknown sculptor. Perhaps the chief could tell me; so I shouted to him to hurry along. The figure was back toward me, with the head half turned aside and drooping; but as my voice resounded through the glen, *it moved*, and I then saw that what I had mistaken for a work of aboriginal art was only an Indian girl of the Sierras taking her morning bath. “Buenos dias, Señorita!” I ejaculated, putting spurs to my mule; and “Buena dia, Señor!” said the maiden, who did not

even turn her head to see what manner of man was this stranger who had so rudely interrupted her sport. As neither of my com-



panions, following not far behind, saw the girl, she must have darted into the shrubbery as soon as I was out of sight. Indian beauty and beauties were the topic of conversation when they joined me ; and the

chief, who was a perfect encyclopædia of ethnological learning, — in truth, his name may be found on the titlepage of an American encyclopædia as assistant editor, — the chief declared that he had seen straighter and more symmetrical figures among the Indians of South America and Mexico than among any others he had met.

Thus discoursing, we rode over the eastern slope of the hills, until we arrived at a gap in a ridge, riding through which we saw before us the town of Villa Alta, the centre of the department of the same name. It was then hot noon; but the *jefe* invited us into his cool courtyard, and we abode with him until the next day. The town contains many substantial stone houses, a fine church, and a bustling market in a wide *plaza*. The *jefe's* hospitality was profuse; but we broke away from him the next day, and again took the trail.

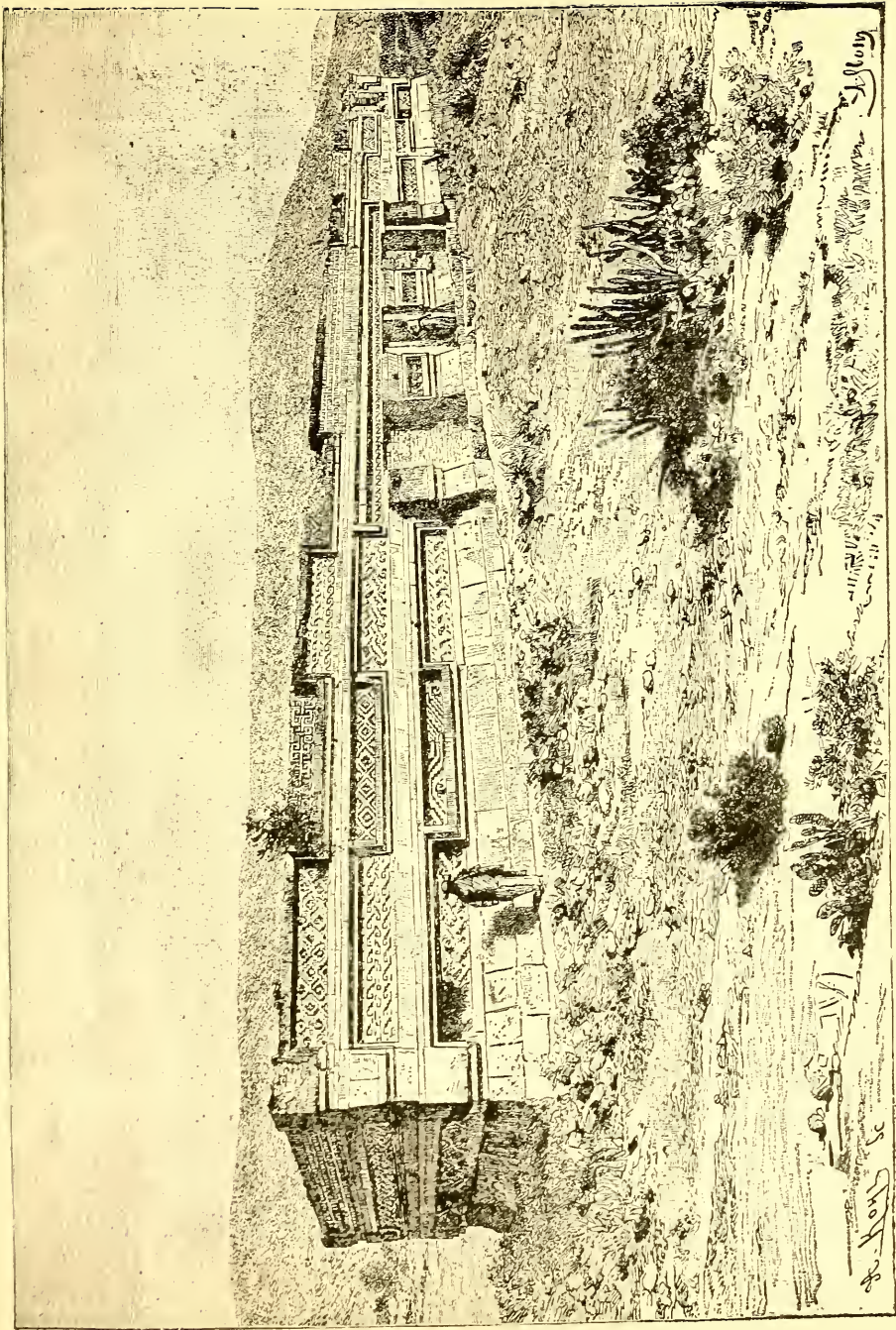
We traversed a section of the country so different that it told us of near approach to the warm region of the coast; for after riding up and down the cultivated slopes of hills, and crossing a swift stream over a kind of hammock bridge, we entered a great forest similar to the "high woods" of the West Indies. The trees were enormous, their trunks buttressed like cypresses, their fine foliage projected against the sky at least a hundred feet above our heads, their limbs and branches bound together by the supple cordage of lianas, and festooned with thousands of epiphytes. We saw a deer (*venado*) and a wild turkey (*paso del monte*); but wild animal life did not abound, even birds being scarce, as well as butterflies.

We lunched by the side of a swift-falling stream, in a gorge filled with the rankest of vegetable growths, — ferns, bignonias, and wild plantains, — and early in the afternoon emerged from the forest into an Indian village called Tonaqui, buried so deeply in banana gardens that we hardly noticed the houses. Some hours later we reached Comaltepec, and at dark, in a pouring rain, entered the village of Choapam, which lies on a steep hillside; three or four rows of adobe houses in the midst of luxuriant gardens. The hill descends

rapidly to a deep ravine; in front is another long green hill, and farther east a great broad one, on which are the church, half-dozen houses, and coffee-groves of Latini.

The *jefe politico* was the only white man in the place; the shrewdest *gente de razon* we had met with, who received us so warmly and discoursed upon politics so intelligently, that it was far into the small hours of morning ere our chief sought his canvas couch. He was a supreme optimist, this leader of ours, ever believing that the next day would disclose to us some clew to the object of his search, some man who could unerringly guide us. Finding in the chief Choapam a congenial soul, a good listener, he drew out of his saddle-bag his precious "Cartas de Cortes," and undertook to prove to the *jefe* that the trail we were pursuing led directly to the undiscovered river with the sands of gold. The *jefe* had resided in the country many years, and undertook to rectify at times the statement of our friend regarding the geography of the region; but at such times he was abruptly stopped by an imperative "Oiga usted!" (Look here, my friend!) that promptly shut him up. Then the Mexican would gnaw his beard and say, with a wag of his head, the chief was welcome to his opinion, but he himself was glad he was not to take the journey.

The next day, the 1st of September, instead of starting off early in the morning, we did not leave Choapam till noon; and as it was now the height of the rainy season, when all travel should be made in the first half of the day, we got well punished for our delay. We had just turned the first hill, when a black cloud, that we had seen gathering ominously above the ravine, burst over us, and the rain fell upon us in a flood. To reach the opposite hill, we had first to plunge into the ravine, and to do this were obliged to ride down the side of a cliff out of which steps had been cut in the solid rock. I was ahead when these perilous stairs were disclosed, and the pressure of my companions' mules from behind compelled me to take the descent



THE GRAND PALACE OF MITLA, PROVINCE OF OAXACA.



without alighting; and step by step, with a caution no beast but a mule could possess, she walked down those slippery rocks. There were between twenty and thirty of them, and as the mule hitched herself over each one, I clung desperately to the saddle with nervous hands, feeling about my heart an electric thrill and a prickling sensation at the roots of my hair. As her hoofs finally slid on the yellow clay beyond the last step, and I turned around to see how my friends took it, I saw how steep was the sheer wall above them, how black and precipitous the bank below, and trembled for their safety. But the mineralogist came down jauntily, swinging his whip, while the chief puffed away at his cigar with a far-away look in his eyes that told of his indifference to present circumstances and implicit confidence in his mule.



ONE OF THE PACK-ANIMALS.

Full five hours the rain poured down its torrents, making of the path a rushing streamlet, and penetrating our rubber *capas* as if they were mere cotton capes. The landscape was entirely enveloped in clouds of mist; but we appeared to be surrounded by great forests, at times by hills, and we plodded disconsolately along steep *bajadas*, or descents, ravines, and *cañadas*, or water-courses. Late in the afternoon we passed by a spout with running water and a smooth washing-stone; but the settlement, of which this would indicate the proximity, had perished, — a wild growth of bananas and plantains alone remaining.

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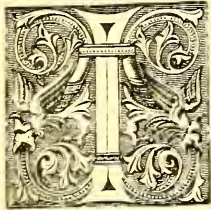
A little while before it was time for the sun to set we did ultimately reach a human habitation, a single hut, called La Hermita, — the Hermit alone in this wilderness. It was in charge of a girl of twelve and a small boy, with whom, without asking their permission,

we proposed stopping for the night, — for there was no other shelter for many miles. A liberal offer of silver started the boy in pursuit of a chicken, and set the girl grinding corn at the *metatl*, while our *mulero* dragged the packs and saddles from the mules, and kindled a blaze on the clay floor of the hut, by which we wearily sat down and drew off boots and leggings, saturated with water, like the rest of our garments. It required a good hour by the sputtering flame, and half the chief's supply of *aguardiente*, to bring their wonted suppleness to our limbs, and dispel the atmosphere of gloom; and then we fell to upon the chicken (which had been driven from joyous life directly into the stewpan, as it were), and the few exceedingly tough *tortillas* prepared by the maiden. Although the chief was the direct instrument of all this misfortune, we did not reproach him, being too unutterably woe-smitten to do so, and retired to sleep as soon as our hammocks were hung. We had plenty of company. My hammock was directly over a brooding turkey, which kept up a hissing noise the whole night through; a female dog with a litter of pups snarled and whined whenever I stirred; a roost of fowls on either side chucked and murmured at my slightest motion, while rats and mice coursed over the corn covering the slatted floor just above my head, and inquisitive pigs rooted over our saddles and boots spread on the mud floor. Yet we rested well, though the boy was shelling corn and the girl grinding it, for our breakfast, till long past midnight; and in the morning arose refreshed, yet damp and very stiff. At a spring of sweet water which bubbled up in the centre of a banana grove we bathed our stiffened limbs and washed our soiled clothing, and in four hours from sunrise were again on the march.

CHAPTER X.

A RIDE IN THE RAINY SEASON.

THE DESERTED HAMLET. — STRANGE BIRDS AND BUTTERFLIES. — A HUT-FULL OF TOPERS. — THE CHINANTECOS. — NO GOLD IN SIGHT. — HOME OF THE BOA-CONSTRUCTOR. — CHATTO DIAZ THE OUTLAW. — MEN AS BEASTS OF BURDEN. — OUR BED AND BOARD. — ZAMPOALTEPETL. — THE LAST STRIP OF TASAJO. — NIGHT IN THE HIGH FOREST. — OUR LAST CENTARO. — THE LAST LEAP INTO THE SADDLE. — FEVER-SMITTEN. — BULL-TAILING. — LEFT ALONE. — A REUNION AND A FAREWELL. — HOW I ESCAPED THE CALABOOSE.

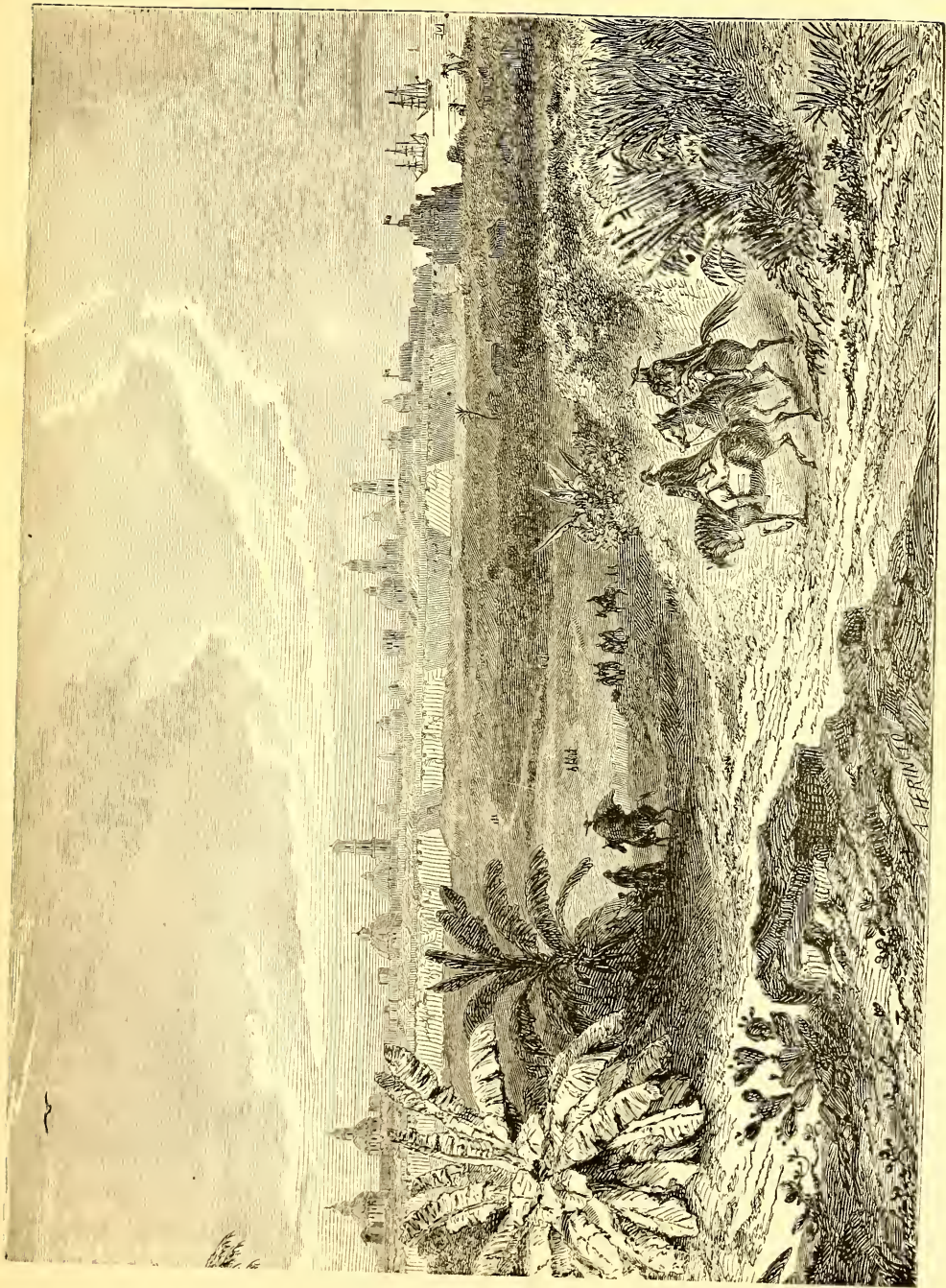


It was at this point that the chief expected to find traces of ancient ruins, but diligent search and inquiry revealed nothing; and he suddenly changed his mind, concluding the ruins must be on another trail which we had missed. Beyond Hermita we passed over oak-covered hills of ferruginous earth, plunging rapidly downward toward *tierra caliente*, — the hot country of the eastern coast; and three hours brought us to Jalahui, right on the dividing line between the warm and the temperate regions. Should a naturalist — or that nondescript which generally travels under that pseudonym, the “collector” — ever visit this section of Mexico, he should make his headquarters here, as it is situated at the union of hill and low country, high enough to be tolerably healthy, and yet within reach of the great forests of the humid lowland. The village was entirely deserted, except by an old horse, which gazed curiously at us from the doorway of the *casa real*.

As the various paths leading from the central, open grass-plot with its great ceiba-tree to the house were quite clear and clean, the people apparently had not been gone long, and were absent in the *milpas*, or corn-fields. We descended from this spot by slippery steeps, the narrow path being worn into the clayey soil by centuries of travel, and rode through a veritable tropical forest, where the lush vegetation of this reeking lowland resounded with the cries of strange birds, as parrots and *chachalahas*. Less than two leagues through this teeming flat country, with lovely streams gliding over golden shallows beneath tree-ferns, wild bananas, and trumpet-trees, brings us to a broad, deep river, the Rio Lalana, which here divides the State of Oaxaca from that of Vera Cruz. A dug-out floats near the bank; a long and high-roofed hut of grass stands at the edge of the forest, the owners of which, when we found them, proved to be highly intoxicated. The women of the hut were sober enough to grant permission to swing our hammocks to the rafters and to cook us something; but the men, shock-headed *mestizos* of the Vera Cruz coast, eyed us with suspicion. Here, according to the latest interpretation of the "Letters," we should find something to reward us in the sand of the river; at least, if not here, then our leaders were at fault, for this was the first stream of magnitude we had seen with sandy bottom, and it was on the extreme eastern verge of that country inhabited by the fierce Chinantecos, who repelled the Spaniards with spears having shafts of extraordinary length. The mineralogist skirted the river, dipping out sand occasionally in a shallow basin and washing it, but he found nothing; and it is my belief that we were on the wrong river.

It was a peculiarity of the chief's nature that he always turned a defeat into victory; and when he saw the last hope of gold fade away at the river verge, he calmly stated his determination to return at once.

It is my opinion that the country we had been traversing for the



VERA CRUZ.

three days past did contain rich deposits of gold, and that the rivers even would yield traces of it in their sands. As has been already hinted, the mineralogist, whose slight acquaintance was derived solely from books and upon whom we entirely depended, did not know gold sign when he saw it. And so, next morning, we journeyed wearily back to Choapam, where our friend the *jefe*, Mariano Ibar, received us heartily. He condoled with us, and said that if a Mexican had been through where we had, he would have come back cursing his mother and denying his country; whereas our coolness and indifference were his admiration. The forest we had passed through, he said, was the haunt of deer and tiger; and it was wonderful that we did not see any boa-constrictors in the lowland, for they were numerous there, many of them over twenty feet in length. Northeast of the point at which we struck the river is a vast tract, thousands of acres, of wild agave, which yields the *pita*, a fibre from six to eight feet long, and which, being Government land, could be "denounced" in any quantity. The rarest of wood, also, such as rosewood, mahogany, and satinwood, grew there. But it was as much as one's life was worth to penetrate and reside in those low littoral regions, since the fevers there were terrible, sure to attack a foreigner, and on the coast itself the *vomito* raged in all the settled districts. The only town of consequence in the *tierra caliente* beyond was Playa Vicente, on a large river, where were agents of Vera Cruz commercial houses, who bought the products of the interior, as coffee, hides, and woods, at very low prices.

Don Mariano was a gossipy host, and told us more political secrets than it would do to reveal here. In this State was the old stamping-ground of the dreaded Chatto Diaz, the cruel brother of the President of Mexico, who had wantonly killed, according to report, the chiefs of seventy-two municipalities and eleven *curas*. One time he was riding through an Indian village and saw an old man sitting in his doorway; drawing his revolver, he shot this inoffensive creature dead on the spot,

and then rode on, as though nothing had happened. Chatto received his reward long ago, by being shot by one of his men; but his name lingers among the hills as that of a fiend incarnate.



PRESIDENT DIAZ.

Our *carga* mule went lame at Choapam, and we hired two *mozos* to take part of the luggage, who agreed to carry a load apiece for three days for seven *reales* (about ninety cents) each. These men often make the journey to Oaxaca with heavy loads — a distance of over one hundred miles — at five *reales* each *arroba*!

Two hours distant from Choapam, on the back trail, is Comaltepec, the most picturesque of these Indian towns, set down in the bend of a large river that roars among huge

boulders, and divides the settlement, with its corn-fields, banana, orange, and coffee groves, into two parts, united by an old pole bridge covered with a thatched roof. Upon the hillsides are great masses of vines, trumpet-trees and castor-plants, above which peer the peaked roofs of thatch and the stone tower of the church. There was a procession of the Virgin, as we entered the village; the members of the band, in white cotton shirts and open pantaloons, came and knelt before the image, playing excellent music for half an hour, then rose and followed three boys with crucifix and candles, preceded by a man with a bell. I was offered a candle, and a place in the procession, but declined, without injury to their feelings.

That night we had the choice of a hammock, a bed, and a bench; the "bed" fell to me, — an old door with a strip of straw matting over it, laid on the floor of a cell, damp, dark, and malodorous. As we

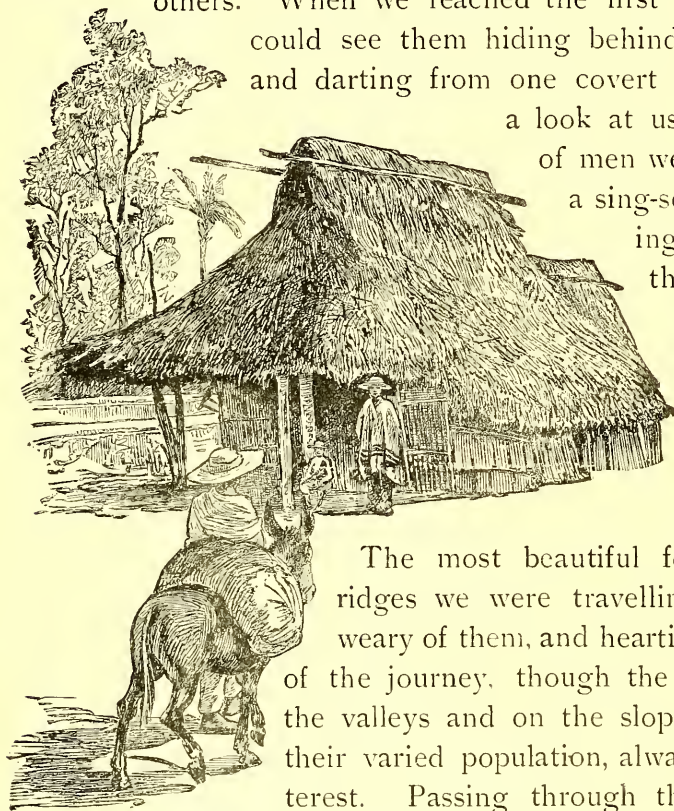
were about to start in the morning, it occurred to these people to tell us that we could n't cross the river without first carrying our luggage across the bridge of poles, and swimming the mules over; so the saddles were removed, and everything carried to the other side; and when this was accomplished, it was after ten o'clock, and rain threatening us out of black clouds. For five hours we toiled upward, finally gaining and entering a mountain valley with several towns in it. We had passed from the river bottom to the highest town in the State, Totontepec, which lies on a semicircular hillside; above it towers a great rock, known as *la Mitra* (the Mitre); and in its centre lies a church, of large dimensions, but covered with thatch. The highest mountain in the State, Zampoaltepetl, is right in sight; its summit a day's journey distant.

