THE ANCIENT CITIES
OF THE NEW WORLD.

CHAPTER I.

VERA CRUZ AND PUEBLA.

My former Mission—The present one—Why called Franco-American—Vera Cruz—Railway from Vera Cruz to Mexico—Warm Region—Temperate Region—Cordova—Orizaba—Maltrata—Cold Region—Esperanza—Puebla and Tlascala—The Old Route.

When I started for Mexico in 1880, I already knew something of the country, having, in the year 1857, been sent out as delegate for my Government to explore parts of it. At that time I was rich in hopes and full of grand intentions, but poor in knowledge and light of purse, and I soon learnt that the work I had undertaken was of so difficult and complicated a character, that the whole thing was beyond my powers; and, finding that from want both of money and of technical knowledge I was unable to carry out the great schemes I had imagined, I contented myself with simply photographing some of the monuments as I visited them, without even venturing to add any comment thereto. Now all was different. Better prepared in every way: with additional knowledge, backed by influential supporters, and with the aid of numerous documents which I had collected, I
felt I might reasonably hope to be able to throw some light on one of the most obscure corners of the history of man.

But at the very moment when the Minister of Public Instruction, on the advice of the Commission for Missions and Travels, was again entrusting me with the exploration of Mexico, that I might study its monuments, it so chanced that a rich American, Mr. Lorillard, of New York, was also minded to fit out a scientific expedition for the same purpose, and that I was the man he had fixed upon to direct it. The latter had already set apart a considerable sum of money for the expedition, so that I found myself placed in a somewhat delicate position, for, by refusing Mr. Lorillard, I should have risked a dangerous competition in the very country and the very places I was to explore; and, by accepting, I should have seemed to give up my nationality, and to deprive my own country of many precious documents and interesting collections. I felt myself, therefore, fortunate in being able to combine the two rival expeditions, and, under the name of a Franco-American Mission, to carry out the important work, and in this I was assisted by the unparalleled generosity of Mr. Lorillard, who gave up to France all the fruits of my labour, my researches, and my discoveries. It was under such circumstances that I started on the 26th of March, 1880, and taking New York on my way, to pay my respects to my generous sleeping partner, I reached Vera Cruz at the end of April.

The aspect of Vera Cruz, seen from the sea, is anything but pretty, consisting of a monotonous line of houses, blackened by heavy rain and the driving Norte. Built on a sandy shore, surrounded by barren hills stripped of all vegetation, and low-lying lagoons, Vera Cruz may safely be pronounced the most unhealthy place in Mexico. Yellow fever is never absent from its shores, and with every new batch of immigrants it becomes
epidemic and violent in the extreme, fastening on the new-comers with unusual severity. We learnt that to our cost, at the time of the war of intervention, when our soldiers were literally decimated by this fearful scourge. It became necessary to replace the white troops by negro battalions, the latter withstanding better than Europeans the fury of the epidemic.

Vera Cruz can scarcely be said to possess a harbour, having only an indifferent anchorage, in which ships are far from safe. Fort St. Juan affords the only shelter, but in bad weather vessels frequently break from their moorings, and are thrown or driven on to the coast. A storm here is synonymous with north wind, and when it blows no words can give an adequate idea of its violence; it is not a straightforward, honest tempest, such as every good mariner knows how to cope with, but it comes in
terrific and sudden squalls, carrying whirlwinds of sand, which penetrate the best-closed houses; consequently, on the first indication of its approach, every dwelling is securely fastened, barges are taken in and chained up, vessels lower their double anchors, the harbour becomes empty, all work is suspended, and the place wears the aspect of a deserted city. The thermometer falls suddenly, the porter, with teeth chattering, wraps himself in his blanket, a woollen overcoat is quickly substituted for the ordinary white holland jacket, and every one goes about shivering with cold. The pier is soon hidden by the huge waves raised by the disturbed element, in the harbour vessels get foul of one another, and steamers to avoid shipwreck get up steam, ready to take their station outside.

Vera Cruz welcomed us with one of these strong north winds, which obliged us to stay for three days in the roadstead, unable to leave our steamer; and when I did land, I was so glad, so happy at once more feeling the ground under my feet, that I failed to notice, as I had done before, the very uncomfortable pavement of the town, which consists of sharp pointed stones but just as a sheep has a portion of his fleece torn from him by every bramble he passes by, so does every traveller leave some portion of his individuality in every country which he visits—and on seeing again the places he has known before, he thinks to himself that he will be welcomed by the same impressions, the same friendships, nay, the same adventures as before will be there. He believes he will find everything exactly as he left it, he looks forward to shaking hands with a particular friend, to revisiting a certain spot, to entering a certain house, whose kind inmates had always had a warm welcome for him. He arrives, but the scene is changed, the old well-remembered spot is laid waste, the house a heap of ruins, friends dead, and Time, alas! has done its fatal work.
After two-and-twenty years' absence, I eagerly looked forward to shaking hands with the friends I had left. The returning traveller looks back on two-and-twenty years as but a day; to him it seems but yesterday that he left the place; every one will, of course, know him again; every one will come forward and warmly welcome him back. Heaven help him! The quarter of a century, which he has hardly taken into account, has in reality weighed heavily on him, as upon all; even should he be fortunate enough to recognise a few acquaintances, they have completely forgotten him, and like Rip Van Winkle, he seems to awake from a hundred years' sleep—to find all changed, and everything about him strange and new. In my own case, the only friend I found was the oldest of all, whom I thought I was never likely to see again. But it was not until I had told him my name that he recognised me; for at first he saw nothing but a perfect stranger standing before him. I inquired after A—he was no more; and B?—dead; and C?—dead also. I stopped, I was afraid to go on. It was under the burden of impressions such as these that I found myself once more in Vera Cruz.

And yet Vera Cruz, situated at the extremity of the Mexican gulf, is not commonplace, but rather an Eastern city, and her origin is marked everywhere; in her cupolas, painted white, pink, and blue, her flat terraces, and ornaments mostly of a pyramidal form. But cities live longer than men, and I found Vera Cruz rejuvenated, younger and more animated than of yore.

A slight breath of French activity seems to have crossed the seas and to pervade everything. The houses are freshly painted, the steeples whitewashed, cupolas enamelled, and new blocks of houses and monuments meet the eye in all directions. The square, which was formerly squalid and intersected by water-courses, is now a charming place, paved with marble and planted with trees, in which squirrels and ouertitis gambol and play the
whole day long. The centre is occupied by a fountain, and the sides by arcades, giving access to magnificent cafés, beautiful shops, the Cathedral and the Town Hall inlaid with gleaming tiles.

In the day-time the shade is deep and the air cool, whilst in the evening numerous loungers and fair women, their hair chequered with phosphorescent cucuyos, fill the green walks, and give it the appearance of a huge hot-house. Vera Cruz, to those who are used to its climate, is a very pleasant abode, and though in some respects not so desirable as many European cities, life here, on account of the great heat, is easier, fuller, more satisfying. Wines are not dearer than in Paris; fish is both plentiful and excellent; tropical fruit of every kind is to be found in the market, as well as all the feathered tribe, varying from the laughing-bird and the parrot to the beautiful red and green Aras of Tabasco. Add to this the constant incoming and outgoing of every nation in the universe, eliciting a daily interchange of news with the outer world, and in a sense annihilating the distance which divides you from the mother country. Then, too, there is the Gulf with its blue waters, tempting to the most delightful dives man ever had; the jetty, which, insignificant though it be, is none the less a favourite resort, where in the evening people go for a little fresh air, beneath a magnificent canopied sky; and where in the day they can watch on the horizon the white sail disappearing out of sight. Picture to yourself this marvellous sky, filled with innumerable noisy seabirds and small black vultures dotting it at a dizzy height, whilst far below, hoary, venerable pelicans, quite at home in the harbour, from long habit seem to spend their lives in diving and rising solemnly, then come and perch on the Custom House flag, with a grotesque kind of dignity, as though conscious of having fully done what was expected of them.

But the great feature about Vera Cruz is the innumerable
flights of black vultures, which fill the streets, and cover every roof and pinnacle. They are so tame as to be scarcely disturbed by the passers-by, and when servants throw out house refuse, there follows a general rush and a fearful fight, in which dogs take part, without, however, always getting the best of it. These dogs, like those of Constantinople, are the ædiles of both town and country, which without them would be intolerable.