Inquiring for the house of a *gente de razon*, we were directed to Don Felipe Alcantara, to whom we applied as one of the two white men in the hamlet. Don Felipe is a silversmith, and works out of doors under an open shed, with all this glorious mountain scenery spread before him. He has but one room in his dwelling, but he says, "Mi casa esta muy à su disposiciones, Señores" (My house is very much at your service, gentlemen); and we take him at his word. It seems a shame to turn a man out of his house; and so I tell the Professor, who replies that we don't know the people, while he does, and can get other lodgings for himself and wife; and that settles it. We have two beds for the three,—a broad board across two saw-horses, covered with our blankets. Next to Don Mariano, of Choapam, Don Felipe Alcantara was the most intelligent man we had met; he was even forming a vocabulary of the Mije language, for the president of Villa Alta. He explained to us the meaning of the custom which we had observed among all the Indians—Zapotecs, Chinantecos, and Mijes—of placing the left hand on the right when handing us anything, especially a cup of drink. In olden times, when the *alcalde* was supreme, whenever an Indian passed him he must take off his hat or

handkerchief, and pass it to the *alcalde* with both hands, as in supplication, when the official would hand it back to him, advising him to be a good Indian, to work well, and to take care of his family.

After leaving Comaltepec and beyond Totontepec, we were in the country of the Mijes,—Indians less educated and wilder than the others. When we reached the first of their villages, we could see them hiding behind bushes and vines, and darting from one covert to another, to have

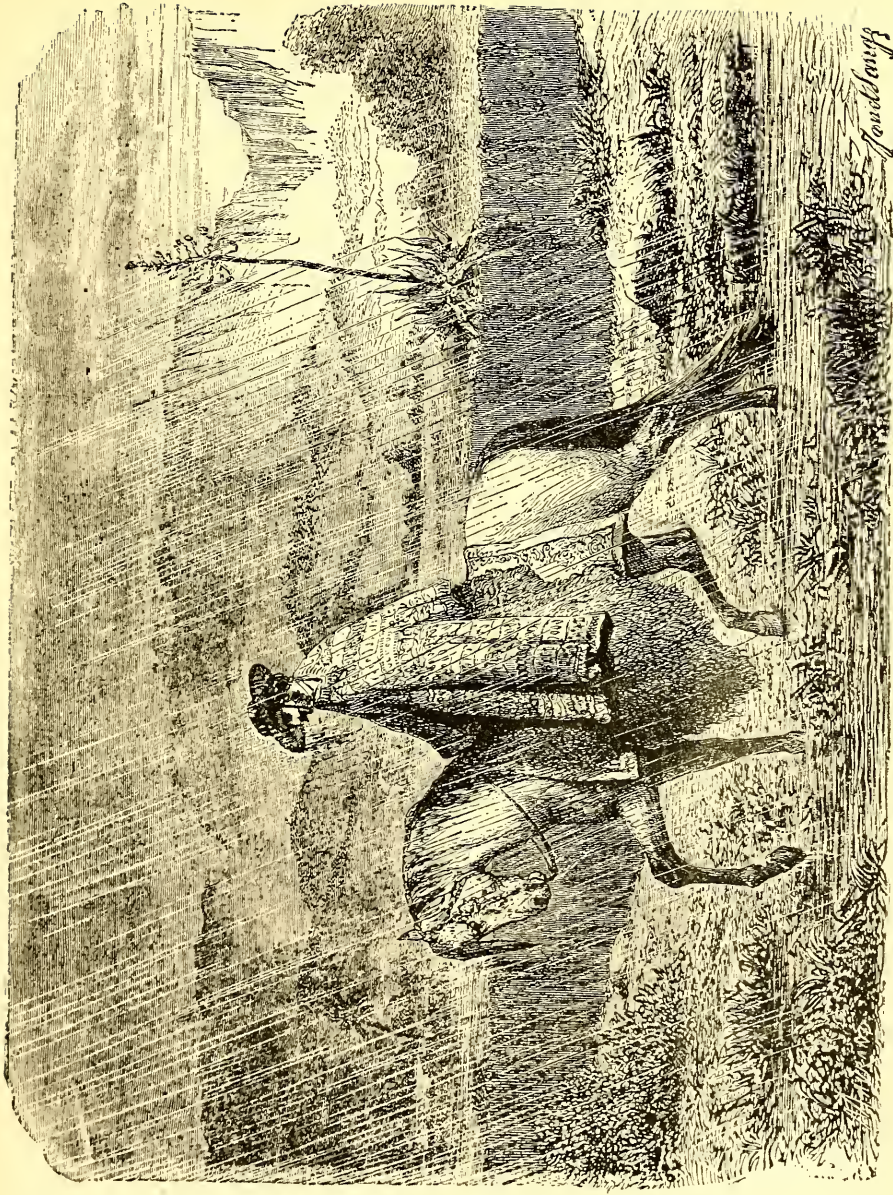
a look at us. At night a party of men went around shouting a sing-song in chorus, warning the inhabitants that they must all turn out to work on the roads in the morning,—a custom I have observed in the Pueblos of New Mexico.



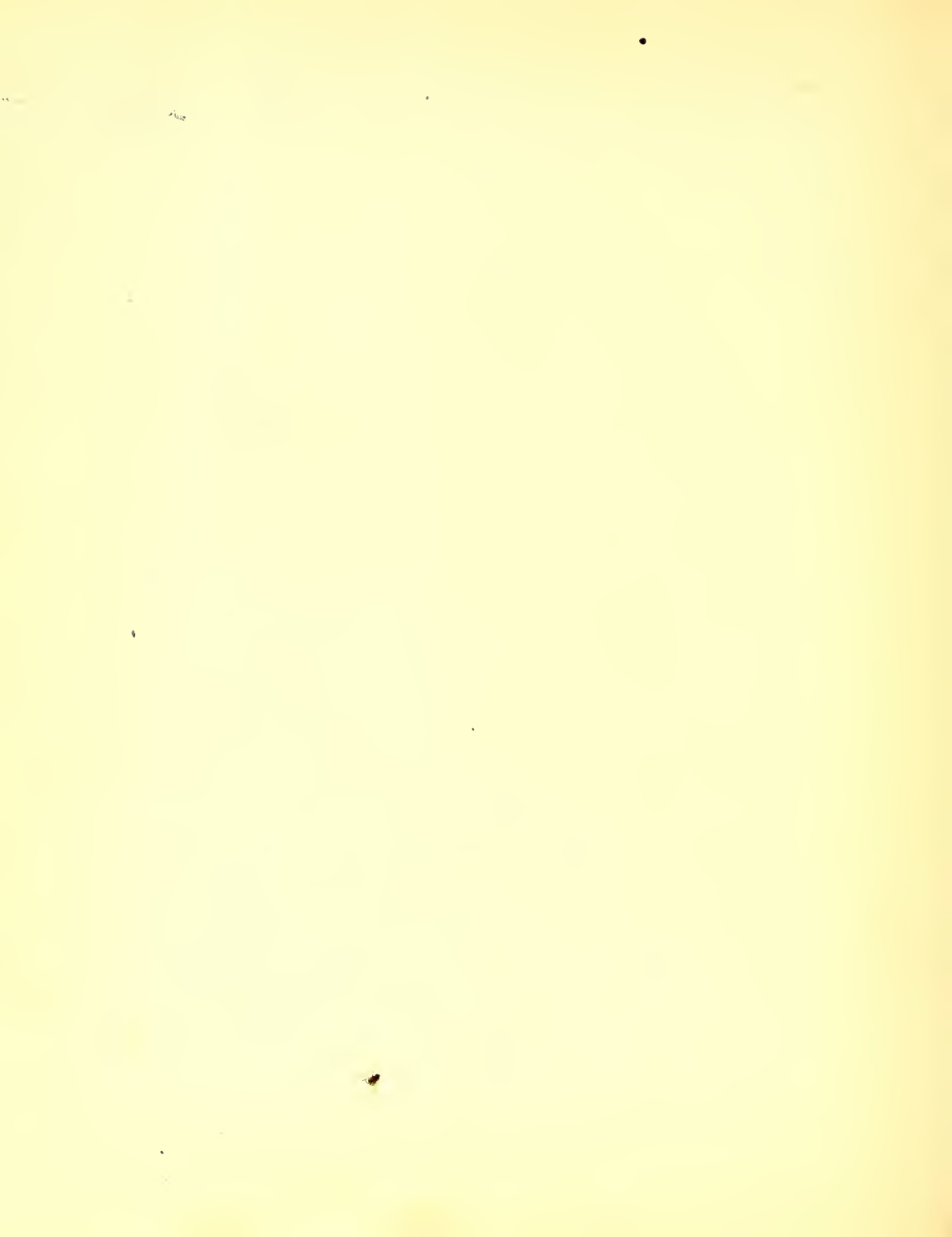
IN THE INTERIOR OF
MEXICO.

The most beautiful forests lay along the ridges we were travelling on; but we were weary of them, and heartily wished for the end of the journey, though the numerous towns in the valleys and on the slopes of the hills, with their varied population, always excited fresh interest. Passing through the thriving town of Chichicastepec, we spent the night at Yalaleg, another Indian settlement. All the country we

had traversed, except of course the mountain ridges and forests, was agricultural, densely inhabited and thoroughly cultivated. We had made a long detour at Comaltepec to the south, but rejoined our old trail at Cohonos, reaching this small Indian hamlet without a scrap of



MEXICAN RAINY-DAY COSTUME.



provision of any sort remaining. To our sorrow, we found nearly all the inhabitants absent in their corn-fields, and could get nothing but a few strips of *tasajo*, or dried beef, which we roasted on the coals, and ate with exceeding great relish. It was late in the day when we entered the mountain forest we had first penetrated in coming into the department of Villa Alta, and night overtook us still in its depths. Had we possessed any food, we should have camped in the woods; but we had nothing, and hoped to find some at Guagimoloya, miles ahead. So we plodded on, in deep darkness, leaving to our mules the finding of the trail. In any other part of Mexico this travel by night in such a wild region would have been attended with danger; but in Southern Mexico safety generally enwraps the feet of the traveller. As we climbed a rugged hillside, between immense rocks and trees, we saw a camp-fire gleam below us, and heard the loud laughter of a party of Indians returning from Oaxaca. The naturalist seemed to have preserved a faint recollection of the trail, and so led the party, finally reaching Guagimoloya at about ten o'clock that night. The same surly crowd we had first met looked askance at us as we entered the log hut; but we secured seats at the blazing hearth, and finally procured coffee and tortillas, and permission to sleep on the floor.

The next day we rode into Oaxaca, men and mules entirely exhausted, and having spent the last *centaro* we had taken with us, at the foot of the hills.

According to the agreement between them, the three explorers were at liberty to separate here and each go his individual way; and the naturalist, having been absent from home over a month longer already than he had purposed, claimed his privilege to return. The chief did his best to retain him, having discovered that the readings of the "Letters" had been altogether incorrect, and that the only route leading to the lost mines was the one he was next to take, in a southwesterly direction, toward the Pacific coast. But, though with sorrow, the naturalist forced himself to say good-by to his friends, parting from

them the next morning, and setting his face toward the railroad leading to Vera Cruz and the steamer thence to the States. Don Santos, our first faithful guide, agreed to take him through to the tramway of Tehuacan, a distance of one hundred and seventy miles, in the three days and a fraction remaining, his horses and himself having recovered their strength and flesh by their long rest while we were in the Chinanteco country. He mounted the naturalist upon his own favorite buckskin, — a true *Mexicano*, that waits till his victim is secure in his saddle, then gets up on his hind legs, and paws the air with his fore legs; reaches out with his hinder limbs; then goes up in the air, and kicks all four legs at once, rolls his eyes, gnashes his teeth, and breathes hard, like a furnace. Yet all the time he had a peculiar air about him, and a sly leer in his eye, that said to the naturalist, "Don't you be afraid of me! this is only my way, you know." Then, as the chief and the mineralogist put out their hands to wring a last farewell, this frisky buckskin leaped to one side and was off like an arrow, leaving them pawing the atmosphere.

As it was yet in the rainy season, the roads were in a horrible condition, with deep holes in them, mud a foot deep, and long stretches of slippery clay; yet that steed, undaunted, waltzed sideways, the greater portion of the journey, down every clayey hill and along the brinks of precipices, in a manner that gave the naturalist deep misgivings. But when on the third day the rider was smitten with a fever-spell, how gently the noble beast bore him over the rough road, — well aware that a man with swaying body and head dropping heavily over the saddle-bow was not able to manage a horse in his tantrums! The streams were swollen, and at the fords we found naked Indians to assist us; one took each horse by the head, while another swam at his flank, on the down-current side, shouting lustily, and landed us safely, though at some distance below the trail. They charged only two *reales* (twenty-five cents) apiece for their service. On the long road leading down from Dominguilla — the only town on

the route — Don Santos gave chase to a bull, and we thundered down the steep grade like a whirlwind, just missing the beast, which darted over the bank as my *compañero* was reaching out to grasp its tail.

With a rain-soaked cloth hanging over his neck, and clinging to the pommel of his saddle, the naturalist rode into the hamlet of Techo-mavaca on the third afternoon, and fell into a cot, in a raging fever. A kind old Indian woman brought him lemonade, and rubbed him all over with *aguardiente*, thus relieving the pain of back and limbs; and he slept till three o'clock next morning, when Don Santos lifted him into the saddle and kept his courage up to the "sticking-point" until the town of Tehuacan and its tramway were reached; and there terminated the horseback and mule-back ride of nearly a thousand miles. Warmly embracing his friend, the Don handed the naturalist his bag of silver, — which he had carried all the time, and now delivered up without a single *peso* missing, — and then left him alone.

Six months later three travellers held a reunion in a hospital ward in New York. The chief was prostrate, smitten with a deadly disease contracted on that journey and in subsequent wanderings after the *ignis fatuus* of Montezuma. But though he explained to us the reason of our failure, and how readily he would soon lead us directly to the treasure, he never left his cot again, and three months later he was in his grave; though I am not willing to affirm that all knowledge of the Aztec treasure-trove perished with him!

Thus died the chief of a strange expedition, our old friend the Professor, who, despite his failings, was a good man and true. We shall miss him when we come to travel again, and we shall ever keep his memory green. In our camp the summer succeeding this Mexican adventure, the Doctor and I discussed the matter of the treasure, and we think we discovered wherein our chief was in error. But whether we shall ever return to the search is a matter of doubt.

Now, as to the sequel to my own story. Some friends were with us who had not been in Mexico, and they insisted upon a story from

the naturalist. The Doctor was urged to relate his experiences ; but he declined.

“ No, I ’m not ready ; let O—— lend a hand. He ’s full of stories ; can’t stick him anywhere but one tumbles out somehow. Come, O——, tell us something about this Mexican muddle.”

“ Don’t remember anything ; but there was something somewhat exciting happened to me once.”

“ Then tell us about it ; we ’re pining for excitement.”

“ Come to think of it, it did n’t happen, but it almost did ; that is, it might have happened if it had.”

“ Well, that ’s near enough ; let us hear it.”

“ Very well, then. There was once a man, whom we will designate as the naturalist, who went to Mexico, and while there wrote some very severe but true things about the Mexicans. Later on he went away down into Southern Mexico, where no letters reached him for seven weeks. When he reached a railroad finally, he was ill with fever. Here he met a lone American ; and while waiting at the lonely station of Esperanza, he improved the time by gleaning, in the intervals of rest allowed him by the intermittent nature of his fever, news of what had transpired during his seven weeks’ absence. The lone American, whom he was plying with questions, suddenly grew frigid, looked at him a moment curiously, and then said, —

“ ‘ Look here ! are n’t you O—— ? ’

“ ‘ I am,’ replied the sick man.

“ ‘ Went down into Southern Mexico about two months ago, along with A—— and B—— ? ’

“ ‘ The same.’

“ ‘ And now skipping the country ? ’

“ ‘ Hardly that ; but still in a hurry to get home.’

“ ‘ Should think you might be ! ’

“ ‘ Might be ! Why ? ’

“ ‘ As though you did n’t know all Mexico was looking for you ! ’

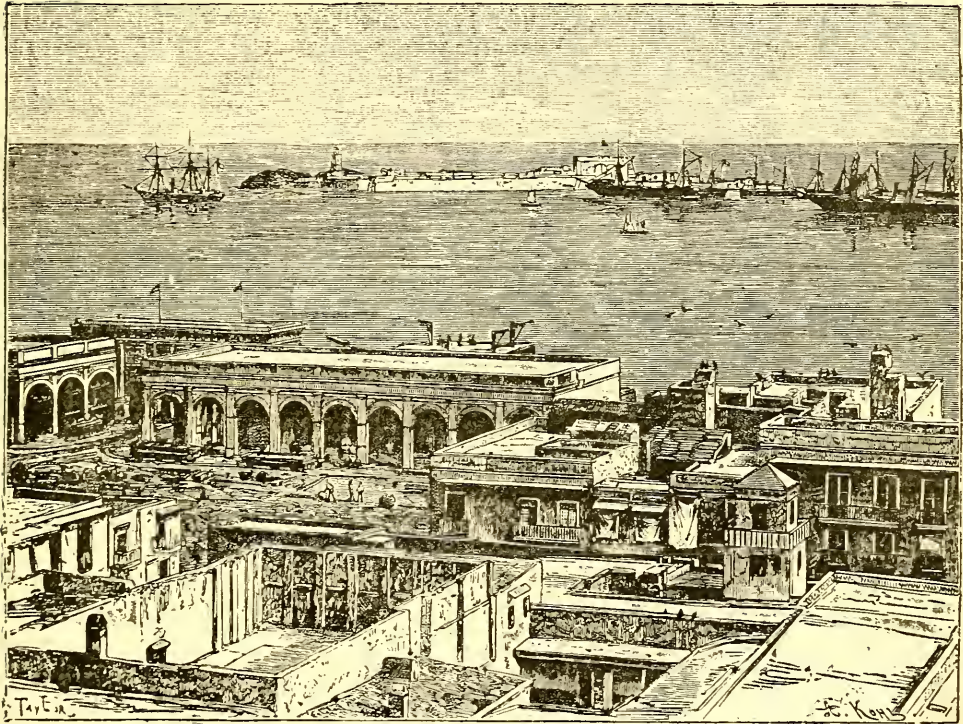
“ ‘Why, no! Why should they be?’

“ ‘That letter you wrote?’

“ ‘Letter?’

“ ‘Exactly; to the “Tribune.”’

“ ‘By Jove!’ murmured the naturalist, ‘has that got here?’



VERA CRUZ AND FORT OF SAN JUAN DE ULLOA.

“ By way of answer his brother American drew from his pocket a late issue of a leading Mexican paper, pointed to a two-column review of the sick man, headed ‘A Dangerous Character,’ and turned on his heel.

“ As the astonished man perused it, the fever flush in his cheek deepened to crimson, his wavering pulses quickened as he read there

that 'all Mexico,' indeed, was cautioned to be on the lookout to apprehend him, — *un enemigo al pais* (an enemy to the country). He learned that he was a villain of deepest dye, for whom the calaboose yawned ; and so, with revolver, lasso, knife, and horsewhip, all patriotic Mexicans were instructed to be on the *qui vive* for this most dangerous individual, and not let him escape the country without a taste of its indignation. The sick man smiled, and shuddered at the falsity of the accusations, and at a possible prospect of incarceration in the castle at Vera Cruz, where 'Yellow Jack' was carrying off a score of victims daily.

"But the irate Mexicans were to be disappointed ; the hunted man reached safely the steamer that lay at Vera Cruz, and eventually sailed serenely on his way. As he mounted to the hurricane deck, he saw two gentlemen, who later introduced themselves as Mormon missionaries, examining a card attached to his gun-case.

"'Pardon me,' said one of them, Elder Moses Thatcher, of Ogden, Utah, 'but do I address Mr. O——?'

"It was admitted that he did address that person.

"'Then, Mr. O——,' said the missionary, extending his hand, 'allow me to congratulate you on getting away from Mexico in safety, for all Mexico is up on its hind legs and howling after you!'

"But you've been there since. Did they calaboose you?"

For answer to this question, O—— handed Q—— the following notice of the naturalist, clipped from a Mexican newspaper of Chi huahua, printed some months later.

"PERSONAL. — His Excellency Mr. O——. The absence of the editor prevented the acquaintance of this distinguished gentleman prior to the day before his departure. Unassuming and reticent, as men of greatest worth usually are, he came, gathered information about our country as few others could, and is off to embody it in a work of lasting utility. Mr. O—— is a lecturer of ability, whose book on Mexico is the best of the kind extant. . . . We trust

he may revisit Chihuahua, and give an appreciative people an opportunity to appropriately demonstrate their high regard for his painstaking and useful efforts. No man is more worthy of public honor than the truthful, accurate historian; and such is Mr. O——.”

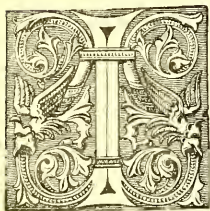
“I call that piling on the agony,” exclaimed O——. “But you didn’t go back, and let an appreciative people appropriately demonstrate their high regard for your painstaking efforts, did you?”

“I’ve been there since,” said O——; “but they did not seem to have anything treasured up against me.”

CHAPTER XI.

THE TREASURE-CAVES OF COATLAN.

THE DOCTOR-MINERALOGIST NARRATES. — HIS EXCITING ADVENTURES AND HAIR-BREADTH ESCAPES. — A BELIEF IN GOLDEN IDOLS. — CAPTURING AN INDIAN TOWN. — THE GREAT CAVES OF COATLAN. — ON A SUBTERRANEAN RIVER. — THE SCHEMING SACRISTAN. — UNWILLING SEEKERS FOR BURIED TREASURE. — COUNTRY OF COCHINEAL. — AN ANTIQUARIAN'S ZEAL. — FOILED BY CIRCUMSTANCES. — ALL IS GOLDEN, BUT IT DOES NOT GLITTER.



HAVE pursued my own adventure to its end, and given the sequel before completing the general narrative; but there is more yet to our story, for I myself had farther travel, and also left the Doctor and the Professor to complete the search for treasure.

At my urgent solicitation the Doctor wrote me an account of his further adventures, after I had left them in Oaxaca; and the following narrative can be relied upon as authentic, and is given in his own words.

Although the search was fruitless that he and our lamented chief made after my departure, yet the adventures by the way were interesting, and the information gained exceedingly valuable.

Leaving the Professor in the city, the Doctor followed his inclinations, and went off alone on a hunt for images and idols.

“In the course of my archæological ‘researches,’” he says, “I found it difficult to persuade the people that I was not hunting for the buried treasures that legends, and facts too, say are buried in many,

many places. Some of these treasures I have seen ; and their value in more than one case was enormous.

“One day, while seated in my room, my collections of rare, quaint idols and strange, antique implements all labelled, catalogued, and boxed, I was meditating whither I should next go, when *un amigo* (a friend) was announced. A man whom I had never seen before came in, and in a very long conversation, with the details of which I need not tire the reader, informed me that he could give me accurate information of the location of a vast treasure. It was far distant, among a fierce, impatient tribe of Indians; there were several of them interested therein, but they were certain that I could find it, and one half of it would then be mine.

“The region he mentioned was one as yet unvisited by me ; but as reports led me to believe it was full of interest to the archæologist, I had often thought of going there, and this additional spice of romance and danger settled it. We struck a bargain at once, and my “friend” gave me letters to the *jefe politico*, or Mayor, of Maihuatlan, who held the precious document which told where the vast treasure lay. There were two American miners in the city who had spoken of going in that direction, and I easily induced them to accompany me. A day or two we spent in making the necessary preparations; and finally, one bright morning, Albert and Alfred Daniels and I started at half-past nine. We were all on horseback. My dress, a broad-brimmed *sombrero* covered with silver braid, a blue flannel shirt, a brilliant striped *serape* over my shoulders; a belt, from which hung a forty-five calibre Colt's six-shooter; dust-colored corduroy riding-pants, thrust into Mexican untanned leather boots armed with huge silver spurs. My horse, a powerful roan, who had brought me safely through many a perilous ride, carried, besides myself, a huge Mexican saddle, from whose horn depended a well-greased *riata*, or lasso; a pair of saddle-bags, and in a rifle-sheath my trusty Winchester rifle. In my pocket reposed a Remington, two-shot,

thirty-eight calibre Derringer, — a weapon I had found most useful at close quarters. I looked very much as I felt, — a thorough bandit or buccaneer.

“ I had a *mozo*, or servant, — a fine, faithful Mexican, well mounted, who led a pack-horse that very complainingly bore a small trunk that contained my photographic cameras, etc., some medicines, surveying instruments, and changes of underclothing. The Danielses had also a pack-horse laden with innumerable bundles, among which pickaxes and shovels were prominent. Their *mozo* was on foot, and was the stupidest Mexican I have ever seen; and that is saying a great deal.

“ Soft banks of clouds tempered the rays of the tropical sun, the road was pleasant, and we rode along easily to the southward through the lovely valley of Oaxaca, making thirty miles to Ocotlan very nicely by half-past four in the afternoon. The road lay chiefly in the valley, the only change being the crossing, — a ‘divide’ or spur of the mountains, of no very great height. To our left rose a noble chain of mountains, the eastern boundary of the valley. These mountains are solidly made up of silver and gold ores, unfortunately of low assay and difficult to work.

“ At Ocotlan we rested for the night, in a very decent *mason*, or inn, reasonably free from the one great plague of Oaxaca, the fleas. The name of this place is derived from two Mexic words, *Ocotl* (pines) and *tlan* (place of).

“ Next morning I was up at three o’clock, amid a prodigious chatter and clatter and bustle; for it is simply impossible for a Mexican to do anything without a vast amount of vociferation and noise. Our horses were saddled, the pack-horses laden, and a cup of chocolate prepared. This we hastily swallowed; and as the cracked bell of the half-ruined church painfully rang out four o’clock, we were in the saddle. For thirty miles, still southward, the road lay through the valley, broad and level; and we advanced over it rapidly, reaching

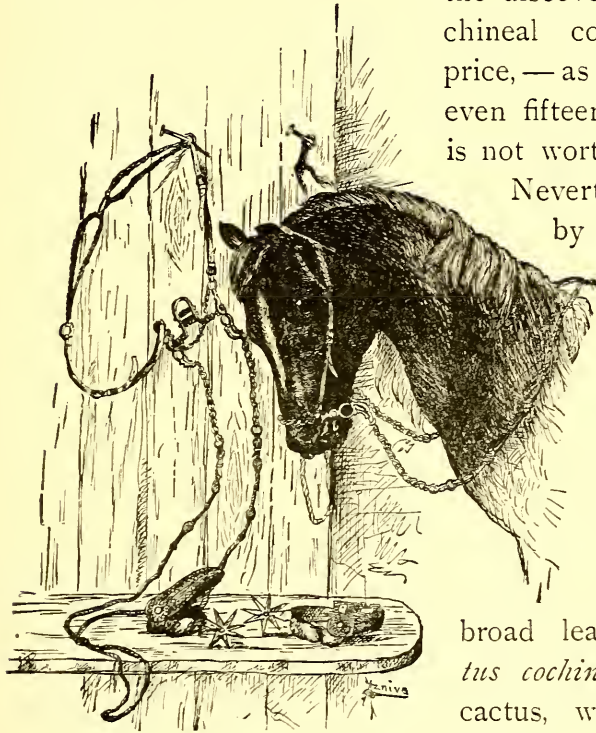


THE VALLEY OF MEXICO.

Ejutla (*ejutla* beans; *tlan*, place of) at nine o'clock. We breakfasted with two Englishmen who have lived here for over thirty years.

“Here the great valley ends, and the *sierras*, the mountains, begin. We have now entered the old cochineal country. Before the discovery of the aniline dyes, cochineal commanded a very high price, — as much as ten, twelve, and even fifteen dollars a pound; now it is not worth half as many shillings.

Nevertheless, it is still cultivated by the Indians, in small patches. The cochineal insect (*Coccus cacti*) is a little bug, about the size and shape of the common ‘lady-bug,’ but soft, and covered with a white woolly substance, which it throws around itself. It lives on the



MEXICAN BIT, BRIDLE, AND SPURS.

broad leaves of the nopal (*Cactus cochinillifer*), a very handsome cactus, with bright green broad leaves, an improved edition of our common ‘prickly pear’ (*Cactus*

opuntia). The nopals are planted in rows some feet apart, and at the proper season the insects are brushed off, killed by heat, and dried. This trade brought millions of dollars into this region years ago, and it is a positive fact that nine tenths of this money is buried in unknown places. Still, every now and again very large amounts are found.

“After breakfast, the Danielses’ *mozo* being still behind, I left my man with Alfred and the pack-horses, and with Albert pushed on for Miahuatlan. We entered the mountains, and rode up ten long miles over terribly steep mountain roads, in the midst of the most magnificent scenery, to the *cumbre*, or summit. There we rested a moment. Far below us, to the north, lay Ejutla, in a broad, fertile plain; and far, far below, to the south, we could see the great white church of Miahuatlan shining twenty long miles away. The road down was perhaps steeper than the way up, and more than once we had to dismount and walk down the steepest grades. When near the foot of the mountains, Albert Daniels very cleverly shot a tiger-cat, while on horseback. Its beautiful skin is among my trophies. When we reached the plain, we made a dash for it, and at 4.20 P. M. were in Miahuatlan. Eleven hours in the saddle gives one an appetite, and I made a hearty dinner. Albert and the *mozos* and pack-horses got in at half-past six. The next two days were spent in lengthy confabulations with the *jefe* and the lawyers; and when at length everything had been written down minutely in a portentous document bearing many huge seals and expensive stamps, and which gave information not only of ourselves, the high contracting parties, but also many interesting details about our relative parents and grandparents and mothers-in-law, I was given the mysterious document, yellow with age, which gave clew to the great treasure.”

For your benefit, reader, I will translate it. It was dated at one of the towns of the Coatlans. The name of the person to whom it was originally addressed is illegible (it was a letter). It is written in a mixture of very good French and very bad Spanish.

THE TRANSLATION.

I have before my mind’s eye a view of the place the curate showed me as an inexhaustible source of treasure. The cave is in front of the head of the church, about one thousand yards, or much farther away. One sees a stream

between two mountains ; this water enters in the cave, and forms a *basin* about three yards deep. It is necessary to empty this to get the mineral stones ; very near on the right hand is another mine, called "The Bell." The Sacristan knows something about this treasure, but will not tell.

"By the terms of our portentous contract the *jefe*, representing several persons, was to have one half of the treasure, and was to furnish guides and all assistance possible ; I was the chief and capitalist, and in conjunction with the Danielses we were the Discovering Party.

"We therefore started one fine morning for the caves of Santa Maria Coatlan. 'We' now means the Danielses, myself, and my *mozo*, and my pack-horse. We were accompanied also by the *presidente* and the *secretario* of the village, whom the *jefe* had sent for, to act as our guides. The *presidente* carried a silver-headed cane, his wand of office ; and the *secretario* a curiously carved ruler, his badge of authority. These were their official uniforms, for they carried very little else ; all the clothes they both wore could have been made from less than four yards of unbleached muslin ! However, the *presidente* did have something more : he carried a big crowbar for us.

"The road was merely a bridle-path, that seemed to have been so made as to go up all the steepest and stoniest places in some of the roughest mountain country I have ever seen. However, after over five hours of desperate scrambling, we managed to cover the twenty-odd miles.

"The little village lies away down in a tiny valley with horrid mountains frowning down on every side, closing it in like a well. It has seventy-five *contribuyentes*, or taxpayers, and perhaps, all told, may number two hundred souls. And yet this town and the other Coatlans (San Pablo, San Miguel, San Joaquin, and San Francisco) formed the very centre and nucleus of the cochineal business years ago, and then numbered thousands of enormously wealthy

Indians. But the trade died; cholera killed thousands; revolutions and the French killed thousands more; they hid their money, crept away and died, and in their places we find a mere handful of poor miserable devils living in the most abject poverty.

“Their only food is black beans (*frijoles*) boiled in water, and *tortillas*. They *never* eat meat or bread or grease or oil; absolutely nothing save the beans, water, and *tortillas*, and always *chilis* (red peppers).

“They had a magnificent church here once, now utterly in ruins, the work of an earthquake. Standing near this church, we see across a ravine two tremendous mountains, between which a gully runs, dry, and filled with enormous boulders. In the rainy season a raging, foaming torrent fills this gully. It is penned up between two terrific beetling cliffs thrown out from the mountains' sides. Perpendicular, scarred, and worn, their gigantic red walls stand in rocky majesty. If we cross over to them, we find in the one on the left a great cave with three mouths, one very large and two smaller. The large mouth is over thirty feet high, and here the Indians have erected a huge cross. The cave is very large and spacious, and is used as a storehouse for their corn. They call it the Virgin's Cave. A little farther on is a little cave with a deepish well, dry, where six skeletons were once found. Hence I called it Six-skeleton Cave; but we always, for some unknown reason, called it Six-fingered Jack's Cave. I had this cave and well all cleaned out, and found only a few bones, a stone axe, and some curious red stone beads. Crossing the gully to the other bluff, we find near its base three curious caves communicating, from which there flows a goodly stream of water. I have named these the Triple Cave. Close by another cave, from which issues a second stream of pure clear cold water, received the name of Clear-water Cave. Farther on and higher up is a very small cave, in the centre of which yawned the black mouth of a well (the Well Cave). No one had ever attempted to explore this well; common

tradition said that the Devil lived there. Having an immense curiosity to see this mythical personage, I lighted my bull's-eye lantern, buckled it about my waist, fastened our *riatas* together, and myself to the end of the resultant rope, and while I thought half comically of 'facilis descensus Avernii,' the Danielses began to lower me down.



FLOATING GARDENS OF MEXICO.

As my head sank below the cave level, I saw the Indians standing in amazement, their brown, lean faces fitfully lit up by the red smoky light of the blazing pine torches they carried. They never expected to see me again. For the first ten or twelve feet the well was narrow enough for me to find foothold on its walls; then it suddenly sloped off to one side. Down the long incline thus formed I half slid and

half scrambled, when suddenly, as a Dutchman would say, 'I took a drop to mineself!'

"The incline had ceased, and the well was again a perpendicular hole. I had firm hold of the rope, and fell only about six feet, the only damage done being that my hands were severely skinned as I went over the edge. Fortunately the Danielses were both strong men, else might I have never been able to write these lines, and my Indian friends would then have been sure of the Devil having his residence in that well. Directly I heard from above: 'Hello! What's the matter? Are you all right?' I replied, explaining, and asked how much rope was out. 'About forty feet!' 'Well,' I shouted back, 'don't pay out any more rope, for it is hanging over a projecting ledge; the well is very wide and seems very deep!'

"Then with a sounding-line I measured the depth of the perpendicular well in which I was hanging, — sixty-five feet, with six feet more of water at the bottom; total, one hundred and sixteen feet! Very carefully they hauled up the line, and soon I was back on solid ground again, to the wonderment of the Indians, who at once decided that I must be *un gran brujo*, the equivalent of our North American Indian's 'Big Medicine man.' There is no treasure in that well; it communicates away under ground with the Triple Cave, as I afterward proved.

"After the exploration of this cave we proceed onward, and soon another cave is reached. Ah! this is quite another place. Not over thirty feet wide anywhere, its roof stretches away up over three hundred feet above our heads, and at the very topmost point a tiny hole opens out to the air and glitters like a star. Midway of its immense length it bends to one side, and just at the bend assumes a somewhat circular form. In the centre of this space stands a huge stalagmitic column, over forty feet high. It looks exactly as though a Titan's spear or lance had been stood upright. Around it clustered bannerets and pennons, and lower down huge battle-flags thickly grouped so as to form a gigantic trophy, and then the whole changed

into pure white glittering marble. I have visited all the most famous caves in this world, and know of none that can compare in exquisite beauty with this. Its walls and marvellous roof are brilliantly, stainlessly white, and refracted a million lovely tints where the red light of the torches struck them. I named this cave Cathedral Cave; the column, Trophy Column. Farther on in the cave a smaller stalagmite breaking suddenly on my view elicited a cry of surprise. Before me was kneeling a woman with head bowed down and hands raised in supplication! I named this Lot's Wife.

“The exploration of these caves took many hours; and when regretfully I left the glories of this magical cave, I found that night was swiftly approaching. We therefore returned to the village.

CHAPTER XII.

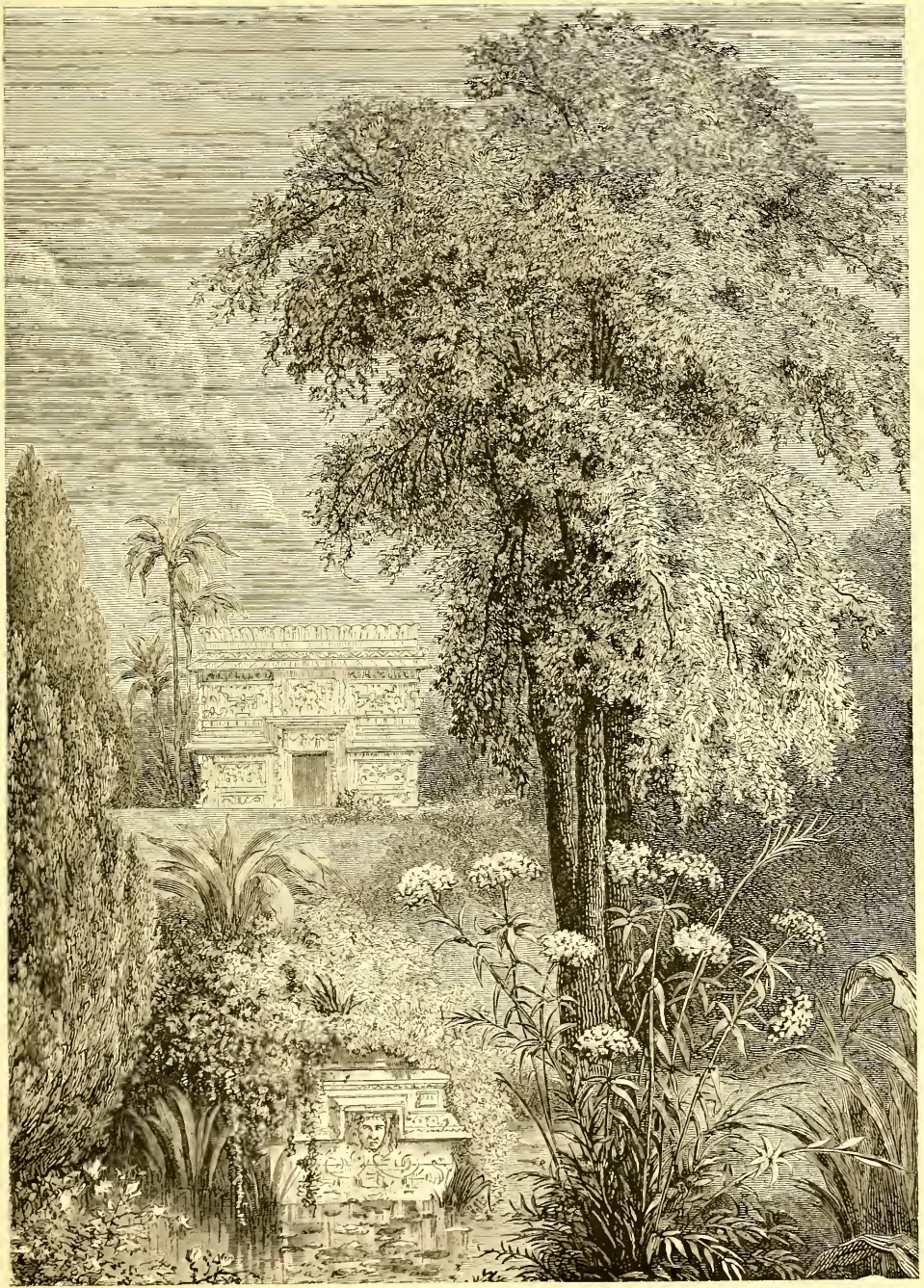
IN PERIL UNDERGROUND.

CAMPED IN A SCHOOLHOUSE. — A LUCKY SHOT AT A BUCK. — EXPLORING ALTAR CAVE. — “MUCH MONEYS HERE.” — LIGHTNING CAVE. — CAVE OF THE BELL AND TRIPLE CAVE. — THE SACRISTAN’S INVOCATION. — AGAINST THE WHITE MAGICIAN. — OUR RAFTS THE “MARY JANE,” AND “POLLY ANN.” — AN UNDERGROUND SWIM. — THE GIANT FROM HELL’S MOUTH. — MYSTERIOUS MARKINGS. — THE INDIANS PLOT TO KILL US. — WE TURN THE TABLES AND FLY.



WE had taken possession of the old schoolhouse. It had a single large room, with the beaten earth for a floor, huge adobe walls tough as copper, a great thatched roof, a single doorway with a tremendously heavy door, no windows. Its furniture consisted of three or four very long and very heavy wooden benches, a terribly heavy wooden table that four of us could scarcely lift, and a clumsy wooden chair big enough and heavy enough to have served as a seat for the Cardiff Giant.

“Our beds were primitive but comfortable. One of the heavy benches was set near the wall; about seven feet away forked sticks were driven into the ground about five feet apart, and a straight stick was lashed across them; then pliant bamboos, eight feet long, were laid side by side, and securely lashed to one another. One end of the resultant mat was laid upon the bench, the other end firmly fastened to the cross-stick. The familiar ‘Florida moss’ grew plentifully here, and I had ordered a large quantity of it to be gathered. A thick layer of this moss laid upon the elastic bamboos and covered with a blanket made an exceedingly comfortable spring bed.



MEXICAN GARDEN.

“ We stood for a few moments talking with the Indians. I had learned that the present sacristan, a hoary-headed old sinner, was the son of the one referred to in the old letter. No doubt if the father knew aught he told it before his death to his son; so I was arranging to have the old fellow brought to me. As we stood there I saw suddenly, about one hundred yards away, a noble buck that had come up the crest of a little hill and stood for a moment gazing at us. My Winchester was close at hand; I sprang for it, took hasty aim, and fired. To my delight the one shot was sufficient: one mighty bound into the air, and the beautiful animal lay dead. A lucky shot indeed; not only did it provide us with an abundance of meat, but the having killed a deer in flight at such a distance with a single ball made a deep impression on the minds of the Indians, and later on I believe it was to the fear they had of my magic (for so they called it) rifle, that our lives were all saved. But I must not anticipate.

“ We were up bright and early next morning. The sacristan appeared, and claimed to know nothing. Alternately I coaxed, bribed, threatened, and flattered him. Finally he seemed to relent, and very mysteriously led me past the caves I had already seen to another. This one was about sixty feet in diameter, nearly circular, with a very large entrance, so that it was well lighted. In the very centre there was a great flat stone, evidently placed there by human hands. It was about fifteen feet by ten and about six feet thick. This cave I named the Altar Cave. Here the old fellow led me, and told me how one day, when he was a boy, his father had led him there, and, stamping his foot on the ground, had said (I shall imitate in English the fellow's bad Spanish): ‘ Pancho, there is moneys here!’ (again stamping his foot). ‘ Pancho, there is many golds here!’

“ Having said so much, off the old hypocrite scuttled, on mischief bent, as we learned later. I at once set a large number of Indians at work with one of the Danielses in charge, and had the whole cave dug down many feet, even turned the huge altar-stone over, and dug under

that. I found no gold, but under a deep layer of stalagmite I did find a quantity of bones, some stone axes, and a large number of Pacific Ocean sea-shells of the genus *Conus* and *Olivus*, most of them perforated as though they had formed pendants to a collar. This excavation took days, and meanwhile I explored other caves. Next the Altar Cave was a very large cave the Indians called the Lightning Cave, or the Birth of the Waters. I named it the Raft Cave. Closely connected with this are two caves, the Fissure Cave and the Waterfall Cave. Last of all comes the Cave of the Bell, as the Indians call it. It takes its name from the fact that a huge stalactite hangs in its very mouth, which, when struck, emits a deep resonant note like the clang of a sweet-toned bell of great size and sweetness of tone. This cave is the refuge of millions of bats, and its floor is covered with tons of guano.

“The language of the old document was very obscure, and susceptible, in view of the actual state of affairs, of many meanings. I thought over it day and night, and ever my conclusions drew me toward the Raft Cave. I had every cave thoroughly explored, and at last brought all my forces to bear upon the thorough exploration of this, — the real treasure cave.

“This cave is very gloomy; it runs back about two hundred yards, when one comes to a pool or basin of water. A stream flows from this along one side frontward, turns sharply to the left, then, nearly at a right angle, plunges into a hole, reappears in the Waterfall Cave, a dimly dark cavern much below the level of the Raft Cave, spreads into another great pool, which runs back about one hundred yards, where you can hear it roaring as it plunges over some precipice far within the bowels of the mountain, down until it reaches the level of the water in the Well Cave, thence to the Triple Cave, and thence, at length, out into the sunshine. This I proved by thoroughly muddying the water in the Raft Cave. The source of this great stream of water is utterly unknown. I surveyed the whole country for miles

around, and found no possible source for it. Doubtless it is fed by some vast spring, far, far within the mountain.