Beyond Mexico Gate, a fine public walk, planted with large cocoa-trees, leads to a suburb which has within the last few years grown into a little town; it is the great rendezvous for sailors and coolies who come to dance and flirt with the damsels of the place, and the evening is generally wound up with a hot dispute with their less favoured companions.

The coast along the Atlantic is a vast sandy plain, diversified by marshes peopled with herons, wild ducks, iguanas, and serpents, which are almost impervious from thickets of aromatic shrubs and wild flowers, in the midst of which tower magnificent trees; but the sound of no voice ever breaks on this wilderness in which lurks the malaria, save the hoarse cry of a wild animal, the passing of an eagle-fisher, or the whirling of a vulture in quest of some easy prey.

The journey from Vera Cruz to Mexico is now performed by railway, which has replaced the once cumbersome diligence, and traffic has increased to such an extent that the English Railway Company is unable to convey inland goods which have come by sea.

We start on our journey with an escort, even now a necessary precaution, for five-and-twenty years have not modified the manners of the natives, and highway robbers are still a flourishing institution in Mexico.

Pressing westward, we go through the sandy, marshy zone, and leaving behind us Tejeria, Soledad, Paso Ancho, and Paso
del Macho, we reach the famous Chiquihuite bridge, when a glorious region succeeds to the flat country and parched vegetation of the coast; we continue to ascend through grander and grander scenery and more luxurious vegetation, having on our left the river Atoyac with its precipitous course, between deep ravines, and presently we come in sight of the iron viaduct, which is considered one of the best works on the line.

Still pressing upwards we reach the temperate zone, where we find coffee, tobacco, and banana plantations, spreading their broad green leaves under the shade of great trees which shelter them against the fierce heat of the sun; while little houses, embowered in orange-groves and creepers, peep out coquettishly from leaf and foliage.

And now the grand outlines of the Sierra are about us, and at every bend of the road charming views unfold before our enraptured gaze; a dazzling light colours all things with the richest tints, and Orizaba rears its magnificent head straight before us. Orizaba is, with the Popocatepetl, the highest mountain in Mexico; its snowy peak is visible for many a mile at sea. At its foot may be seen the city of the same name, extending over a large area, with her numerous and once gorgeous churches, now falling into decay, amidst a vast plateau, circled by mighty mountains, once gleaming with volcanic fires and grand summits. Mills and factories, greatly on the increase, are worked by water-power, which is brought by aqueducts or mountain torrents.

After Orizaba, the road becomes very steep; we enter the gorges of Infiernillo (small hell), where, along roads coasting deep ravines and unfathomable precipices, spanned by stupendous bridges, we reach Maltrata, where the train stops to change engines, when we ascend the heights, or cumbres, leading to the plateau.
And now the road opens out in long windings, rounding the steepest declivities; bridges and tunnels succeed each other with dazzling rapidity, and the huge engine puffs and hisses, sending out long, curling volumes of white smoke over the most glorious landscape; and our journey, which has lasted three hours, brings us to Esperanza, at an elevation of some 1,200 metres, and here we breakfast at an excellent buffet. After Esperanza, the country becomes a dreary, monotonous, dusty plain, contrasting painfully with the brilliant colouring of the warm zone; not a tree is to be seen, hardly any vegetation; some rare fields of stunted maize and wheat, a few meagre cactuses, with here and there a white hacienda, are the only indications that this forlorn region is not wholly uninhabited. Nevertheless, the monotony of this immense plain is relieved by the grand outline of mountains which bound the horizon.

* 3,901 feet.
and the sand mounds, which are visible everywhere, give the landscape a peculiar and somewhat severe aspect.

The railway, strange to say, has deprived this region of its few inhabitants, and steam has done away with the arriero and the long lines of heavy carts, panting mules, and muleteers in picturesque costumes, and the tinkling bells of madinas (mules heading the trains) are no more.

Then, also, these dusty roads were enlivened by the presence of small cottages, whence the cheerful hand-clapping of tortilleros reminded the hungry traveller that here his honest hunger might be appeased, during which the muleteer would ogle or distribute somewhat questionable compliments among the belles of the district; all is gone, even to the meson, in whose vast courtyard weary mules were put up for the night. The cottage has left no trace behind, the walls of the meson are a mass of ruins, and the courtyard deserted.