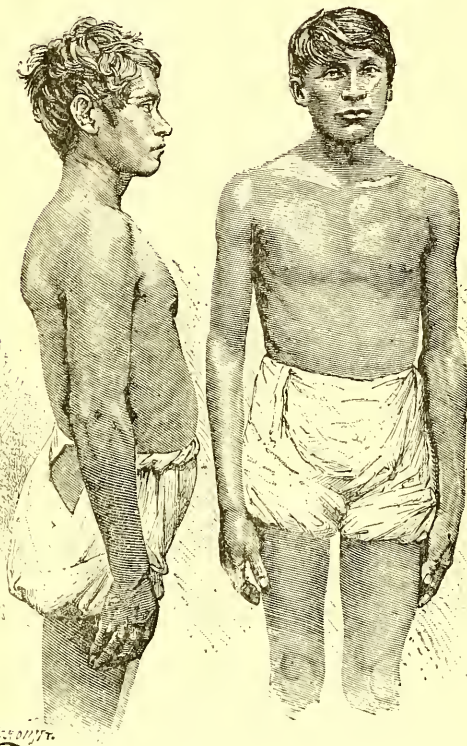
“ I need not tire you with the details of my work there ; but our main object was to drain if possible the great pool (the Raft Pool). While taking measures to this end, I had a number of logs cut, and with infinite toil dragged up the steep hillside and laid beside the pool, so that we could build a raft and continue our explorations more rapidly. That night my good *mozo*, Francisco, informed me that nightly shortly after midnight the sacristan would gather all the Indians in the old ruined church, and that the wild chants that more than once had broken our rest were invocations to the Virgin not to permit the white stranger, the ‘ possessor of powers,’ to carry off the gods of their ancestors ; that though they were of gold and of much value, yet had they buried them deep in the recesses of the Raft Cave, and worshipped her only ; that unless something were done, ‘ the white magician would carry off these precious idols, — his boats were building to carry him to the hiding-place !’

“ The *jefe* had given me arbitrary powers ; so early in the morning I arrested the *presidente*, the *alcalde*, and the sacristan, bound their wrists with cords, and ordered them off to Miahuatlan to the *jefe*. They dared not refuse, for the *jefe* had been very explicit in his orders to the *presidente*.

“ I had always believed that the treasure was not, as the old document seemed to indicate, gold ore, but idols of gold, of which every now and then superb specimens have been found. (In April of this year one was found in another part of the State, weighing seventy-eight pounds !)

“ So, once rid of our ‘ big men ’ of the village, I set to work in earnest, after properly terrorizing the remainder of the Indians. The raft was rapidly built. We named it the ‘ Mary Jane ;’ and placing Alfred Daniels in charge, we embarked, leaving my good Francisco on the shore with a Winchester to keep guard. We had lowered the

stream in the great cave, and the Raft Pool was low enough for us to be able to pole slowly across it until we came to an island of sand.



MAYAS TYPES OF INDIAN.

Here we jumped off. The stream ran on either side too narrow for the 'Mary Jane' to pass. Above the island stretched another pool, and at its farther side a huge black mouth of a tunnel leading straight into the mountain. The 'Mary Jane' made several trips bringing up laborers, whom we set to work digging a great canal across 'the island,' to dry and drain off the upper pool (Threshold Pool). Others brought up lighter logs; and another raft (the 'Polly Ann') was made, much lighter than the 'Mary Jane.' The 'Polly Ann' would carry but one man.

"While at work on the canal, most frightful noises were heard far up across the Threshold Pool, and seemingly from a great distance within. It needed all our coolness to keep the Indians from being panic-stricken. These noises were so diabolical, and the farther cave so black and forbidding, that it received the name of 'Hell's Mouth.' Undoubtedly these noises were caused by the lowering of the water consequent on opening the canal. Late one afternoon we launched the 'Polly Ann;' and Alfred Daniels volunteered to make a trial trip

alone, and if worth while the next day we would get more logs and build a raft large enough to carry us all.

“ He soon disappeared from sight, then the last flicker of his torch disappeared, and finally we could no longer hear even his voice, and to our shouts only responded mocking echoes and the awful noises in redoubled force. It was a weird scene. Albert Daniels and I squatted on the upper edge of that Cave Island, pine-knots blazing redly near in various heaps, and stretching back across the island to the Raft Pool, on whose farther side my good *mozo* Francisco stood ‘on guard’ in a ruddy radiance of a huge pile of blazing pitch-pine that shone on the water, turning it to blood. Beyond, in the main cave, red, twinkling lights, where some men were still at work deepening the channel; behind us, the half-naked Indians, clustered together with faces full of awe and murmuring in low whispers. We ceased shouting. Nothing was heard save now and then the dull stroke of the pick or bar far frontward in the main cave, the swish and whirl of the stream in its triple bed, and now and again the frightful noises far up where our brave companion had gone. The minutes rolled by. Suddenly we looked a question at each other. ‘We’ll swim it?’ ‘You bet, we will!’ we murmured simultaneously. ‘I’ll try another shout,’ said I; and rising to my feet and expanding my lungs to the uttermost, I sent out a mighty ‘A-hoy!!!’ that rang and reverberated in a thousand echoes: we waited a moment, — silence, — and then, just as with lips compressed and cocked revolvers in our hands we were about to step into the gloomy pool, — hark faintly to our straining ears comes, ‘A-l-l r-i-g-h-t!’ Judge what a great breath of relief we drew. By and by we heard more clearly the cheery ‘All right!’ Then the gleam of the torch shooting ruby rays far athwart the inky waters; and then, in a smoky haze that magnified his proportions until he seemed a giant of terrific stature walking down on the water upon us, with a tremendous burst of shrieks and groans following him from the ‘Hell’s Mouth,’ appeared

our brave boy. He is only forty-two, but a whole-hearted, good-natured, fearless Western 'boy' nevertheless.

"He reported the Threshold Pool as about one hundred and fifty yards long, about eight feet deep, and at the upper end a great bar of sand stretched inward; on either side ran the water. He had walked up this bar for over three quarters of a mile, and expressed his belief that the cave was 'miles longer!' On the side rock of the cave where he had stopped he had found some strange markings, and opposite a small branch cave, full of water, which he could not enter, but in which he had seen, by the uncertain light of his torch, stones that had evidently been arranged there by men. He thought this enough for a preliminary trip; it was late, and fearing that not understanding the cause of his long absence, we might 'do some plaguey fool thing,' he had returned.

"'What made you think we would do anything?' I asked.

"'Oh! well,' he replied, 'I know you well enough! I'll bet my share of this treasure when we get it, that ten minutes more would ha' seen you swimmin' this cussed pool to see what had become o' me!'

"I could but laugh; he had hit it pretty close.

"He was highly elated, and believed firmly that on the morrow, when more logs were brought and lashed to the 'Polly Ann,' so that we could all go to the point where he had found the markings, before nightfall we would be in possession of the much-sought treasure.

"At my request he drew roughly in the sand some of these markings, which, when the Indians saw, they set up a shout. It was near nightfall, and I at once ordered work suspended, and returned to the village.

"Meantime the *presidente*, the *alcalde*, and the sacristan had returned. It turned out afterward that the *jefe* was very sick, and without reading my letter had supposed that I merely wished to impress the Indians with my power and have these men out of the way for a time, so he had permitted them to return. It was most unfortunate. They had

alarmed the Indians in some neighboring villages, and I found some five hundred Indians lounging about, who cast looks of bitter hatred at us. Fortunately they had no fire-arms, while we had the two Winchesters, six heavy revolvers, and plenty of ammunition. That night we closely barricaded and fortified our hut, and 'Frisco slipped out to reconnoitre. A big council was held in the old church, and in view of the certainty they had that we would in a few hours find and carry off their idols, they resolved to kill us all. They dared not attack us openly, the incident of the killing of the deer had taught them to fear our Winchesters; so finally it was decided that if we all went up into the cavern they would shut us all in, or drown us, or drop huge stones on us, and report that a great accident had befallen us.

"This was startling news. Next morning I informed the Indians that we would have to go to Miahuatlan for various supplies and would return in a week. For a time I thought there would be trouble; but the Danielses hastily saw the horses saddled and packed, while I, seeing an opportunity, floored the *presidente* and the *alcalde* with a couple of blows, and drawing my revolver threatened to shoot the first man who moved. Francisco skilfully bound their arms, and fastening one to his *riata* forced him to march behind us, while the other, similarly fastened, marched ahead. We carried them thus some ten miles, and then unbound them, and at a gallop sped down the rough paths to Miahuatlan.

"I found the *jefe* very sick, and not expected to live. Under these circumstances nothing could be done. So the expedition broke up; the Danielses going in one direction prospecting for gold-mines, and I, with Francisco and my pack-horse, set our faces northward.

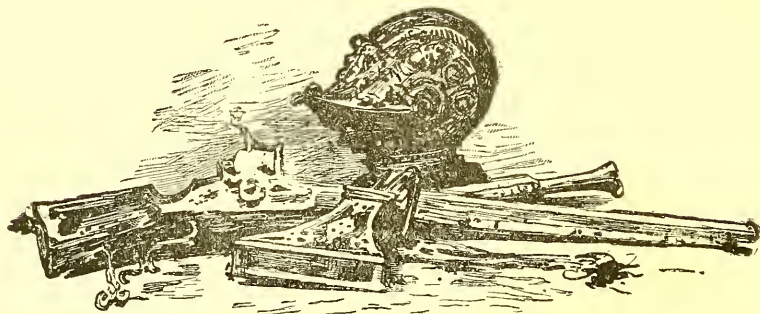
"That night I slept at Ejutla; and next day, by hard riding, I made sixty miles, to Oaxaca, riding into the *plaza* on the stroke of noon.

"There is a treasure in that cave, and I am inclined to think it of very great value. Perhaps some day I may be able to return and seek for it again."

There, that is the Doctor's story of his adventures in Southern Mexico, which were supplemental to our own, as it were. It is my opinion that he was on the right track, but somehow the golden thread broke in his grasp.

That is always the way in this brief life of ours : no sooner do we lay hold on what we think is a treasure, or the clew to it, than we lose it, or are turned aside from our object by sickness or death.

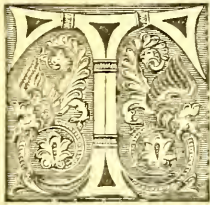
The real treasure, after all, is life ; and the thread upon which we string our daily doings may be long or short, as the Lord wills, but it lies with us to make it golden.



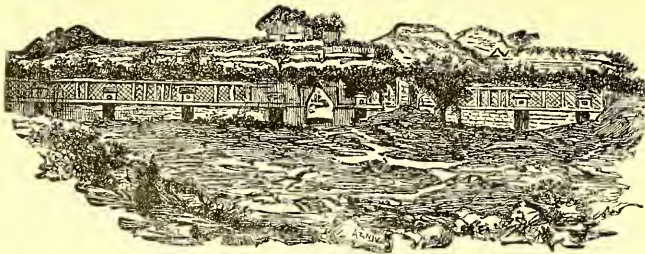
CHAPTER XIII.

PALENQUE, THE PAINTED CITY.

THE DOCTOR MAKES A VENTURE ALL ALONE. — THE LORD OF THE SILENT CITY. — THE INDIAN'S BOOK OF BARK. — FIRST GLIMPSE OF PALENQUE. — PYRAMIDS AND TEMPLES. — ABORIGINAL PORTRAITS. — THE TABLET OF THE CROSS. — LAND OF THE GREAT STONE SERPENT. — WHERE IS THE SILVER CITY? — MYSTERIOUS GLYPHS. — THE EMPTY BOX OF STONE. — SPEAR-POINTS AND ARROW-HEADS. — A COUNTRY OF CONTRARIETIES. — WHERE MAN IS TREACHEROUS AND WHERE HE IS CLEAN. — MEETING-PLACE OF THE ZONES. — CONTRASTS AND SHADOWS. — WHERE THE TROPIC TWILIGHT IS SHORTEST.



THE Doctor had, or thought he had, a clew. He may have been wrong; but he had sufficient faith in it to follow it several hundred miles, over plain, through forests, and among semi-savage peoples. After I had returned, and the Professor also, he started out again, this time with no companion but an Indian guide, in search of the mysterious symbols that should lead to the ancient depository of golden treasure. He had received the information in the valley where the platter of skulls was found. The old Indian who guarded the sacred mound took a liking to the Doctor, and learning of his disappointment at Coatlan, told him not to be discouraged. "You are on the wrong track," he said. "The gold is in this country, truly, but the ancient mines are a sealed book, — they cannot be found, or if found cannot be opened, till you get permission from the Lord of the Silent City, in Yucatan." We will let the Doctor tell the story in his own words; and as I am merely the chronicler of his adventures, he shall speak in the first person to the end of the narrative.



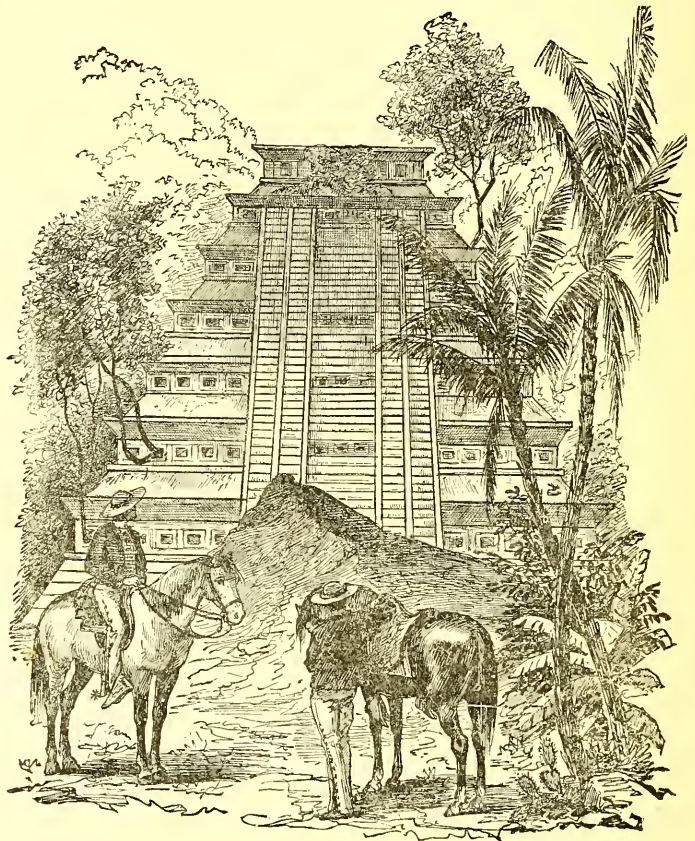
UXMAL.

“The Lord of the Silent City, in Yucatan?” I asked of the old Indian, as I sat resting myself in his hut of adobe. “But Yucatan is a far coun-

try, and I never before heard of the Silent City.”

“True, my son, it is far; but Yucatan is full of silent cities. The Lord of the City liveth not there in these times of ours; but *his sign* is there, and it will point you to the mines of the Aztec king. Go you to Palenque, in Tabasco, and there remain awhile among the ruins of the great city. What you will find will perhaps send you farther on, even to Yucatan; but if the sign is sure you may safely follow it.”

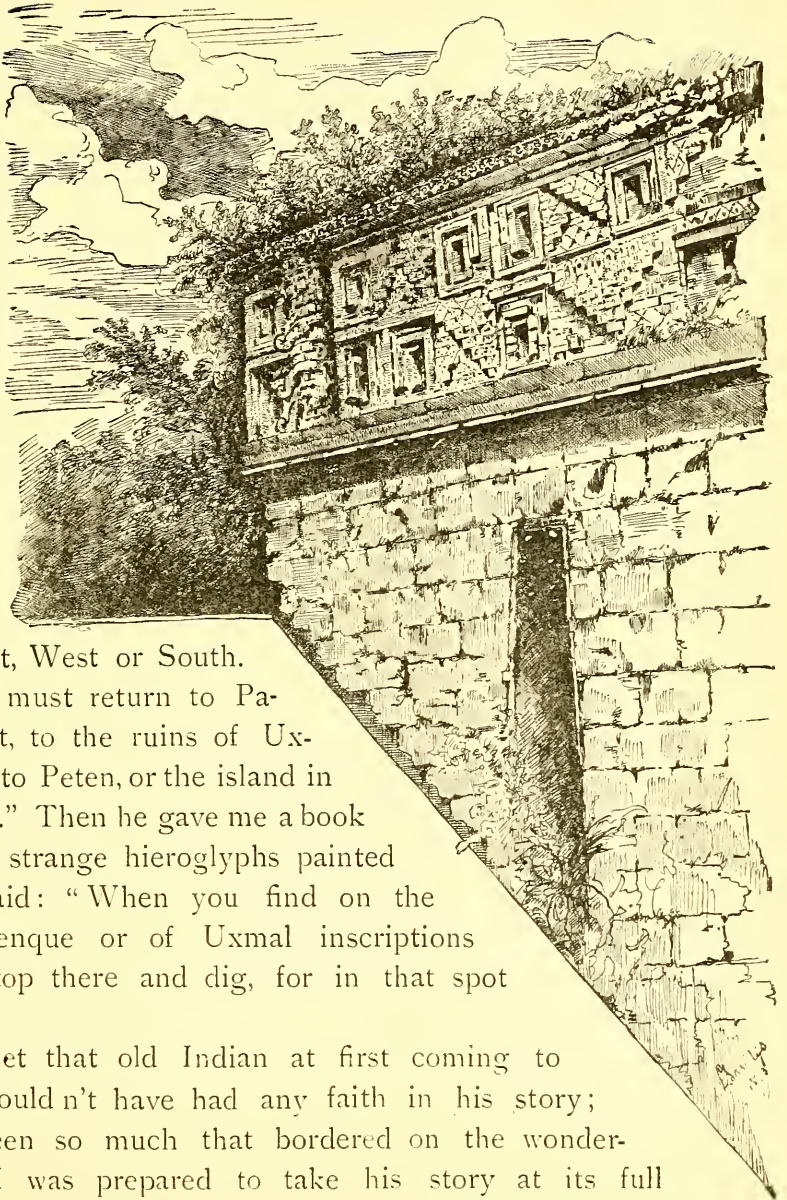
“And what is the sign, *amigo mio*? How can I know when I behold it?” I asked.



RUINS OF PAPANTLA.

GOVERNOR'S PALACE, UXMAL.

“ You will behold it, and you will know it, for it is the sign of the *red hand*, the totem the lord of the edifice, whose name my forefather called Yum. Note how it points, — whether North or East, West or South.

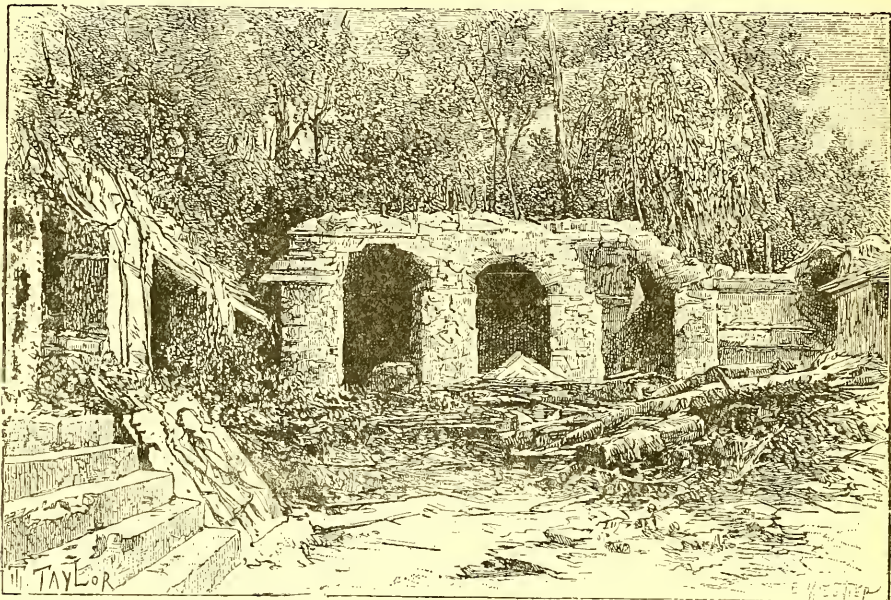


If north you must return to Paptlantla; if east, to the ruins of Uxmal; if south, to Peten, or the island in the great lake.” Then he gave me a book of bark, with strange hieroglyphs painted on it, and said: “ When you find on the walls of Palenque or of Uxmal inscriptions like these, stop there and dig, for in that spot is treasure.”

If I had met that old Indian at first coming to Mexico, I should n't have had any faith in his story; but having seen so much that bordered on the wonderful already, I was prepared to take his story at its full value. He gave me the book of bark, again repeating what

he had said, and left me, going into an inner room and closing the door. It was strange, I'll confess; but strange things happen every day in that land of surprises, Mexico, and I determined to follow out his advice.

The Professor had experimented on his own clews, and had come to grief; I could do no worse than he had done, and meant to try. Returning to Oaxaca, I found that both the Professor and the Nat-



COURT OF THE PALACE OF PALENQUE.

uralist had left for home; hence I could not count on their assistance. It did n't trouble me much; for though I should miss them, yet I could now follow my own devices, and roam hither and thither, as I liked. To make the story as short as possible, I hired a guide and two mules, and started across country for the ruins of Palenque. The journey was a terrible one; for there were no roads or trails, half the way, and we had to ford rivers innumerable. A taste of such work we had already experienced in Zapotlan; but all that was as nothing to this new and venturesome experiment.

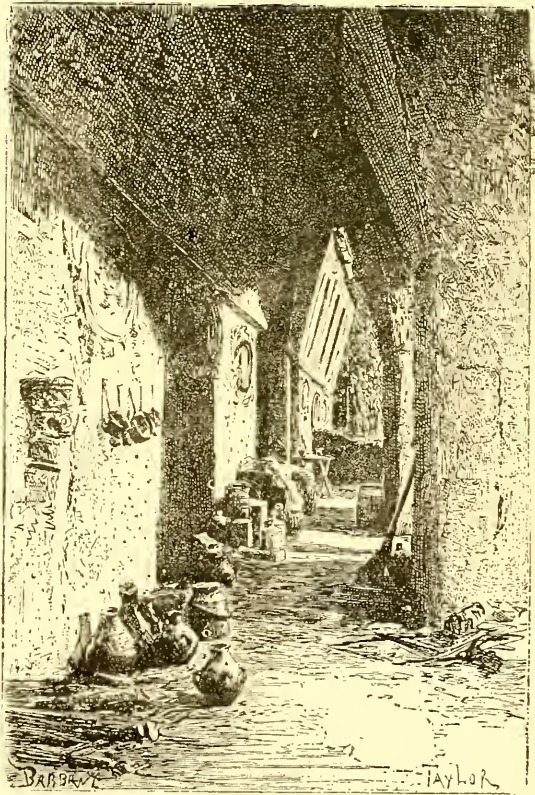
At last I reached the ruins I was seeking, and made my camp within an enclosure that may once have surrounded a palace court. I was in Palenque, of which the poet says, —

“At every step some palace greets the eye,
Some figure frowns, some temple courts the sky.”