And now we travel in a north-west direction; we pass Huamantla, round Malinche, and leave Puebla some twenty leagues on our left, and crossing Apizaco we reach the Llanos of Apam, famed for its pulque, or Mexican wine, which is made of the juice of aloes (Agave Americana), to be found everywhere; but Apam pulque is as superior to other pulque as Chambertin is superior to ordinary claret. Aloe plantations are everywhere to be seen, and at each station a huge train calls daily for the casks full of the liquor so dear to Mexicans. This intoxicating beverage is not tempting in appearance, for it is yellowish, thick and stringy, with a most repulsive smell, yet when a taste for it has been acquired even Europeans drink it with pleasure after a day's trip. Here I am reminded how much the railway has destroyed the picturesqueness of the road. If in former times the traveller went over the ground at a slower pace, he had leisure to linger over the plain, admire the mountain round which the
railway now twines, to stop at Amozoc, a time-honoured haunt of brigands; and though he missed Tlascala, the faithful ally of Cortez, and the hereditary enemy of Mexico, he had the opportunity of visiting Puebla de los Angeles, which lies at the very foot of great Malintzi or Malinche, faced by the snowy peaks of Iztaccihuatl and Popocatepetl.

The city of Puebla de los Angeles was founded by the Spaniards soon after the conquest, on the site of an insignificant village a few miles east of Cholula. After Mexico, which it rivals by the beauty of its edifices, it is the most important city of New Spain. Like ancient Cholula, she is remarkable for the number and the magnificence of her sacred buildings, the multitude of her priests, and the pomp of her religious ceremonies, and her cathedral, in an architectural point of view, ranks as high as that of Mexico, whilst her treasures are perhaps even more considerable than those of her rival—her grand chandelier of massive silver having alone cost £14,000. The innumerable steeples of a hundred churches, and the gleaming cupolas, give a remarkable character to the panorama of this city, which has sustained many a siege, while her last defence under Ortega was simply heroic.

In the time of the diligence the road led to ancient Cholula, and the traveller had the opportunity of visiting her pyramid, on which stands the temple dedicated to Quetzacoatl, "God of the air," who was pleased to dwell among men, and, during his visit in Cholula, which extended over twenty years, he taught the Toltecs the arts of peace, a better form of government, and a more spiritualised religion, in which the only sacrifices were the fruits and flowers of the season. It was in honour of this benevolent deity that this stupendous mound was erected. The date of its erection is unknown, for it was found there when the Aztecs entered the plateau; but it has been variously ascribed
to the Olmecs, the Toltecs, and even to a race of giants, who wished to save themselves from another deluge. Clavigero observes very naturally, that the builders were rather stupid in taking so much trouble to raise an artificial mound, when they had within reach the highest mountains in the world where to take refuge in any such emergency.* It had the truncated, pyramidal form of the Mexican teocalli (temple), its four sides facing the cardinal points, and divided into the same number of terraces. The original outlines, however, have been effaced by the action of time, while the growth of shrubs and wild flowers, which cover its surface, gives it the appearance of one of those symmetrical elevations thrown up by Plutonic agency rather than the work of man. The height of this pyramid is 60 metres;† its base, which is square, covers about forty-four acres, and the platform on its truncated summit embraces more than one. Cholula was of great antiquity, and was founded by the primitive race which occupied the land before the Aztecs. At the time of the conquest it was one of the most populous and flourishing cities of New Spain. "Nothing could be more grand than the view which met the eye from the truncated summit of the pyramid. Towards the north stretched the bold barrier of porphyry rock which nature has reared round the valley of Mexico, with the huge Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl standing like two sentinels to guard the entrance of this enchanted region. Far away to the south was seen the conical head of Orizaba soaring high into the clouds, and nearer, the barren, though beautifully shaped Sierra de Malinche, throwing its broad shadows over the plains of Tlascala. Three of these volcanoes, higher than the highest peak in Europe, and shrouded in snows which never melt under

† 199 feet.
espacio de cinco ó seis meses, y á veces hasta un año. Estas cortinas ocupan la fachada entera, estando separadas únicamente por delgadas columnas de madera.