This royal city, the seat of ancient empire, is situated eight miles distant from the modern town of the same name, — Palenque, — and though Cortez passed quite near it, in 1524, was not discovered until 1750.

There are at least five great structures, erected upon high mounds of vast dimensions, the grandest of which is the Palace, two hundred and eighty feet by one hundred and eighty, but with a height of not over twenty-five, built of stone, with mortar of lime and sand, and the whole front covered with stucco, painted in red, blue, yellow, black, and white.

Ruined pyramids are found here, and upon one pyramidal elevation one hundred and ten feet high we find the Casa de Pie-

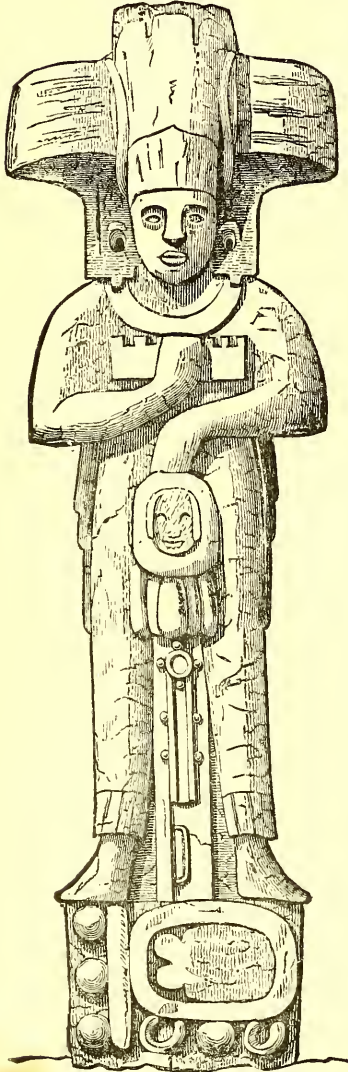


INTERIOR OF A GALLERY IN THE PALACE OF PALENQUE.

dras, “rich in stucco bas-reliefs and hieroglyphic tablets.” Other structures are the Temple of the Sun, the Temple of the Beau Re-

lief, and the Temple of the Tablets, besides aqueducts and numerous ruins far gone in decay.

In sculpture and ornament Palenque is richer than any other remains in America, its prominent feature being its numerous bas-reliefs in stucco. These stucco ornaments take the shape not only of plants and flowers in delicate tracery, but of human figures, some of which, "in justness of proportion and symmetry, approach the Greek models."



STATUE FROM PALENQUE.

"We walk the rooms where kings and princes met ;
Frown on the walls their sculptured portraits yet ;
Strange their costume, — ye see no native face, —
Lip, brow, and hue bespeak an Ethiop race."

This is a very accurate description, — for a poet. What a mournful interest is excited over these wonderful specimens of man's handiwork buried deep in a dense forest inhabited solely by monkeys, parrots, wild turkeys, and the prowling ocelot ! In a ruined structure known as "Casa Number Two" — a modern appellation — is a portion of the famous sculpture known as the Palenque Tablet, containing that *figure of the cross*, of mysterious origin. A portion of this tablet was torn, by vandal hands, from its position, and taken to the United States, and may now be seen in our national museum ; another lies buried beneath the mound of the Tabascan forest, while but one third remains in its original position on the wall. Professor Rau, of the

Smithsonian Institution, to whom we are indebted for its restoration, published an interesting comparison between the *glyphs* sculptured on the tablet and the symbols of the Maya alphabet (of Yucatan), finding points of contact between the two, and only such differences as would naturally exist between the writings of a language at epochs perhaps thousands of years apart.

“Throughout several centuries preceding the Christian era,” says the historian, “there flourished in Central America the great Maya Empire of the Chanes, or Serpents, known to its foes as Xibalba, with its centre at or near Palenque. Its first establishment, at a remote period (probably about 1000 B. C.), was attributed to a being called Votan, who was afterward deified. Its language was doubtless the Maya, — now spoken in Yucatan, which from this centre extended toward Anahuac or Mexico.” If we were to trace the extension of the Xibalban Empire, or rather the ruins having an impress of Palenque, into Central America proper, we should find numerous examples; as at Ocosingo, and at the Quiche capital, Ututlan; and especially at Copan, in Honduras, near the Guatemalan boundary-line. There we find an immense wall enclosing an area about nine hundred by sixteen hundred feet, within it a “temple” with walls twenty-five feet thick and from sixty to ninety feet high, — a pyramidal terrace, — six hundred and twenty-four by eight hundred and nine feet, built of heavy blocks of cut stone. Most noteworthy at Copan are the numerous sculptured obelisks, pillars, idols, and altar stones, their backs covered with hieroglyphics, “which could, no doubt, tell the sealed story of Copan’s greatness; and the attributes of its many gods were the key once discovered.” Should we continue southward, we should discover traces of prehistoric man, extending through Central America even to the highlands of Peru.

“The ruins of former races seem to culminate in the province of Yucatan. There are the wonderful structures that are the amazement of the present generation of man; but all are *silent cities*. All their

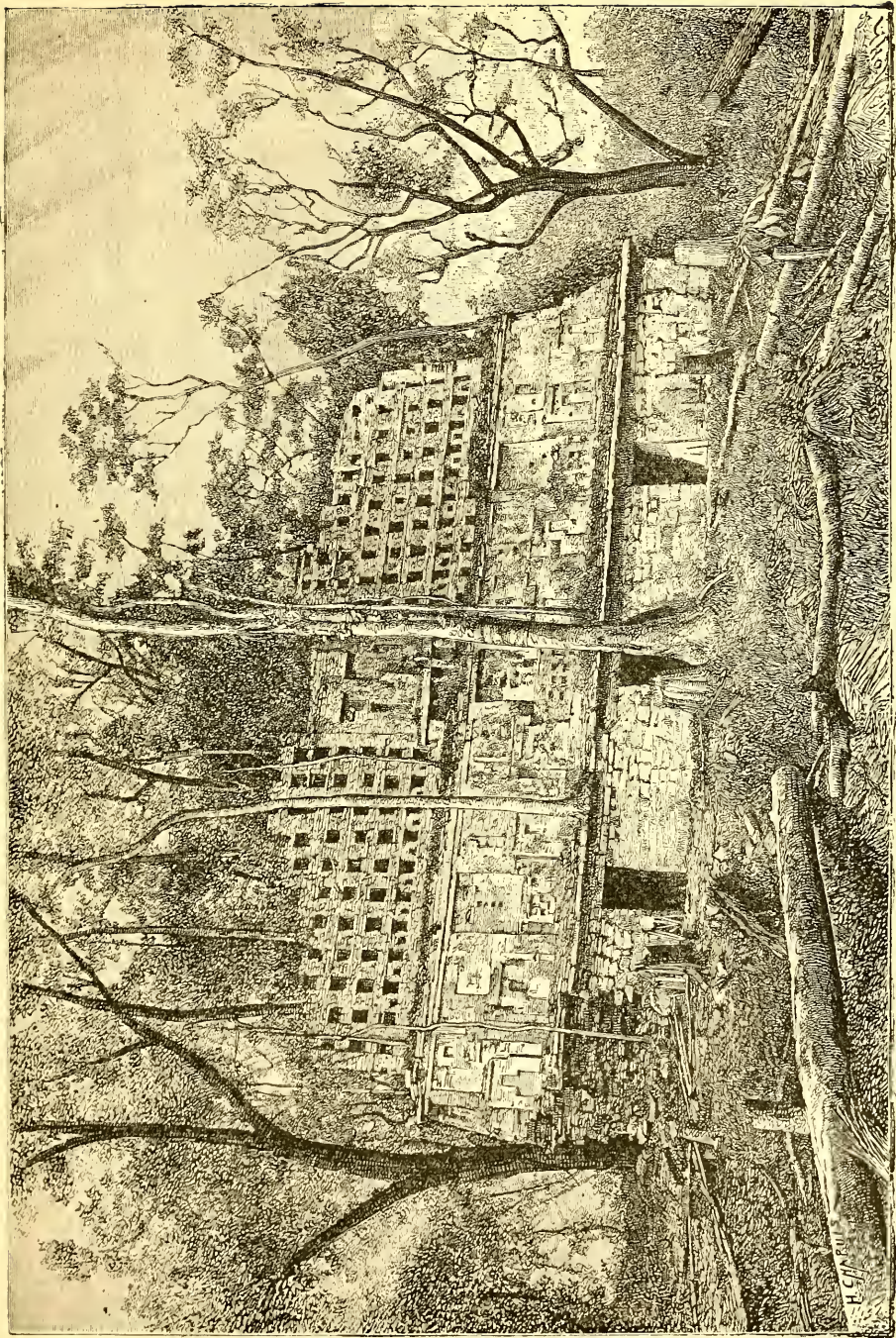
inhabitants departed hundreds, perhaps thousands of years ago. Yet somewhere in the vast and impenetrable forests of this region is supposed to stand the 'Mysterious City,' its silver walls visible a hundred miles away, and said still to be occupied by the descendants of its original builders. But this living aboriginal city has never yet been seen, though a year of one's life would be a cheap purchase of its secret! In this forest also is the ruined group recently discovered by Charnay, and called by him Lorillard City, — only one of many that doubtless yet exist in the obscurity of that vast wilderness. But in Yucatan are the most glorious vestiges of former civilization, in the ruined cities that there await the coming of the traveller, — cities that had their birth so far back in the twilight of time that even tradition is silent as to their builders."

Yes, tradition is silent. The description was written for me by the Professor, before he passed away. He always had an idea that he could find that wonderful "Silver City," if he could but penetrate through the country of the Lacandones, the fierce Indians who live in the region between Palenque and the interior of Guatemala. But he could never raise an expedition strong enough; and though I believe he would have braved the dangers alone, yet he left this undertaking as one of his unfinished tasks.

How much I missed his companionship, and how valuable would have been his assistance! "Find some inscription like that in the book of bark," the old Indian had said, "and then dig at the foot of the wall it is on."

Prowling about the ruins for days, with the assistance of my Indian guide, I laid bare the walls of several buildings before I saw any *glyphs*, or carven symbols, anything like those written in the book of bark.

At last, one day, tearing away a veil of vines that hid the face of a crumbling wall in tropic drapery, I fancied I saw a resemblance, in the strange characters sculptured there, to those on the Indian's book.



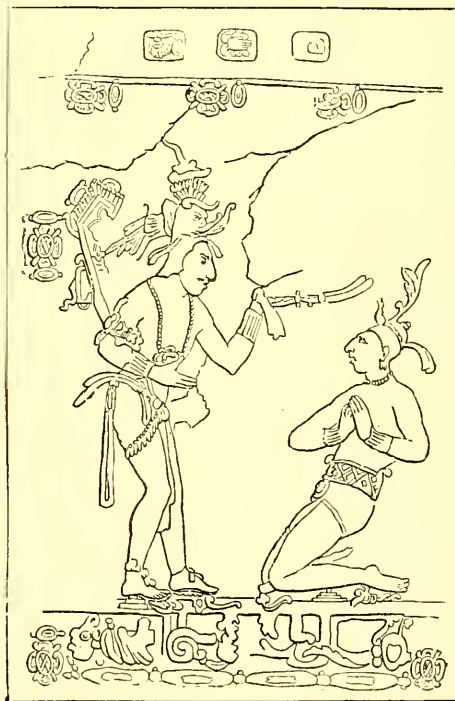
FIRST TEMPLE OF LORILLARD CITY.

My heart beat rapidly, and hope ran high, as, character by character, the carven *glyphs* were compared with the painted ones.

Even my stolid Indian grew excited, as the resemblance was made out, and at last they were shown to be the same. He danced about, he beat the wall with his fist, and he ran to our camp for a spade, and began digging immediately. There could be no doubt as to the spot; the hieroglyphs did not cover a space more than eight feet square, and the place to dig might be easily determined. Just what I was to find I did not know, but felt confident it would be revealed, step by step. My guide dug about an hour, and then struck a stone, or rather, a flat rock, as it seemed, not very large and quite thin. This slab we raised, after some trouble; and we fully expected to find something under it to reward us for our labor. There was a dark box of stone revealed, half filled with earth that had sifted in, and in which we groped for something we knew not what. But we were destined to be disappointed; nothing whatever was in it save the dirt.

My trusty friend still persisted in digging, however, even around and beyond the stone; but nothing was found except a stone arrow-head, and a spear-point of flint, that had once belonged to some aboriginal warrior.

It was a perfectly tropical forest that enclosed and surrounded the ruins of Palenque, with many wild animals in it, but not so many as I had expected to find.



STUCCO ORNAMENT, PALENQUE.

Lying in the hammock my companion had slung between two trees, I fell to ruminating upon the great possibilities of Mexico, the southern part of which I was then exploring,

“Of all that extensive empire which once acknowledged the authority of Spain in the New World,” says the peerless historian of its conquest, “no portion, for interest and importance, can be compared with Mexico.”

At the outset, however, we must note that it is a country of contrarities. With a coast-line of nearly six thousand miles, it has but two or three secure and navigable harbors; from its rugged and snow-covered mountain crests trickle a thousand rills, which swell into torrents that dash so impetuously to the sea that few keels ever cleave their waters. Joining the United States of the north by a continuous boundary of eighteen hundred miles, and stretching to a length of two thousand, it dwindles in the south, at Tehuantepec, to a width of one hundred and forty. Endless summer sleeps upon its coast, eternal winter upon its mountains. Valleys of verdure lie on the slopes of its southern hills — vales of peace and plenty, where a tropical luxuriance clothes every vegetable form with beauty, and the air is laden with the sweetness of the flowers; but beneath the palm and plantain lurks the fateful fever. With an area of nearly a million square miles, and lying on the verge of the tropics, the flora of this country is as varied as is its climate; yet it comprises also vast deserts, terrible in their sterility.

Even the inhabitants of Mexico partake of its peculiarities; while they can produce — through the length of their summer and the fertility of soil — every plant on earth that has a name, yet three articles of food constitute the daily diet of thousands. Two crops, and sometimes three, of cereals can be raised by the Mexican Indian, yet his labor goes begging at thirty cents a day, and flour is \$20 a barrel! Every textile plant, and even silk, can be brought forth in abundance; while he contents himself with a single coarse garment, with an entire wardrobe

that would be a dear purchase at fifty cents. A million cattle graze on Mexican pastures, and butter is one dollar a pound!

Sharper contrasts — deeper shadows, more brilliant high-lights — are nowhere oftener displayed than here! Where you would expect to find man most reliable and honest, on the temperate plateaux, there he is most treacherous; where you would look for deceit, and glance over your shoulder to detect the assassin's hand, in the tropical region, there life is safest! In the heated coast region in Yucatan, where water is not easily procured and is hidden in subterranean *cenotes*, is a population noted for its cleanliness; while the Aztec, inhabiting well-watered plains, has an almost hydrophobic aversion to water, and never comes into close contact with it save by accident! Beneath the palatial structures of the *hacendados*, the planters, crouch the miserable adobe huts of the peons. With all improved agricultural machinery at their doors, they still cling tenaciously to the wooden plough of primitive Egypt; drive carts with wheels hewn from blocks of wood and with yokes lashed to the horns of their cattle.

The stronghold of the Romish Church in years gone by — Mexico — is now Roman Catholic only in name. Once the capital city blazed with inquisitorial fires; now its conventual structures are in ruins, its churches held by the ecclesiastics only at the pleasure of the government, and a Protestant chapel is in every important city in the Republic. Neither is Mexican society less anomalous; for while the people of a once proscribed race (the Spanish) constitute the aristocracy and exclude from their social gatherings all save the Creoles and those of untainted blood, yet the dominant class, holding the reins of power and guiding the destinies of the country, is the *mestizo*, a resultant of the admixture of European and aboriginal stock; while the poor Indian who has been the indirect cause of all the revolutions of Mexico is to-day in reality a serf, and bears the burden of every fight. Nominally a Republic, its president is little else than a military dictator, at whose mercy even are the wealthy aristocracy whose society

he is not permitted to share. *Dios y Libertad*—“ God and Liberty ”—is the watchword of these people, who neither greatly fear their Creator, nor strongly respect the universal rights of mankind!

Mexico lies at the meeting-place of two zones, the temperate and tropic, and from its geographical position, combined with its varying altitudes, possesses a greater variety of soil, surface, and vegetation than any equal extent of contiguous territory on the globe. We may describe it as consisting of a series of plateaux lying mainly above an altitude of six thousand feet, extending from the confines of Guatemala to its northern boundary, falling abruptly to the coast on either hand, and descending gradually to the plains of Texas and Arizona, in the north. The vast Sierra Madre, or Mother Range, traverses it from north to south, attaining at times an elevation of ten thousand feet; while, crossing this longitudinal system from west to east, are several ridges due to igneous action, and containing some of the highest volcanoes in North America; twenty above four thousand feet in height, nine that surpass ten thousand, and one, the Popocatepetl, that rises to nearly eighteen thousand feet.

The distribution of these volcanoes is exceptional; the highest and most noted, as Popocatepetl, Nevada de Toluca, Cofre de Perote, and Jorullo, are in the centre of the table-land, and not along the coast. All are either extinct or quiescent, none having been in eruption in the present century. The most noteworthy instance of volcanic activity was the formation of Jorullo (in the State of Michacan) in 1759, which was suddenly thrown up from the centre of a fertile valley (three thousand feet above the sea and one hundred miles inland) to a height of sixteen hundred feet; besides six volcanic cones, the smallest over three hundred feet in height, and thousands of conical mounds which even now give out sulphurous acid and vapor. Earthquakes are infrequent, as the seismic area is not extensive; and they are rather *temblores*, or tremblings, than *terremotos*, or forceful shakings.

The surface of the table-land is cut up into innumerable *barrancas* and ravines, caused by the plunging torrents speeding on their way to the sea. The Indians still make use of these solitary chasms, in which they secretly practise many of their ancient heathen rites; and one must beware of descending into any of them late in the afternoon, as their daylight disappears sooner than at the surface, and the tropical twilight is so short that it is quite dark very soon after sunset.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE GREAT RED HAND IN THE RUINED PALACE.

IT POINTED TOWARDS YUCATAN. — THE FLYING COACH AND THREE UNHAPPY MULES. — ANOTHER CITY OF THE DEAD, WITH ITS PALACE-PYRAMIDS. — THE TIGER PROCESSION. — ITZAE CALENDAR STONES. — TIME'S MONUMENTS. — OUR CAMP IN THE KING'S HOUSE. — WHAT THE FIRE REVEALED. — MY INDIAN RUNS AWAY. — VAMPIRES AND BATS AND PROWLING ANIMALS. — A SIGHT THAT STARTLED ME. — THE BLOODY HAND AT MIDNIGHT. — A GREWSOME, GHOULISH THING. — WHY MY GUIDE WAS FRIGHTENED. — YUM DID IT. — BUT HIS DEMONS DID N'T COME.



N one sense our exploration of Palenque was a failure, but in another sense it was not; for it led me into another region that was filled with fascinations, — I mean that vast, outlying province of Yucatan, which belongs politically to Mexico, but geographically should be considered all by itself.

And why did I go there? Because the *red hand* pointed thither, — the emblem of the lord of the edifice, painted or imprinted upon the wall of hieroglyphs! It pointed toward Yucatan, in the direction of the city known as Uxmal; and leaving the district of Tabasco, I sailed for Progreso, the chief port of Yucatan, passing on the way Campeche and Champoton, — cities anciently of much importance, but now decaying. From Progreso a railroad led to Merida, the capital of the province, where I hired the peculiar vehicle of Yucatan called *volan-coché*. It is a modified form of the *volante*, which we find in Cuba; only, instead of sitting up in the *volan-coché*, the passenger lies down on a thin mattress,



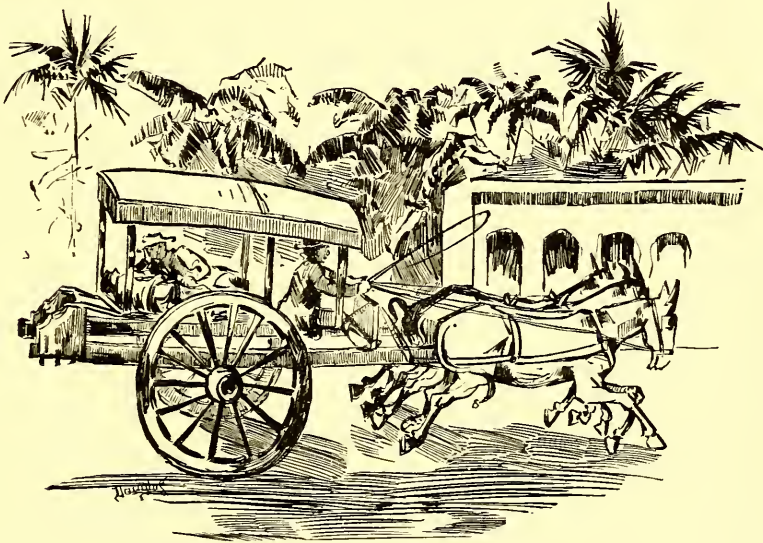
HALF-BREED WOMEN, AND WATER-CARRIER, MERIDA.



and his driver usually stands outside on the shafts, and belabors three unhappy mules, which travel "like all possessed."

The roads are bad, and the pace is tremendous; so that I was very sore indeed when we arrived within sight of Uxmal, the silent city in which I was to look for the guiding symbol.

The predominant character of the Yucatan ruins is that all are built upon an artificial elevation, — a pyramid, or truncate cone, sup-

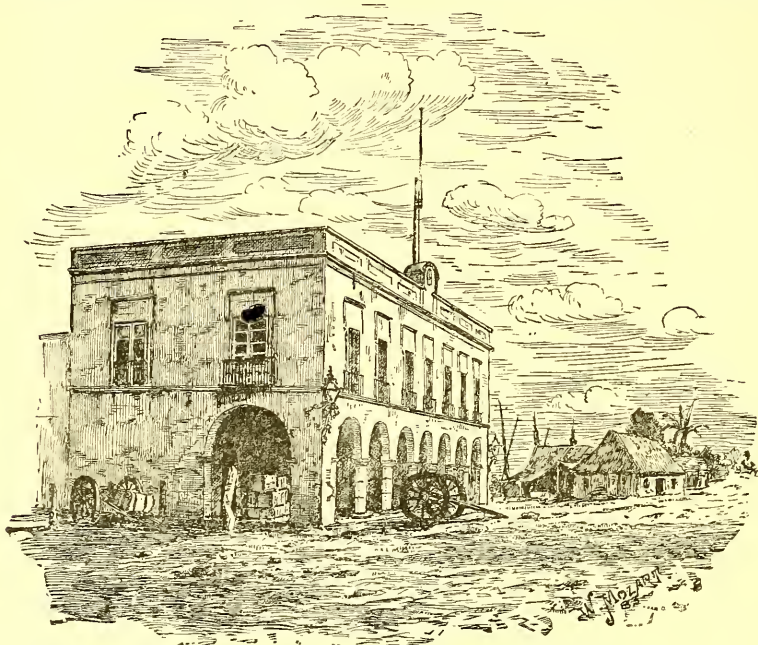


THE VOLAN-COCHÉ.

porting a building more or less vast and grand. The walls are generally of great thickness, mostly of cut stone, sculptured in their façades. Busts, human heads, figures of animals, and hieroglyphics, which no one has yet been able to decipher, constitute their adornment. The finest workmanship is displayed in broad and elevated cornices; the doors are generally low, the lintels of wood, sometimes sculptured; the interiors dark, owing to lack of windows; and the ceilings are formed by the peculiar "American" arch, without the keystone. Sixty-two groups have been discovered, many of them

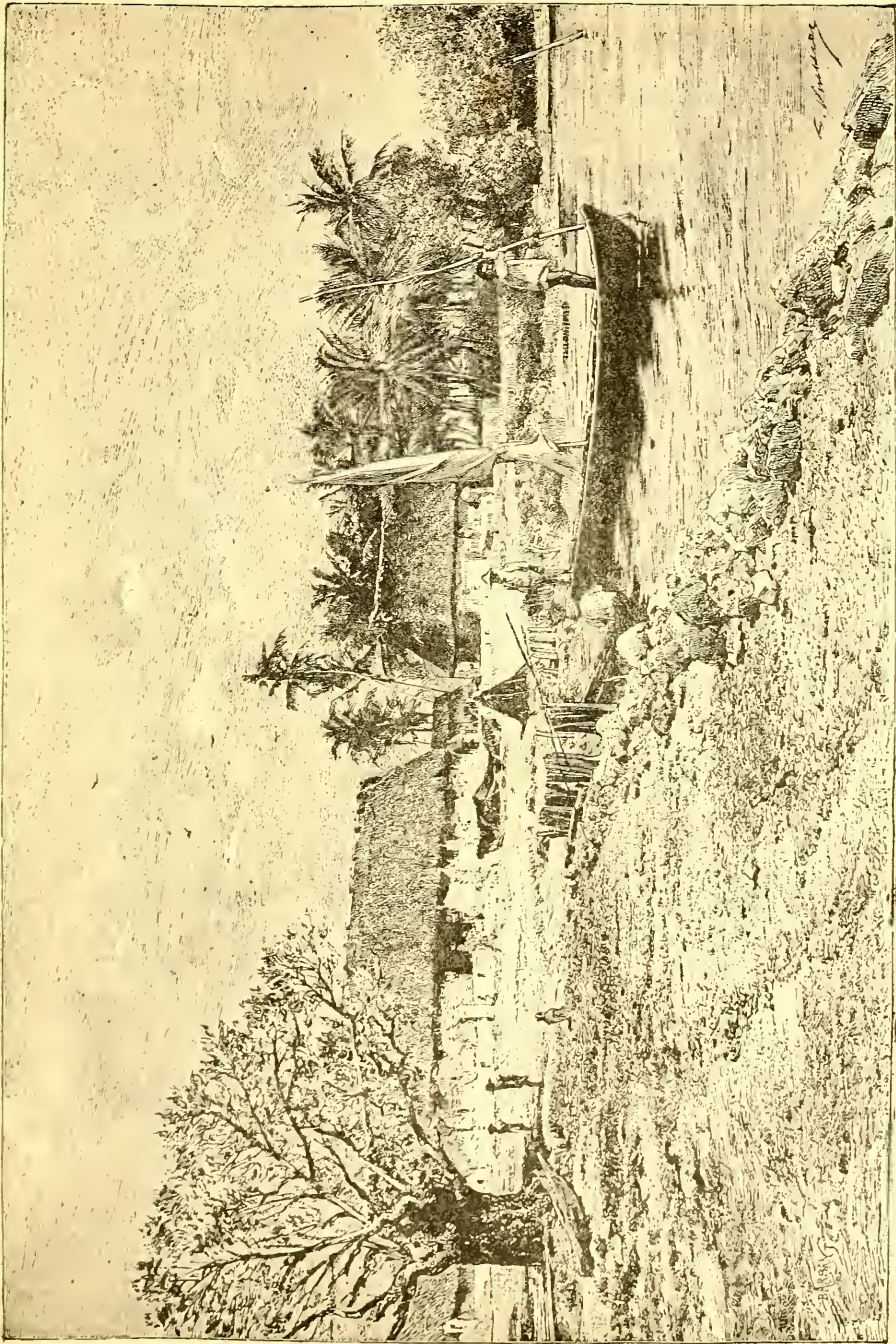
within a radius of one hundred miles from Merida, the capital city of Yucatan. None is more interesting than Uxmal, sixty miles distant, and which I first saw one evening in May, having travelled thither in a *volan-coché*.

The first object that greeted my eyes was a lofty pyramid, known as the Casa del Adevino, or House of the Prophet, up the steep sides of which we climbed, and from its summit, difficult to reach and



THE CUSTOM HOUSE, PROGRESO.

offering precarious foothold, we found a glorious spectacle spread before us. Directly beneath was the Casa de las Monjas, Nuns' Palace, composed of four buildings, about two hundred and eighty feet long, enclosing an immense quadrangle, which has a high arched entrance and eighty-eight apartments opening into it. The façades of this grand court were ornamented with the richest and most intricate carvings known to those ancient builders, the western one having



JAINA, NEAR CAMPECHE.

its entire length of one hundred and seventy-three feet covered by two colossal serpents, whose intertwined bodies enclose a puzzling variety of sculptured hieroglyphics. The principal building, the Casa del Gobernador (all these names are modern misnomers, their original ones being unknown), lay south of the pyramid, raised upon the topmost of three terraces, the uppermost of which is three hundred and sixty feet in length. It is the finest in the dead city, having a length of three hundred and twenty-two feet, a depth of thirty-nine, and a height of twenty-three feet; is built entirely of cut stone, without ornament, to the height of ten feet, above which is a wide cornice beneath a perfect *maze* of intricate and beautiful sculpture. It contains a series of rooms, sixty feet long by twenty-seven wide, the ceiling of which is a triangular arch capped by flat blocks.

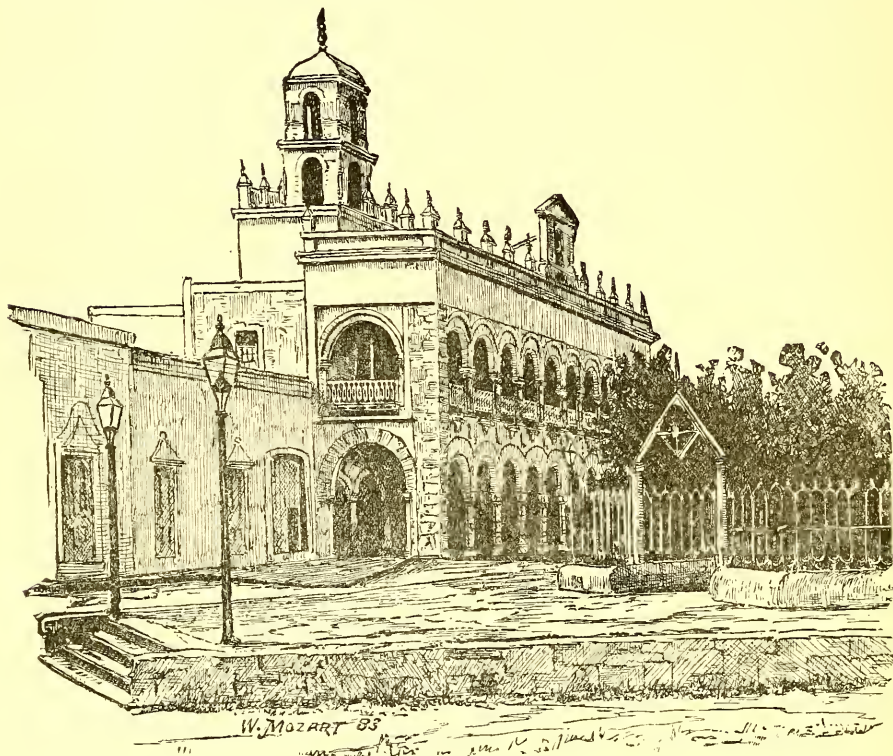
Noteworthy features of this palace are the triangular arch, a curious sculpture adorning the corners, called from its shape the "Elephant Trunk," and imprints, *in red paint*, of the *human hand*, on the walls of various rooms. On the same terrace is a smaller building, called the Casa de las Tortugas (House of the Turtles), from a row of tortoises as ornaments to its upper cornice. Near it are the Palomas (Pigeons' House); the Casa de la Vieja, or Old Woman's House; a great pile called the Nameless Mound, and several others. The pyramid itself, our post of observation, is one hundred and five feet high, with steep steps reaching to the top,



MARKET-WOMAN OF MERIDA.

where is a narrow building, seventy feet long and twelve deep, rich in carven hieroglyphics.

The ruins of Copan are distinguished for idols and altars, richly sculptured; Palenque for its profusion of stucco adornment, tablets,



CASA MUNICIPAL, MERIDA.

and statuary; and Uxmal for the richness of its sculptured façades, the magnitude of its buildings, and the chasteness and beauty of the few statues so far exhumed.

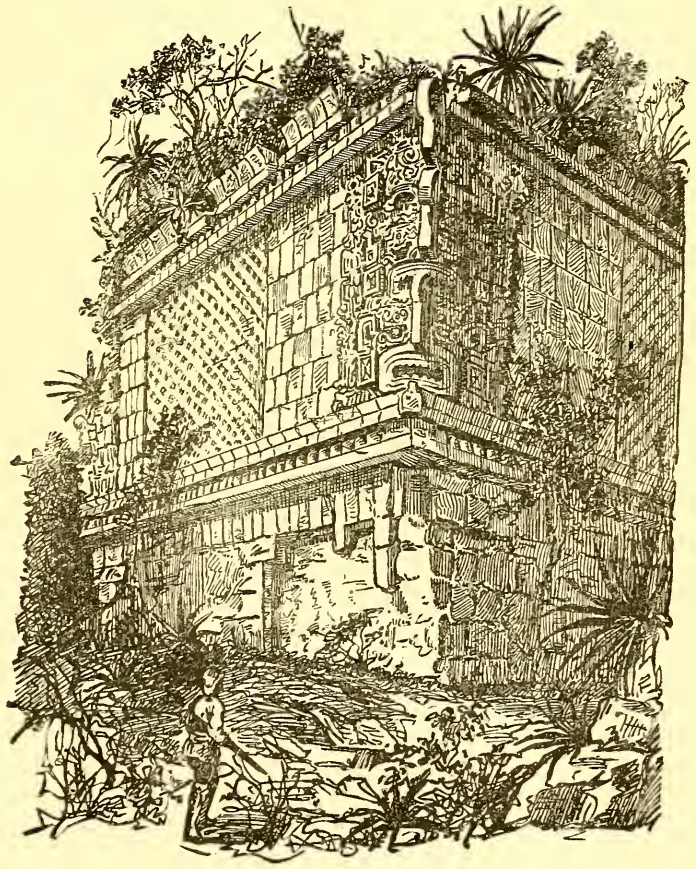
Beyond Uxmal are the extensive ruins of Kabah, with buildings having fronts of one hundred and fifty feet, on terraces eight hundred by one hundred feet, and "lavishly ornamented from the very foundation;" and a massive arch, that reminded the archæologist Stephens of the Arch of Titus.

Labna is another ruin, with sculptures most profuse, grotesque, and florid.

We may not mention one half the groups of ruins in Yucatan, but must content ourselves with a glance here and there at the most conspicuous.

Thirty miles from Merida is Mayapan, the Maya capital, where there is an oblong pyramid thought to have served as a "gnomon mound," and several sculptured slabs. Directly east is Ixamal, once the dwelling-place of the Itzaes, first inhabitants of Yucatan of whom we have knowledge, where there is a colossal head in stucco.

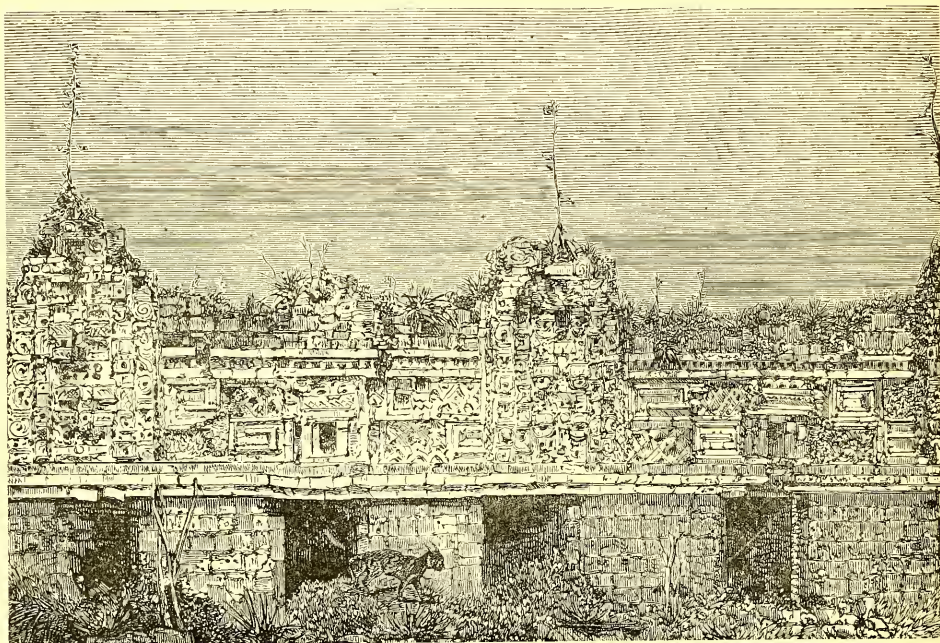
Lying about thirty miles west of the city of Valladolid are the ruins of Chichen Itza, next in importance to Uxmal, and scattered over an area of nearly two miles. The most magnificent pile is the Casa de las Monjas, very rich in sculpture; a grand structure called the Carcel, a circular ruin standing



FAÇADE OF CASA DE LAS MONJAS.

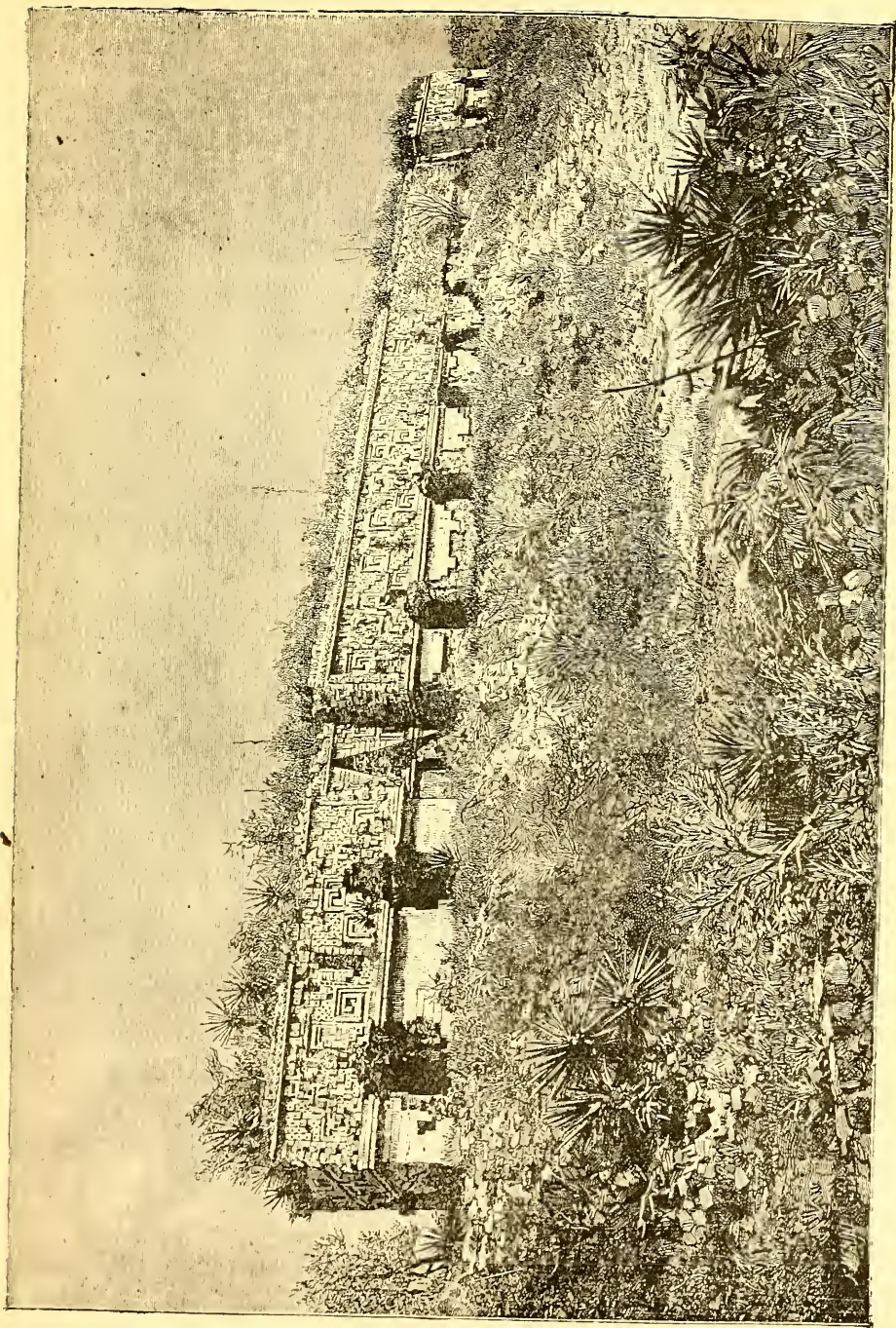
sculpture; a grand structure called the Carcel, a circular ruin standing

on a double-terraced platform twenty-feet in diameter and sixty high; the Casa Colorado, or Red House, highly ornamented with a stone tablet covered with inscriptions; and a most remarkable building known as the Gymnasium, two parallel walls two hundred and seventy-four feet long and thirty thick, with two stone rings four feet in



NORTH FAÇADE OF NUNS' HOUSE, UXMAL.

diameter, with borders carved in the shape of two intertwined serpents, set midway their length. The hieroglyphic carvings of Chichen are wonderful and of exceeding beauty, while its mural paintings, representing warriors in battle and events in the lives of the various rulers of Chichen, are artistic in execution, and superior to any others yet discovered. A sculptured eagle and lynx were found here, while a procession of tigers ornaments the cornice of one of the important buildings. Though this is known to have been the abiding-place of the Itzaes after they had been driven from Izamal, yet the various



GOVERNOR'S PALACE AT UXMAL.

attempts to reconstruct their history from the scattered fragments left by tradition and from the mural paintings and hieroglyphics, have met with but little success.

It was here that Dr. Le Plongeon (a recent explorer who spent seven years in Yucatan) disinterred the monolith known as Chaacmol, nine feet in length; and which was taken from him by the Mexican Government, and now lies in the Museum. He also claims to have discovered more recently (1883) seven stone serpents, and a group of fifteen statues supporting a circular table.

Near the northern part of the peninsula is Ake, an old Indian province, containing a remarkable monument. Upon a great platform mound, one hundred and twenty-five by fifty feet, approached by a range of steps one hundred and thirty-seven feet long, we find a series of stone columns, thirty-six in number, from fourteen to sixteen feet high. The early chroniclers tell us that these columns were not intended as supports for the roof of a temple, nor as altars for sacred fires; but as *katuncs*, or calendar stones, each one representing a period of two hundred years. One antiquarian claims that



COLOSSAL HEAD AT THE BASE OF ONE OF THE
PYRAMIDS AT IZAMAL.

there was an undeniable lapse of fifty-one hundred years from the time the first stone was placed on the platform until the place was abandoned.

My Indian guide was with me ; but he might as well have stayed at home, because he did n't know the country or the people. But he was very useful, and busied himself about the place, clearing out one of the rooms in the great palace, the Casa del Gobernador, and swinging a hammock in it for me, between two great sticks wedged against the walls. The room was very long and dark, and had but one opening into it, — the doorway, facing the east. The ceiling was triangular, great blocks of stone meeting above in the form of the letter A. It was dusk by the time preparations were completed for our camp in the palace, and a fire flickered in one corner of the room, — for the light it gave, more than for the heat. I had cast myself into the hammock as soon as it was ready, and fell asleep while my servant was, as I supposed, preparing my supper.

It was well into the night when I awoke, and I immediately rolled out of the hammock and called for the Indian. There was no response, though I called again and again ; only the night-sounds disturbed the stillness of the night, such as the occasional hootings of owls and the rasping of the nocturnal cicadas. It was as dark as a cavern, and the white ruins gleamed in the darkness like marbles in a cemetery. I shuddered, with something unaccountable affecting me. I was not afraid ; but a nameless fear oppressed me, just the same. The bats and vampires circled softly around the room, dipping down upon me as I swung uneasily in my hammock, brushing my face with their long membranous wings. I could not close the doorway, for it was too large, and there was no door ; and I could not help thinking that I was peculiarly exposed to the attacks of prowling animals, such as ocelots and tiger-cats, should they take a notion to dine off my bones. The fire had died down ; so I threw on fresh fuel and kicked the coals into a blaze. As the flames leaped up, the whole room was illumined, and grotesque shadows leaped along the walls. Thinking

the blaze ought to be sufficient to keep away the wild animals for a while, I got up from the fire and was about to leap into my hammock again, when I was arrested, almost in mid-air, by a sight that startled me and made my hair stand up. For there upon the wall, staring me straight in the face, was the *great red hand*! A giant,



STREET OF VALLADOLID

an antediluvian, had dipped his hand in blood, and stamped it against the wall. The *bloody hand*, — there it was, all the creases in the palm and finger-joints distinctly visible, and drops and streaks of blood trickling away from it, as though the hand had been freshly severed and were bleeding yet.

It was a grewsome thing, staring at me there out of the gloom; and I imagined its owner ready to walk down from the ceiling or up from the subterranean chamber with mouth agape and face aflame. I gazed at it so intently that long after the fire had expired I saw it, — saw it stretching out its bloody fingers, reaching nearer and

nearer toward the hammock, until — I felt a cold grasp on my throat, and found I had fallen asleep, and awakened at dawn. Yet there was the hand, still stretching its fingers in the dim light, with its long forefinger pointing directly toward the end wall of the room.