El cementerio de la ciudad está situado á unos dos kilómetros al norte de la cuarta calle y adosado á las colinas llamadas Las Peñas. En Guayaquil se conserva la costumbre de sepultar los muertos en nichos, el columbarium romano. Esos grandes muros que se escalonan en una suave pendiente, las pequeñas bóvedas sombrías que interrumpen la monotonia de este mausoleo comunal, producen un efecto absolutamente grandioso. Vi por primera vez este cementerio en una hermosa noche de luna: sus paredes parecían más blancas y los nichos más negros. El cuadro de verdura, el bosquecillo que cubre las peñas, difundía sus sombras fantásticas sobre tan singular escena: aquello parecía una infinidad de cráneos inmensos, con sus negras órbitas, alineados en la montaña.

He ido á este cementerio con frecuencia, acompañando los cadáveres de muchos compatriotas, de muchos amigos, y las víctimas fueron tan numerosas durante la epidemia de fiebre amarilla que asoló á Guayaquil á fines de 1881, que me admiraba el día en que por casualidad no tenía que dar un triste paseo á tan lúgubre morada. El guardian del cementerio no dejaba jamás de decirme, cuando me veía salir de sus dominios, y con una sonrisa á la que procuraba dar un tinte agradable y que á mí me parecía repulsiva: «¡Hasta la vista!» Y en efecto, me ha visto muchas veces, pero afortunadamente para mí, siempre he ido por cuenta de otro y no como «inquilino perpetuo» de aquel excelente negro.

El camino del cementerio se reune, á un kilómetro al Oeste, con el de la tranvía que va desde la ciudad á un brazo del Pacífico llamado el «Salado.» En este sitio encantador, en medio de una vegetación soberbia, se toman baños de mar, casi á veinte leguas de la verdadera orilla del Océano.

A pocas millas de allí y en los canales sembrados de islotes de flores, se entretienen los habitantes en surcar en piraguas el espejo de color verde esmeralda de aquellas mansas aguas, subiendo y bajando con el movimiento de la marea, y dedicándose al ejercicio más raro que pueda imaginarse: la caza, ó mejor dicho, la recolección de ostras, las cuales cogen en los árboles. Las mangles que abundan en aquellos terrenos palúdicos están en parte debajo del agua, durante la pleamar, y en seco con la marea baja. Durante el movimiento ascendente de las aguas, estas depositan la freza de la ostra en las ramas, en el tronco ó en las raíces de los mangles. A cada marea, el agua lleva, por decirlo así, el alimento á esos «hijos de las amargas ondas» y de este modo se desarrollan las ostras, y se las puede coger en disposición de comerlas.

Por espacio de mucho tiempo ha sido la ostra el principal sustento de los pueblos ribereños del Guayas. Con sus conchas se ha llegado á consolidar una gran parte del terreno en que la ciudad se asienta; pero los cargamentos de ostras enviadas al Perú y hasta á Chile han hecho desaparecer los principales bancos conocidos. Con su desaparición cesó forzosamente este renglón de industria para los pescadores que á él se dedicaban; los bancos se han poblado de nuevo y de un año á esta parte se ha podido reanudar la explotación con resultado satisfactorio.

Sin embargo, las gentes del pueblo han perdido la costumbre de alimentarse de ostras, y como las condiciones económicas van mejorando, empieza á formar parte de la alimentación
the fierce sun of the tropics, at the foot of the spectator the sacred city of Cholula, with its bright towers and pinnacles sparkling in the sun, reposing amidst gardens and verdant groves. Such was the magnificent prospect which met the eye of the conquerors, and may still, with slight change, meet that of the modern traveller, as he stands on the broad plateau of the pyramid and his eye wanders over the fairest portion of the beautiful plateau of Puebla.” *

Cholula was the holy city of Anahuac, the Mecca, Jerusalem, and Rome of the Indians; in it the kindred races had temples of their own, and ministers for the service of the deity to whom they were consecrated. The sanctity of the place brought pilgrims from the furthest corners of Anahuac, who came to offer up their devotions at the shrine of Quetzacoatl and other divinities. Here Quetzacoatl had dwelt, and on his departure for the countries of the East, he had bidden his followers to keep fast his teaching, promising that he and his descendants would return, to reign again over them. This remarkable legend, which was popular with all the Indian tribes, was one of the most powerful auxiliaries of the Spanish conquerors, in whom the simple Indians thought they recognised the lofty stature, noble mien, clear complexion, and blue eyes, of the deity they had so long expected.