When the morning came streaming in, and by the time it had dispelled the gloom, I anxiously examined the wall.

Which way did the hand point? That was the important question. If it pointed up, I was to infer that the treasure was in the little temple on the pyramid, on the temple-platform of the conjurer's house; if it pointed downward, then it was buried beneath; if to the west, then I must return again to the wilds of Tabasco or Guatemala. But it did not point in either direction mentioned, for it steadily held that long forefinger toward the north-northeast.

When I had found this out, I stepped outside upon the terrace, whence I could look over the wilds for miles; and then I saw my recreant Indian coming toward me, with his head hung down, as though he expected punishment.

He knew well he deserved to be punished for leaving me alone all night without warning; and I was strongly tempted to give him a taste of my riding-whip. But the danger — if there had been any — was now over, and I was curious to know why it was this man, hitherto so faithful, had suddenly stampeded.

He saw the angry look in my eyes as he reached the platform, and halted a little way from me.

“The *Señor* has seen it, the red hand?”

“Yes, you rascal, the *Señor* has seen it; but what had that to do with your running away?”

“Ah, *Señor*, let not your worship be offended with me, for surely I could not avoid it.”

“And why not? Who compelled you to go?”

“Nobody, *Señor*; yes, somebody, — the Lord of the Edifice, the great Yum. If I had stayed here after dark, he would have snatched me away.”

“ Well, I almost wish he had ; there would have been one bad Indian less in the world. But why did you leave me alone ? Was not there danger that old Yum would snatch me away too ? ”

“ Oh, no, *Señor* ; he never troubles the white man, only the poor Indian. White stranger too strong for Yum ; he Indian God, and like their society best.”

“ Very well ; but after this, remember that I have the first claim to your society, and that if I stay here another night, you stay too. Remember that ! ”

“ *Si, Señor*, I stay, but you no find me in the morning.”

His limbs shook, and he turned an ashy hue, — as nearly pale as an Indian can become.

Breakfast was ready soon after, and the entire day I devoted to examining the ruins. We rambled about through the scrub, unearthing idol-like stones and fragments of sculpture, and stirring up queer birds, like the *toh* and the *chackalaka*. When night came again, my servant showed unmistakable signs of wishing to depart ; but I looked at him severely, and pointed significantly at my revolver, hanging on the hammock.

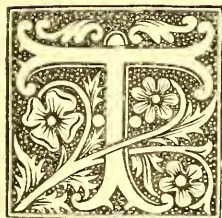
He stayed, therefore, and prepared me a good supper, building a fire that illumined our great room and threw a long lane of light out into the forest. He was sure that if he should be left alone in the dark the demons of the crafty Yum would descend and snatch him away.

So he sat up all night, and fed the flames with odorous branches from the mesquite-tree ; while I, certain that he would not attempt to run away through the dark forest, fell asleep, and awoke refreshed in the morning.

CHAPTER XV.

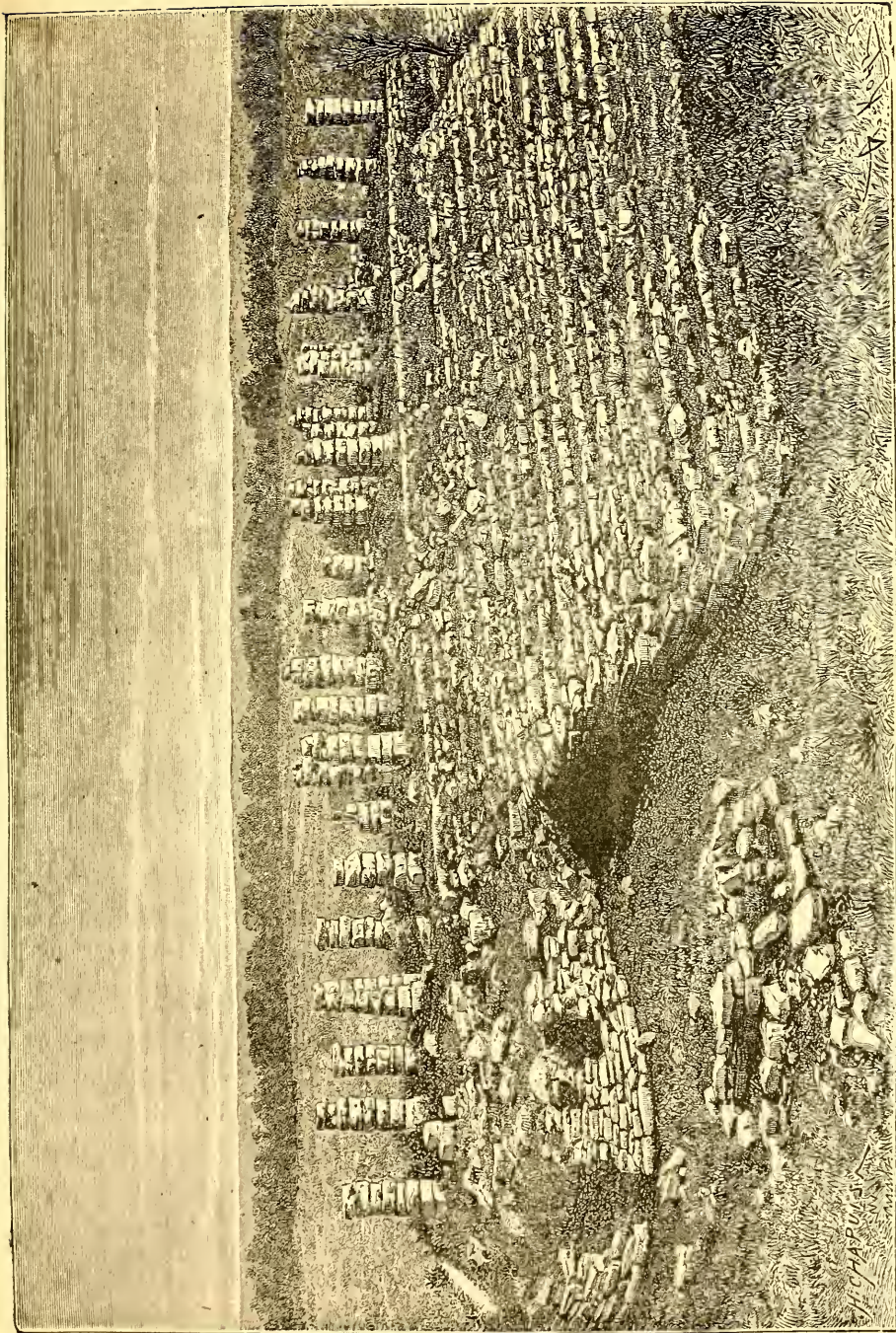
SOMETHING ABOUT A STRANGE COUNTRY.

WHAT THE OLD HISTORIAN WROTE. — GREAT SEÑOR CUCULCAN AND HIS WISE MEN. — THE HOLY PLACES AND THE SACRED WELLS. — THE WHITE MAN WHO TURNED IDOLATER. — SOME STRANGE STATISTICS. — A REVIEW OF TROPICAL AGRICULTURE. — PLANTS DIFFERENT FROM OURS. — SILK-COTTONS, PINES, AND TAMARINDS. — THE VARIED MEXICAN FLORA. — VIPER'S-HEAD, TIGER-FLOWER, AND MONKEY-FOOT. — COFFEE, CORN, AND CACTUS PLANTS. — A PAPER AND TWINE PLANT. — OUR JOURNEY RESUMED. — AND ENDED AT TULOOM.



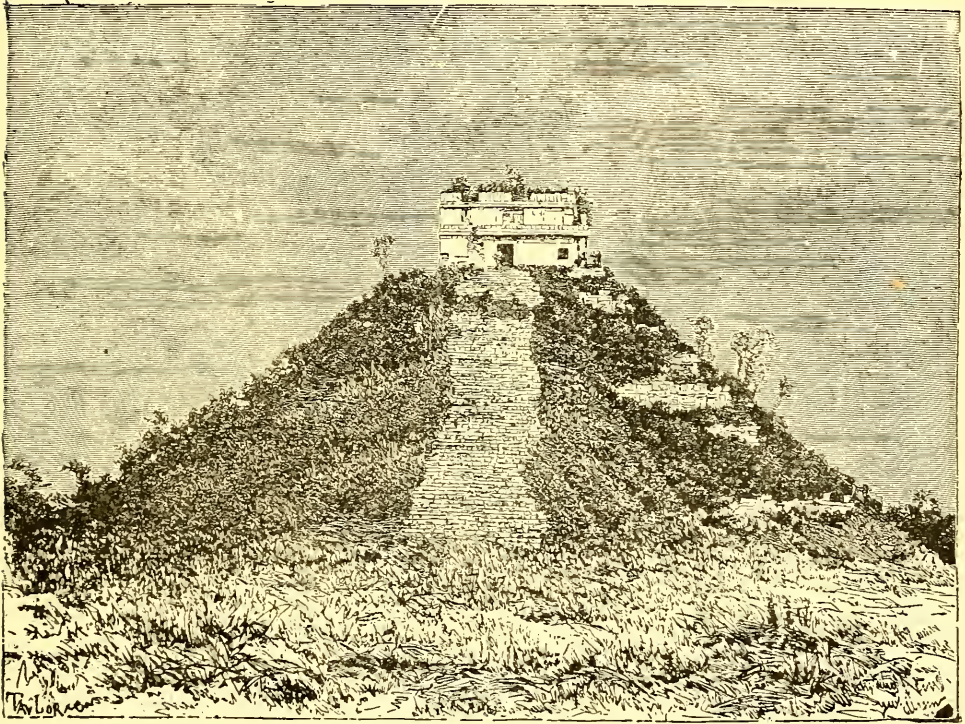
HERE was an old historian, some three hundred years ago or more, who wrote a faithful account of the Indians of this peninsula. His name was Cogal-ludo, and his book was called "Cosas de Yucatan," or "Things of Yucatan." His style is quaint and charming, though he wrote in Spanish, and I shall have to translate what he says, for my readers. There are, he says, many great edifices of exceeding beauty, the grandest ever discovered in this country, their walls beautifully sculptured; and all this work was done by the ancestors of the people of Yucatan, with instruments of metal of any kind. The only knives they had were of flint and of obsidian, a kind of volcanic glass found on the plains of Mexico. There are many edifices of which we do not know the founders; but nearly all were doubtless erected by the ancestors of the present Indians.

There was a tradition among the Mayas that there once reigned in Uxmal a great *señor* called Cuculcan, who came from the West, and who subsequently disappeared and was regarded as a god. In



GRAND GALLERY AT AKE.

Mexico they called him Quetzalcohuatl, but in Yucatan his name was Cuculcan. After he had gone, a fine city was built in his honor, near Campeche. Those ancient Indians had but little learning; but their wise men made books of bark and of paper made from the root of a tree, which they prepared in a manner that gave it a white

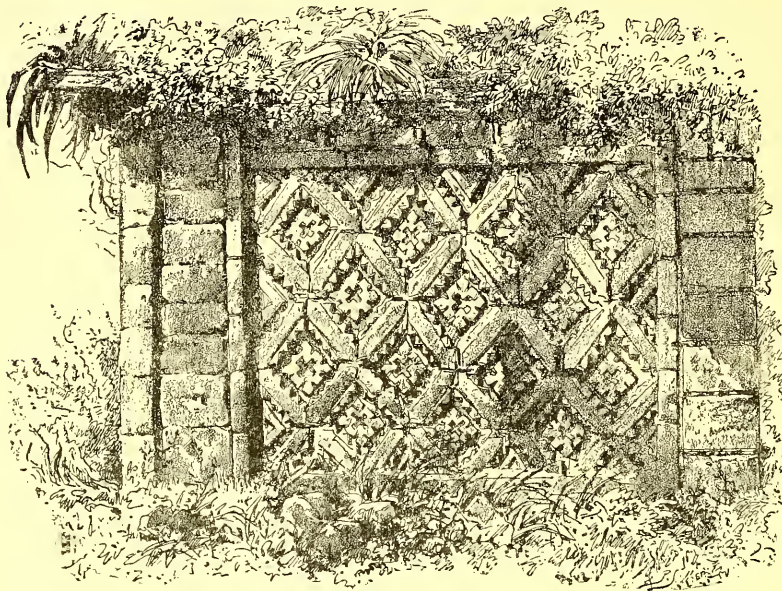


THE CASTLE AT CHICHEN-ITZA.

and lustrous surface. These books were in charge of the priests, or wise men, who lived in the temples and palaces.

They had numerous idols of stone, and also holy places, like Jerusalem. Such a holy place was Chichen-Itza and the island of Cozumel. Sometimes their priests performed their rites with the aid of the men of blood, and human victims were sacrificed. All over the pe-

ninsula of Yucatan are deep caverns, underground rivers, and holes leading to subterranean chambers. Some of these deep natural wells were regarded as sacred to the gods ; and human beings were cast into



ORNAMENTATION OF THE PALACE OF THE NUNS, CHICHEN-ITZA.

them alive, never again to see the light of day. Such was the “ sacred well ” of Chichen-Itza.

The first Spaniard to coast the shores of Yucatan was Juan Grijalva, in 1517, followed by Hernandez de Cordova, the next year, and by Hernando Cortez, the conqueror of Mexico, in 1519.

Cortez sailed from the island of Cuba, with eleven vessels, eleven captains, and five hundred men, and arrived at the island of Cozumel, off the coast of Yucatan, which he found inhabited, with great houses of stone and numerous idols. He found there a figure of the cross (similar to the one we saw in Palenque), which the people adored as the symbol of their rain-god. It was here that Cortez heard of a Spanish captive named Aguilar, who lived with the Indians and was

a slave to a great cacique. He had a companion, also, taken prisoner at the same time he was, named Guerrero, who became a great captain among the Indians, learned their language, and married an Indian wife. Aguilar remained a good Christian, observing all the feast and fast days; while Guerrero, it is thought, turned idolater. When the messengers from Cortez reached them, they persuaded Aguilar to return to his friends and civilization; but the warrior Guerrero remained behind, and no white man ever heard of him again.

In one of the preceding chapters we got a glimpse, in passing, of the great natural wealth of Mexico; and I wonder if we cannot recur once more to the same subject. Imagine ourselves for the moment again on the Mexican table-land.

Between the bases of the central mountain ranges and the coast is a broad expanse of comparatively level land, — the great lowland plains, known as the *savanas*, or *llanos*. The low-lying region is well designated the *tierra caliente* (or hot country), in which a humid atmosphere perpetually nourishes a tropical vegetation. The mean annual temperature of this climatic zone ranges from seventy-five degrees to eighty-two degrees, and its influence is felt to an approximate altitude of three thousand feet above the sea; at which height we enter the *tierra templada*, or temperate region, with a mean of about seventy degrees. A delightful coolness here prevails in the shade; while the vegetable forms, blending as they do those of the lower and upper regions, are of most astonishing variety. The classification is an arbitrary one, and it is difficult to say at just what elevation each zone overlaps and merges into the other; but the *tierra caliente* may be said to extend to a vertical height of three thousand feet, the *templada* from this to six thousand, the verge of the table-land; while above this altitude is the *tierra fria*, or cold country, rising by successive stages to eighteen thousand feet, and with a vegetation varying from the corn and barley of the lower levels to the cryptogamia of the mountain tops. Its mean annual temperature is about sixty degrees. Travel on the

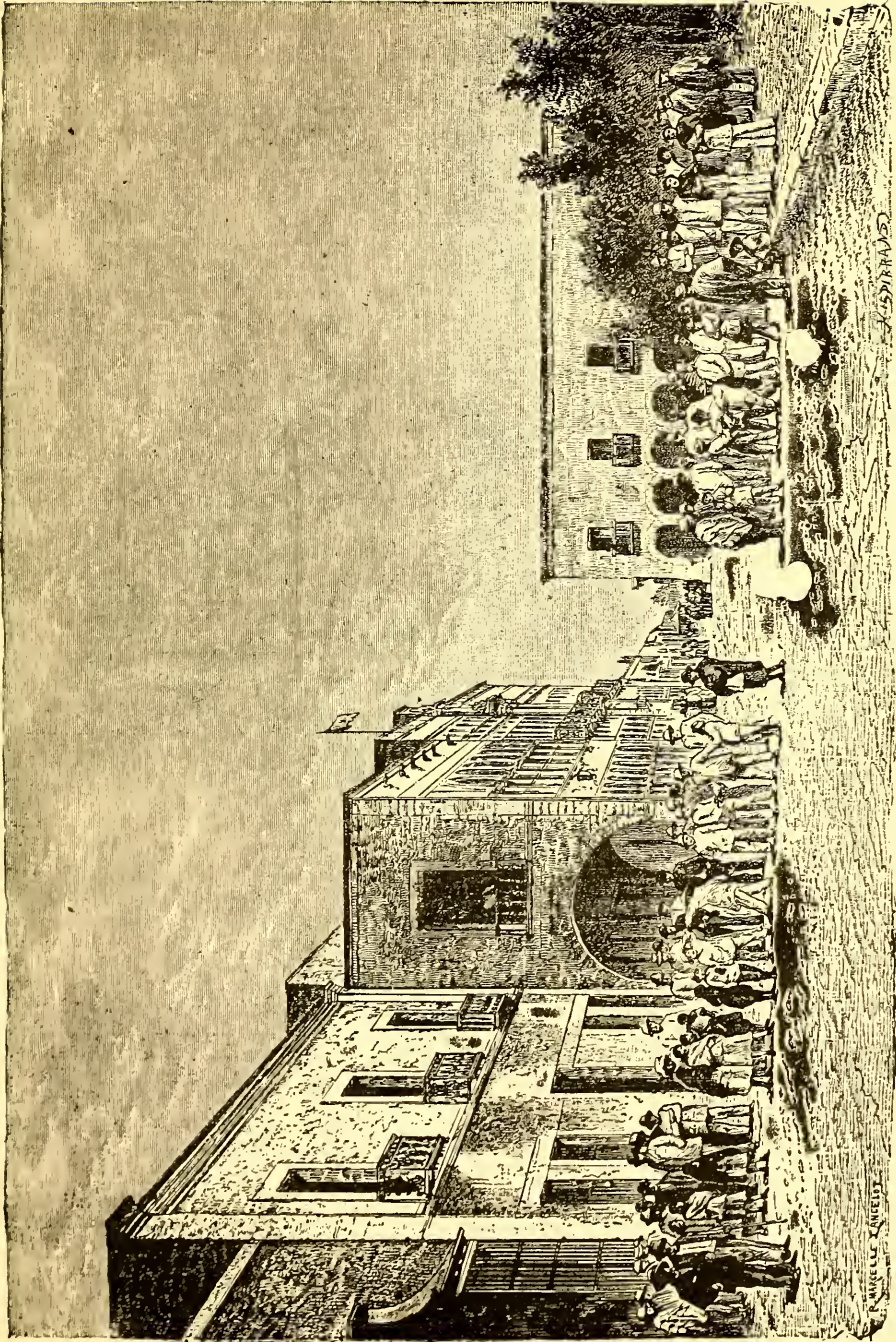
plateaux may be equally agreeable summer or winter, excepting that during the former it is liable to frequent detentions. The Mexicans divide the year into two periods, — *el estio*, the dry season, extending from October to June; and *la estacion de las aguas*, or the rainy season, comprising the rest of the year. The rain, in fact, follows the sun in his northward and southward journeys.

As there are climatic zones, so also there are zones of vegetation. From the Mexican Gulf, at Vera Cruz, a famous railroad stretches inland across the plains, and climbs the mountains to the very heart of the table-land, eight thousand feet above the sea, thus rendering it easy to obtain a complete exposition of Mexico's vegetable wonders.

First, after leaving the shore, which is like that of our southern coast States, we have the tropic coast-belt, where, as high as fifteen hundred feet, we find the coco, cacao, cotton, vanilla, cloves, nutmegs, peppers, bananas, plantains, and all the tropical fruit. To impress upon one the character of the coast vegetation, must be imagined a group of coco-palms, waving their long leaves in the wind, shining like gold in the sun. Essentially a littoral product, the coco-palm is rarely found far inland; and the equally beautiful and tropical plant, the banana, leaves it behind in the advance up the mountains, as the foot-hills are reached.

First among tropical trees I rank the coco-palm; for there is no more valuable product of the soil to the inhabitant of the coast region than this, and none more graceful or stately.

Poets, native and foreign, have celebrated the "hundred uses of the palm," — a tree which furnishes man in the tropics with nearly everything necessary for his subsistence. Many are the draughts of cool coco-milk that I have drunk beneath the golden-canopied roof-tree of the palm, reclining in cool shade, while outside the grove blazed the ardent sun of a tropic noon. Everywhere in the hot coast region, and on the lower borders of the temperate land, may be found the banana and its sister plantain, which, we have little reason to doubt, are indi-



MUNICIPAL PALACE OF VALLADOLID.



genous to tropical America, and were cultivated by the aboriginal inhabitants in pre-Columbian times. Regarding their productiveness, we may repeat that oft-quoted statement of Humboldt, that thirty-three pounds of wheat and ninety-nine pounds of potatoes require the same space to grow upon as will suffice to produce four thousand pounds of bananas.

Cotton is another plant indigenous to Mexico, found here by the Spaniards, as Indians clothed in cotton garments were seen by Columbus, off the coast of Yucatan, in 1502. Beautiful cotton mantles were woven by the Indians of the lustre of silk, while their cotton breastplates were considered arrow-proof.

Of rising importance is the cultivation of the sugar-cane, to which the *tierras calientes* are especially adapted. Another plant native to Mexico is tobacco, called *yetl* by the Aztecs, and used by them as a mild narcotic. We have only to turn to the history of the Conquest to find that Montezuma and the lords of his court used it after their repasts, daintily smoking it through amber tubes, and finding it especially grateful for the mid-day siesta. We find in profusion in the forests of Southern Mexico those valuable woods obtained only beneath the vertical sun of the torrid zone, — not less than twenty precious cabinet woods and sixty species of timber. Among those noted for their fineness of grain and susceptibility to polish are: Ebony, lignum vitæ, mahogany, manchineel, rosewood, sapota, and violet wood. These woods, at a distance from the coast and a market, are often in common use; even a rosewood pig-pen is often seen, and a hut of bamboo, with floor of mud, may contain a table of solid mahogany.

Among trees famous for their size and durability of wood are cedars, cypresses, *ceibas* or silk-cottons, oaks, pines, and tamarinds. Of gum, resin, and oil-yielding plants, cereals and alimantal plants, and others famous for their medicinal properties, Mexico has indeed her share; for the Mexican flora, rich and varied, contains over ten thousand species known and analyzed. There is hardly a fruit in the

known world that does not find a congenial home here ; to mention all would be to enumerate nearly every variety cultivated in both habitable zones. Of native trees the cacao (*Theobroma cacao*) flourishes in the warmer regions, giving profitable returns for its culture. It was famous in early Aztec times, and the beverage produced from its seed, chocolate, was well known to them as *chocolatl*.