But talking of Cholula has made us forget that the train is going to start: the guards, hurrying in every direction to look for us, summon us into our carriages, the signal is given, and we speed away.

And now we notice on the platform of every station, detachments of soldiers, with large felt hats, trimmed with silver ribbons and tassels, whilst their horses, ready saddled, are stationed close by. In spite of their baggy trousers and slouching

hats, these men have a military bearing, which shows them to be a picked body of troops, and in fact they are the "rural guard," lately formed, but already of the greatest service; thanks to their vigilant intelligence, the country is almost safe. This guard is recruited among the class described as "having no occupation and no permanent abode," and the Government gave proof of its sagacity when it availed itself of this turbulent element, which after having been the scourge of the country, now keeps it quiet. It is a case of setting a thief to catch a thief; for the "rural," acquainted for twenty miles round with all the "old customers," whose accomplice he used to be, knows better than any one how to track an escaped convict, or discover a secret haunt; and thanks to telegraphs and railroads, pronunciamientos have gone out of fashion, nipped in the bud before they are given time to assume any large proportions.

From Apam, where we got out to look at the view, we proceed to Palma; then Otumba, where Cortez, a few days after his evacuation of Mexico, obtained a great victory over the Aztecs, in which their chief was slain; and leaving Teotihuacan with its pyramids on the left, we reach Mexico and St. Cosme Station.
CHAPTER II.

MEXICO.

Her New Appearance—Moral Transformation—Public Walks and Squares—
Suburbs—Railway—Monuments—Cathedral—S. Domingo—S. Francisco—
La Merced—Hats à la S. Basilio—Suppression of Religious Orders.

MEXICO has undergone a still greater change than Vera Cruz. The large square, which used to be ill-paved and empty, has become a fine garden, planted with eucalyptus trees, which have grown wonderfully during the last twelve years, some measuring seven feet in girth and over 100 feet in height. Beneath the shade of these beautiful trees stretch beautiful gardens and green turf, whilst the centre is occupied by the Zocalo, a pavilion, in
which every evening very fair concerts are given, attended by the Mexican society.

Spacious houses in modern style have been constructed at different points of the city; new districts have arisen on the site once occupied by convents; pretty squares are distributed about, and the Paseo Nuevo, which was to extend as far as Chapultepec, is one which the proudest cities in the world might envy. But will it ever be completed? At present, it only reaches the imposing monument erected in honour of Christopher Columbus, which every Frenchman should admire as coming from Paris and the work of a Frenchman. The immediate area round Mexico has been completely transformed by lines of railroad and tramways; in places once occupied by fetid water or marshy ground, pretty villas and flower gardens are now to be seen, whilst on the other side of the Paseo, to the right and left of S. Cosme, the smaller suburbs are extending so fast that they will soon join the main city. Should Americans come—and a goodly number are here already—all this land, now almost valueless, would in a few years double and treble in price.

But what is still more remarkable is the moral transformation: a new life seems to animate Mexico: education, trade, industry, and public works, have received great development; security has increased, a public conscience has been awakened, ideas have become more liberal, change of power is now effected without disturbance, whilst formerly it was preceded, accompanied and followed by the ever-recurring pronunciamientos; a feeling of good-fellowship begins to penetrate all classes, and Government House is in a true sense the House of the people, being filled from early morning by friends, employés, or petitioners. Every one is free to come and go, without let or hindrance, all are received by the Governor without having to ask an audience, and every one is welcomed with the greatest affability,
as I can from personal experience amply testify. To give an idea how far the spirit of patriotism was roused by the war of intervention, I will quote the words of a deputy, who, on my preliminary bill being submitted to Congress, which had been agreed to between the Government and myself respecting my excavations and their export, rushed into the tribune to speak against its adoption. "Gentlemen," he cried, "I feel savage, beside myself, almost idiotic, when the interests of our country are at stake." The speaker was right in his description of himself, for the removal of a few fragments from the soil of the Republic was not deserving of such an outburst.