“ Thousands of flowers embellish the meads and adorn the gardens of Mexico, of most singular beauty and extraordinary forms.” All had significant Aztec names, even in remote times, such as the *coat-zontecoxochitl*, or viper’s head, of incomparable beauty ; the *oceloxochitl*, or tiger-flower ; the *chempoalxochitl*, or Indian carnation ; the *floripundo*, beautiful, white, odoriferous, eight inches in length by four in diameter. The *marphalxochitl*, or hand-flower, is one of the most wonderful productions of Nature, being in shape a bird’s foot, or the hand of an ape. But one plant is said to have existed in ancient times, for the possession of which a sanguinary battle was fought.

Where the hills set their feet upon the plains of the coast, vegetation radically changes, and we gradually pass to the cooler and more salubrious climate of the temperate region. Rising higher and higher in our ascent from the coast, our eyes are bewildered by the vast variety of vegetable forms that are massed upon the trees, the wild pines and air-plants and hosts of ferns, bignonias with tints of sea-shell, orchids with spikes of blossoms, and an entire world of creepers and parasitic vines, unknown to any but the skilled botanist.

The most important product of the temperate region is coffee, which thrives best at an altitude of from three to four thousand feet, where it gets shade and moisture, which the lowlands of the *caliente* cannot invariably supply, and a temperature changing but slightly from year to year. Though the tree in its native mountains of Ceylon attains a height of twenty feet, on the plantation it is pruned down to eight or ten, forming dome-shaped masses of glossy green.

The berries which cluster along the slender branches are about the size of a cherry, at first green, then changing to bright red, the bean itself being contained in a viscid pulp. A coffee plantation is indeed beautiful, with wide straight paths opening through the dark green coffee-trees gleaming with berries, and filling the air with perfume from clouds of snowy blossoms.

Beyond an altitude of four thousand feet, vegetation is less luxuriant. The Old World grains, as wheat and barley, flourish best at an elevation of six thousand feet; and there begin the pines, while Indian corn marches with us all the way from the coast, and climbs with us up the mountain sides. The maize (Spanish, *maíz*), this precious cereal, was probably cultivated a thousand years before our country acquired a name; at the present day it is almost the sole support of the Mexican Indian. In our journey through the Indian hill-towns of Southern Mexico, we rode for days through successive valleys filled with maize, where the villages were entirely hidden in vast fields, and where the giant culms with their feathered crests reached far above our heads as we sat on horseback. Its yield is astonishing, and said frequently to reach two hundred fold.

At about seven thousand feet above the sea, resuming our journey, we reach the verge of the table-land that lies between the eastern and western cordilleras, and extends over an area of some fifteen hundred by five hundred miles. Not a trace of tropical vegetation exists, save in the cactus, aloe, and nearly related plants.

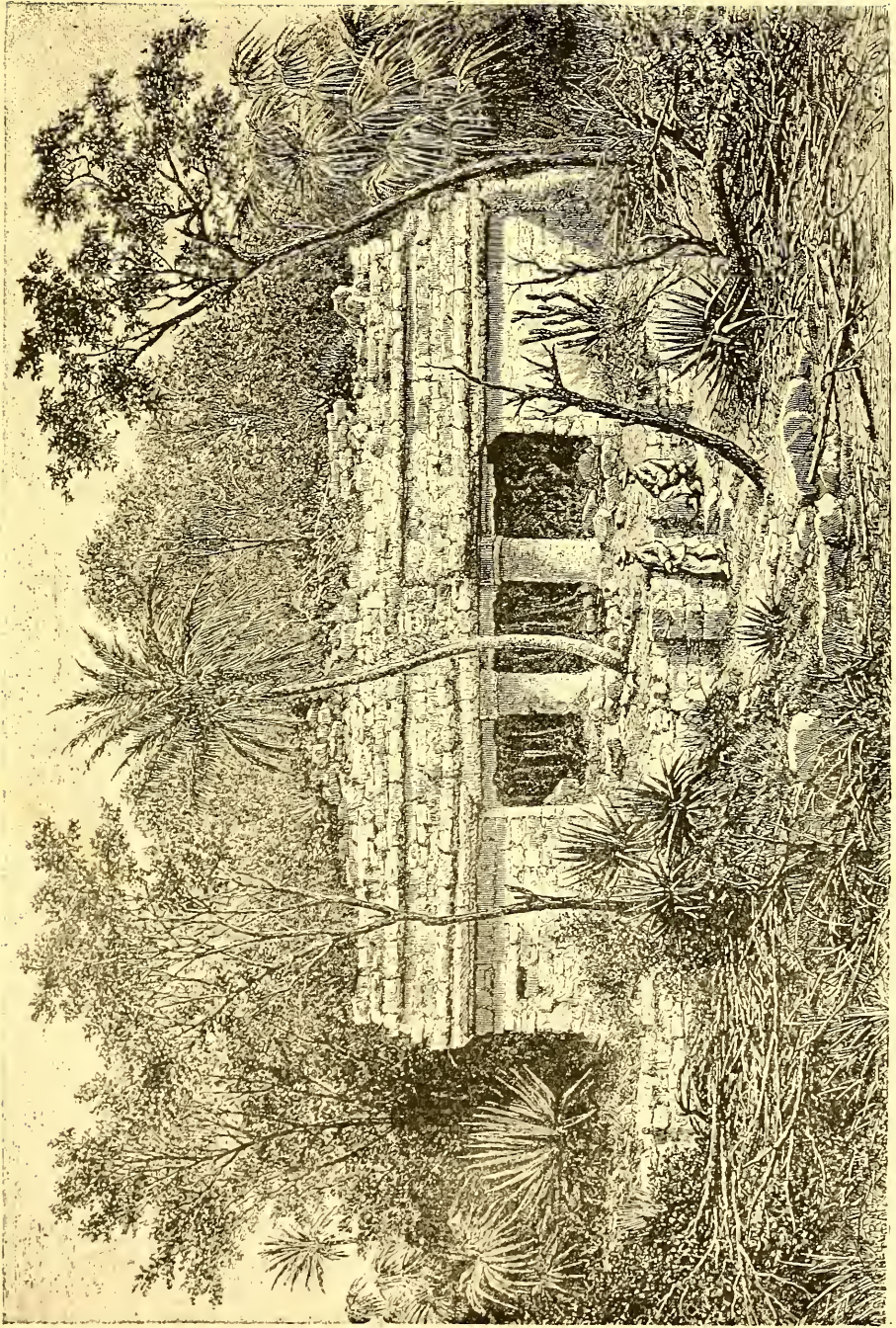
“ We are here reminded that Mexico belongs to the region of cacti and peppers, possessing as she does a full share of the five hundred species found in America. Some of these cacti, as the *cereae*, rise to a height of sixty feet, with branches like candelabra, whence the name of the plant, — the candelabra cactus. Some are globular, and weigh at least two hundred pounds, and all are covered with spines. The *cereae* creep like snakes along the ground; the *opuntias*, or Indian figs, furnish refreshing fruit; and the leaves of some species support the cochineal.”

The cactus has not without reason been termed "the vegetable spring of the wilderness," as in the dry season the cattle and horses of the plains depend on the *opuntia* for their nourishment. With their horns or hoofs they remove the thorns and wool on the top of the *echinocactae*, and bite out of it a small reservoir, in which a clear sap collects during the night, which quenches their thirst in the morning. These vegetable reservoirs refill themselves for weeks in succession; and the brutes know their watering-places well, returning to them every morning and defending them savagely against all usurpers.

"But the miracle of Nature" is the maguey, — the *Agave Mexicana*, sometimes, though erroneously, called the century plant, — whose habitat is this same plateau we are describing. When the Spaniards first arrived here in 1519, the native Mexican had the maguey, which yielded him almost the hundred uses of the palm. From the pulp of its leaves paper is made, and twine from its fibres. Upon such paper (which much resembles the true papyrus) the rare and valuable Mexican manuscripts were painted. Needles are obtained from its thorn-tipped leaves, and ready-threaded by stripping away the fibres attached. The poor people thatch their houses with the leaves; use a hollow leaf as a gutter, a cradle, a bread-tray. Its uses are almost innumerable. The *pita*, or strong fibre, is woven into everything, from ropes to hammocks.

But it is from the sap of the maguey, its life blood, that the Indian obtains that which he prizes most, — the native beverage, in use from time immemorial, — *pulque*.

The leaves of the maguey are sometimes ten feet in length and a foot in breadth. From the centre of the plant, at from ten to fifteen years of age, a giant flower-stock is shot up, from twenty to thirty feet in height, after which supreme effort the exhausted plant dies, having performed the service to Nature for which it was created. Just before the period of inflorescence the Indian cuts out the whole heart of the



TEMPLE AT TULOOM.

plant, and into the reservoir thus formed the juice for the nourishment of the flower-stock is abundantly poured,—from eight to ten pints a day for two or three months. This is the *aguamiel*, or honey-water, which the Indian extracts by means of suction through a long hollow gourd, called *acojote*, or water-throat. It is then taken to the *hacienda* in sheepskin sacks, where it undergoes fermentation and becomes *pulque*, a liquor refreshing and but slightly intoxicating.

It may be said to exert a beneficial effect upon the Mexican, who is determined to drink something; and it would better be the mild and somniferous *pulque* than *mescal*, or *aguardiente*, the Mexican fire-water. It seems to produce a very satisfactory state of inebriety, favorable to good-humor and sleep. The odor of *pulque* is not attractive. It tastes like stale buttermilk, and is not, to a stranger, the “nectar fit for gods” the Mexican believes.

But I must not allow the seductive honey-water to divert us from our course up the mountains. Let us journey on. We have, I think, taken a comprehensive survey of Mexico’s flora, and incidentally of her resources of fields and forests. Perhaps it may not appear irrelevant to introduce an incident of travel, while at the same time following in the line of our investigations.

I did not intend to stray so far away; but I have not lost sight of the end we had in view, let me assure you. Still keeping my Indian companion, who had become much attached to me, I recrossed Yucatan, and with an escort of native soldiers, penetrated to the northeast coast, towards which the *red hand* pointed. I knew there could be no other place intended than the ruined city of Tuloom; and thither I went. There stands this city, on the northern coast, silent, deserted, and almost unknown. Centuries have passed since its corridors echoed to the footfalls of its inhabitants, and since the Indian watchmen looked out from its signal towers.

“On the coast of Yucatan,
As untenanted of man
As a castle under ban
 By a doom,
For the deeds of bloody hours,
Overgrown with tropic bowers,
Stand the Teocallis towers
 Of Tuloom.

“One of these is fair to sight,
Where it pinnacles a height ;
And the breakers blossom white,
 As they boom
And split beneath the walls ;
And an ocean murmur falls
Through the melancholy halls
 Of Tuloom.”

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ISLAND OF TIZIMINCHAK.

FIERCE INDIANS OF TULOOM. — FOWLS ON SPEARS, AND CORN ON ARROW-POINTS. — THE RED HAND POINTS TO GUATEMALA. — BOUND FOR BELIZE. — A BUCCANEER TOWN. — A JOURNEY TO LAKE PETEN. — THE ISLAND CAPITAL. — THE LAST OF THE ITZAES. — THE HORSE OF CORTEZ. — THE INDIANS WORSHIP HIS IMAGE OF STONE. — THE GOD OF THUNDERBOLTS, TIZIMINCHAK. — MASSACRE OF THE MISSIONARIES. — FURY OF THE ZAMAGNALES. — COUNTRY OF THE LACANDONES. — STONE IMPLEMENTS AND LITTLE GRASS CRADLES. — THE TONGUE-TIED DOG AND DOGS THAT COULDN'T BARK. — END OF THE DOCTOR'S NARRATIVE.



HAD expected to have my journey interrupted by the fierce Indians of the east coast of Yucatan, who have a hatred of white men, and never allow an opportunity to pass of doing them injury. These Indians are known as *Sublevados*, or rebels; but in reality they never were conquered, and their chiefs have sworn they never shall be. Formerly they used to kill every white man visiting their country at sight; or if they chanced to take him prisoner, he was put to death with dreadful tortures. They are supposed to be a remnant of the once powerful people known as the Itzaes, who ruled Yucatan, and who perhaps built the wonderful palaces we find there now. Their province was called Bakalar, and was once a stronghold of the Itzaes, who are now only represented by a small tribe in Yucatan and another about the shores of Lake Peten. It was here, in 1528, that Captain Daxila, who

was one of the conquering army of Spaniards under Montijo, met with repulse at the hands of the native cacique.

The Spaniards demanded of the cacique gold and provisions; but the haughty prince sent back word that he would give them fowls on spears and corn on arrow-points; and he so nearly fulfilled that threat that Daxila was only too glad to escape with what was left of his detachment to the coast.

The country to the south and west of Bakalar is almost unexplored, and I believe it is very rich in remains of the ancient civilizations.

It was of no use for me to tarry in Tuloom. The longer I remained, the greater were the chances I should be found out by some prowling *Sublevado*. Neither did I wish to retrace my steps, and return to the capital of Yucatan or to Mexico. The *red hand* pointed southward again, and that for a long time puzzled me. If I continued following that mysterious symbol, which pointed as many ways as a weather-vane, I should never get anywhere. But as I was gaining information all the time, it did not matter much, even though I was still in the dark regarding the treasure. My Indian, who had been in Guatemala, suggested I should try that country, and especially as the red finger pointed thitherward. And as if to emphasize his suggestion, we saw a sail, that afternoon, standing along the coast evidently bound for Belize! I was looking out from the watch-tower, and saw it come into sight from the direction of the island of Cozumel. As soon as it was near enough to signal, I waved a red blanket over the battlement, which the helmsman finally seemed to see. But it approached cautiously, fearing evidently the wild Indians, until the men on board could distinguish that I was a white man. Then the vessel came up in the wind, and sent a boat ashore. The captain promised to take us to Belize, whither he was going; and we were soon on board, and leaving Tuloom in the distance. Belize, as you may know, is a British colony in the southeastern part of the peninsula of Yucatan. It had its origin in those times when Spanish galleons sailed the sea and

English buccaneers pursued them. The river, town, and eventually the colony were named from one Wallis, a noted pirate, who made the safe and secluded harbor back of the coral reefs his secure retreat.

The valuable dye-woods and timber found in the forests of this coast gradually attracted quite a colony, and by the middle of the seventeenth century there was a large British settlement, which the Spaniards tried in vain to destroy. They could not be dislodged, and finally Spain and Great Britain fixed the limit of this wood-cutting colony by treaty in 1783. The coast limit was at first sixty miles; but it soon extended farther, and in 1837 reached from Rio Hondo on the north, to the Rio Sarsatoon on the south, a distance of nearly two hundred and fifty miles. Inland from the sea-coast the settlers occupy as much territory as they please.

As a colony, it is bounded on the north by Yucatan, east by the Caribbean Sea, south by Guatemala, and westerly by the same republic and Campeche. Proclaimed a British colony in 1852, it was separated from the British Crown in 1860, and ceded to Honduras; but guarantees were required securing the civil and religious liberty of the inhabitants.

We reached Belize in safety, and then we departed, for there was nothing there desirable either for a naturalist or a treasure-seeker. I had been thinking over all the evidence on our short voyage, and had concluded I would try to reach Peten, the island capital of the ancient Lacandonnes, in the far interior. Engaging guides and mules, I set out bravely, and after a week of the wildest kind of travel reached the great lake, "which is called Chaltana," an old historian says. In some places it is said to be fathomless; in others, thirty fathoms deep. Its water is delightful and pleasant, sweet and clear, with good fish in it, and *icoteas*, or tortoises. It has creeks and arms in all directions, and numerous streams fall into it; but it has no outlet, except perhaps a subterranean one. In the narrowest part of this lake, at a distance of some five miles from the mainland, is the great island

on which the Indian capital was built, called Tayasal. This island is very steep and lofty, with a table-land on top and very broad. When the first white men came here, it was covered with houses, of stone and wood, with thatched roofs; and the number of Indians living here was very great. Within a short distance were four smaller islands, and another Peten, which was uninhabited. Near some parts of the shores are pleasant groves, and in the direction of the mountains many Coboxes, and other nations, once under control of the Cacique of Peten.

Herds of wild animals are found in the woods, as deer and mountain hogs, turkeys and pheasants; and valuable spice and timber trees abound here. The first arrivals found a great many stone idols, made of jasper, green, violet, and red, and arrows with heads of crystal instead of flint. The land yields two crops a year, of corn, indigo, cochineal, etc.; the climate is healthy, and there are very few poisonous reptiles or insects.

Here reside the last descendants of the most ancient inhabitants of Yucatan, the Itzaes, who have a brown complexion like the Yucatecos. This island was discovered by Hernando Cortez, three hundred and sixty years ago, when he was on his way to Nicaragua,— a terrible journey, that lost him many of his men. He was well received by the Itzaes: and when about to depart from Peten, he left with Canek, cacique of the tribe, his favorite horse, Monzillo, which had been lamed. The simple Indians did not know what food the horse required, and fed it with the best they had, such as poultry, and other kinds of meat, and presented him with bunches of flowers, as they were accustomed to do to persons of rank when they were sick. But the horse did not thrive on this attention, and died, at which the Indians were deeply concerned. They made an effigy of him in stone and mortar, and then worshipped it as a divinity. It was seated on its hind quarters on the floor of one of the temples, raised on its fore legs, and with its hind legs bent under it. These barbarians

adored it as the God of Thunder and Thunderbolts, and called it Tiziminchak, which means the Bride of Thunder, or the Thunderbolt.

Three hundred years ago, there were twenty *cués*, or temples, in Peten, in which the native priests officiated. The principal one was square, with a handsome parapet, and approached by nine steps of beautiful stones. On the upper step by the entrance, was an idol of human form, with very bad countenance, sitting on his heels; and in the temple another of unwrought emerald, called the God of Battles.

In the midst of the temple, which was formed like a castle, there was found by the white men, hanging from the top by three strips of cotton of different colors, the leg-bone of a horse, very much decayed. Below it hung a little bag containing small pieces of bone, also very much decayed; and on the ground were placed three braziers, for burning perfumes or incense, of styrax and other aromatic substances, which the priests used in the sacrifices. On the top of the leg-bone was set a crown. It was explained that these bones were the fragments of what remained of a great horse which had been left in the Indians' care by a king who had passed that way a long time before; from which account it is certain the so-called king was Hernando Cortez.

The first missionaries to Peten left Merida, the capital of Yucatan, in 1618; and they were the first white visitors to that country since the visit of Cortez, nearly one hundred years before.

They went by the way of the river Nohuhun, through thick forests, where medicinal shrubs were abundant, and gold was found in the streams. The Itzaes of Peten received the white strangers with hospitality, and treated them well, till one of the Fathers provoked them; and this was how he did it. He attempted to destroy their precious idol-horse, the great Tiziminchak. No sooner, says the old chronicler, had he heard the legend of the horse of Cortez, than his religious zeal awoke, and seizing a large stone, he mounted upon the image, and straightway began to batter it to pieces, scattering the fragments over the floor of the temple.

The Itzae priests, the Zamagnales, raised a tremendous outcry when they witnessed the destruction of their favorite idol, and loudly clamored that the missionaries should be put to death for having killed their god. The iconoclastic priests narrowly escaped with their lives, but they got away. But five years later, in 1623, a priest named Father Delgado, guided by a man called Cristoval Ná, and accompanied by eighty Indians, reached Peten. They were all put to death, and their hearts torn out and offered to the idols by the Itzaes. This is the story, all that the white man knows of it, of the great Tiziminchak, the holy horse of Peten. How long the Itzaes worshipped him nobody exactly knows, but for at least one hundred and fifty years.

Two hundred years ago the Lacandones, the Indians of the region between Peten and Guatemala, were subjugated by the Spaniards, and they fled to the dense forests. But they left behind plenty of stores; their houses being filled with maize, beans, and cotton, together with primitive warring instruments, blow-guns for shooting birds, calabashes, grass ropes, and stone tools. Little grass cradles hung from the roofs of the huts showed how the children were taken care of, while their mothers attended to the duties of the household. These Indians had tamed the native birds, and had also dogs and tame macaws.

It was about two hundred years ago, in 1697, that the Spaniards undertook the conquest of Peten, where the last of the Itzaes lived. A great road was built from Campeche, and the lake was reached. A most desperate battle ensued; but the Itzaes finally fled, and the Spanish soldiers destroyed every vestige of the altars in their temples, and their idols, the labor occupying several days.

It was during this campaign, when the Spaniards found themselves in a particularly bad place and wished to escape, that a shrewd stratagem was employed. Noticing that some of the Indian sentinels were careless on their watch, the captain of the company tied the tongue of a large bell to the tail of a hungry dog, and caused food to

be placed before him at a distance just beyond his reach. When the dog saw the soldiers depart, he strove to follow them, and in trying to reach the food, also, his motions rang the bell. Thus the Indians, hearing the noise, thought the Spaniards were still in camp, and were deceived till they had escaped beyond the reach of pursuit.

This dog story reminds me of another that I found in an old book published in the year 1555. The author, Petrus Martyr, in the quaint old English of his time, says of discoveries which had then been recently made, —

“They say the same of the islands lately found ; whereof two are named Destam and Lestam, whose inhabitants go naked ; and for scarceness of children, sacrifice dogges, which they nourish as well for that purpose as we do connies. These dogges are dumme, and cannot barke, having snoutes like unto foxes. Such as they destinate to eat, they set apart while they are whelpes, whereby they waxe very fat in the space of four monthes.”

What a blessing it must be to have dogs that neither bark nor bite, and that can be served up as a tidbit for the table ! These dumb dogs are also mentioned as occurring in Cuba, Mexico, and Haiti ; but they are now extinct. Indeed, they may not have been dogs at all, but perhaps raccoons or agontis.

The largest animal in the forests about Lake Peten is not ferocious, and the forests are remarkably free from poisonous snakes. We roamed them at will, but did not shoot anything beyond what we needed for food. The old temple-ruins and the Indian houses on the island we searched in vain for some repetition of the red-hand symbol. Perhaps the Spaniards destroyed all vestige of it when they tore down the temples. However that may be, I did not find trace of it. And of course, there being no sign to guide me, and no *glyph* similar to the characters in the book of bark, I had perforce to give up my search. That it is high time to do so, I have no doubt you, my dear companions who may have followed me thus far, will admit. But I

am not disappointed in the failure to find the treasure, for I have had *the pleasure of the search.*

“It is not all of life to live,” nor is it all of success to “succeed.” What I mean is that in searching for the treasure we found our reward in the search. With our getting we got understanding. In our desultory wanderings we have acquired a goodly amount of information; and I hold that what we put into the brain is worth more to us than what we put in our pockets. Now I am going to take leave of you. Of the fate of my companions, the Professor and the Historian, you have already been informed; and that I myself escaped the dangers of the forests and reached home, these lines are in evidence to prove.