But it is the privilege of the young ever to exaggerate, and Mexico is as yet in her youth. The public press is just started, and there are but two independent papers, the admirably conducted Republican Moniteur and the Nineteenth Century, which give any profits. All the others are paid by the Government, are short-lived, and disappear one after another, to reappear under new names and take up with a different party. And yet there is no lack of talent, the drawback is in the difficulty of communications. The heavy postal charges (a letter from one village to another costs one shilling), the ignorance and indifference of the masses about political events, are the main causes which prevent any newspaper from succeeding. The only interest evinced in politics is at the time of the elections, and even in these, Mexicans take very little interest, knowing beforehand that it will not much matter to them, and that their burden will hardly be made lighter. It may be safely predicted that the Indians will not be roused from their apathy until they are better educated, and until they discover that they have a direct interest in mixing in politics—for which they are eminently qualified—and if their vast majority be considered, they would undoubtedly contribute a large contingent, whilst their industry, their intelligent quickness
to seize everything, coupled with a natural talent of adaptation, would soon raise them to the foremost ranks in the army, politics, the bar and science, as may even now be seen in the few who have had the privilege of education; nor would this be difficult, for they now stand on a perfect footing of equality with the Mexicans, for unlike most conquerors, jealous to preserve their nationality, the modern Mexicans repudiate their Spanish descent and are proud to call themselves Indians. But what is to be the outcome of it all? Will the Indian, forgetting his humble and thrifty aspirations, thirst, like the Mexican, after Government employment, which, whilst it keeps him idle, unfits him for commercial and industrious pursuits? He has lived hitherto under laws harsh and severe for him alone; is there no fear that once free, he will plunge into the vices of freed men, rather than put on the virtues of civilised people? If we are to borrow our experience from the past, this would be the case, since when, shortly after the conquest, he lived under milder laws, the effect was to sink him into such an appalling condition of moral depravity as to move the good Franciscan monk Sahagun to say of him: "We ought not perhaps to be surprised at finding among them the usual shortcomings which belong to their country, since the Spaniards who live here, and especially the American born, are in no way better than the Indians. Even the natives of Spain, after a few years in this country, are quite altered, and I have always ascribed this change to a difference of climate and latitude. It is humiliating to our feelings as Christians," exclaims Sahagun, "to reflect that the Indians of olden time, wise in their generation, knew how to remedy evils peculiar to the soil, by means of practices which were their safeguard, whereas we succumb to our evil propensities; the result of which is that we see a new generation, Indian as well as Spanish, rising around us, which it is difficult to manage or to save. Parents have not
that authority they ought to have over their offspring to guard them against their natural proclivities. The ancient dwellers of this soil were far better inspired when they abandoned the education of their children to public authority, which replaced paternal rights. Unfortunately this method was tainted by idolatrous and superstitious practices; but were these to be eliminated and the ancient method introduced afresh among the Indo-Spanish people, a great public good would undoubtedly follow, which would relieve the Government of many difficulties now pressing upon it. As it is we hardly know how to deal with those reared in our schools, who, finding themselves no longer checked by the fear and discipline of former, nor the severity of pagan times, do not care to learn and are indifferent to admonition; very different in this respect from their Aztec forefathers. At first, following their ancient practice, which placed the youth of both sexes in buildings within the enclosure of their temples, in which they were drilled in monastic discipline, and taught to reverence their gods and obey the laws of their country, we tried to bring them up in our establishments, and to this end we collected them in buildings adjoining our houses, in which they were accustomed to rise in the middle of the night to sing the matins of Our Lady, and recite the 'Hours' at early dawn; they were also required to beat themselves with stripes and to spend some time of the day in mental exercises, but as they were not compelled as in pagan times to do any manual labour, as their natural aspirations seemed to demand, and as moreover they were better fed and more mildly treated than their student ancestors, they soon learnt and fell into evil ways. We also directed our attention to the women to see whether it were possible to place them in convents, as in heathen times, and with this end in view we made them Christian nuns, and imposed on them perpetual vows; convents and retreats were erected, in
which they were taught their religious duties and the art of reading and writing. Such as had shown themselves proficient in these pursuits and were possessed besides of becoming dignity and decorum, were chosen to preside over these establishments as guides and teachers of Christianity and purity of life.* At first we fondly hoped, as in the men's case, that they would become worthy and spotless nuns, but we were mistaken, experience having shown that, for the present at least, they were incapable of so much perfection, and convents and conventicles had to be abolished, and we have to confess that the time has not yet come for repeating the experiment."

The passage just quoted is suggestive of many things.

A deplorable change for the worse is already observable in the character of the Indians of Tabasco and Chiapas since the Suffrage Bill, which by making them partly independent of the whites, has also made them idle, insolent, treacherous, and depraved. A sad look-out for times to come. But even granting that all happens for the best, is there much probability that the Indian will have time to develop his natural resources before the Anglo-Saxon invasion shall have confined him for ever to the lower ranks in the social scale?

However that may be, Mexico, although bent on progress, seems only to receive her notions second-hand. Eager for action, every new idea or advance which has received a trial with other nations, is sure to be promptly adopted, without any inquiry whether it is applicable, suitable, or useful, among a people wholly unprepared to receive them; and this total impossibility of legislating for half savages and illiterate people made a deputy say one day to me: "We have a constitution fit for angels, whereas we ought to have one fit for asses."

* Sahagun, "Hist. de Nueva España," lib x. cap. xxvii.
What happens? The Mexicans at present enjoy perfect liberty, which they use to stop the action of the Government, and as each department is entirely independent, the lowest clerk is able to stop the whole machinery. Most Mexicans have, or wish to have, Government employment, leaving to foreigners the development of their national wealth; banking, trade, and the working of their rich mines are, with few exceptions, in the hands of Spaniards, French, English, and Americans. The latter are swarming in; and, save Vera Cruz, all the railways are American.

Very few Mexicans have been found willing to risk their capital in these important enterprises, being satisfied with receiving a premium, or joining the companies as employés. What will happen? It would be a strange and novel phenomenon to see a superior (?) race disappearing before an inferior one. Be that as it may, it is certain that on the day when the Anglo-Americans shall be able to dispense with the services of the Mexican, they will not scruple to thrust him aside, careful however to keep the Indians of the Highlands, now a docile, frugal, hard-working people, whom they will use for mining and agricultural purposes, as well as for the construction of railways. But this is not yet. The absorption will come, however—gradually, silent, peaceful—a slow, easy death, but a sure death nevertheless.

Yet it would be a matter for regret that this attractive people, open to every new idea of progress, eager to distinguish themselves, as shown a hundred times in the defence of their liberties, should be swallowed up by the Saxon element. The “Timeo Danaos dona ferentes” is surely applicable here, and Mexico should beware of her powerful neighbour—Caveant Consules.

Mexico has a great wealth of monuments, palatial houses, and churches, the finest of which is the Cathedral, occupying
the northern side of the Place d'Armes, with the Palace to the east, the Houses of Parliament to the south, and the Portal de las Damas on the western side. It was erected on the site of the sumptuous temple dedicated to *Huitzilopochtli*, the war god and the patron deity of the Aztecs, whose altars reeked with the blood of human hecatombs in every city of the empire. The first stone for this church was laid in the reign of Philip II., and the canonicate of Archbishop Pedro Moya de Contreras. The foundations, which extended as far as the north side of the old temple, embracing the whole space now taken up by the courts, were carried on under the energetic supervision of Alonzo Perez de Castañeda. The work required for these foundations, owing to the unsteady, marshy nature of the soil, was so enormous that in 1615 the walls only rose to some twenty feet above the ground. Philip III., on being informed of the difficulties which retarded the work begun by his father, sent a plan drawn by his own architect, which was to simplify the original one, and accelerate the completion of the church.

The principal sacristy was finished in 1623; the vaults in the middle nave were completed between 1623 and 1665. In 1667, the interior of the Cathedral being quite finished, the inauguration took place. The choir, however, was only completed in 1730, when the rich and marvellous balustrade, which divides the choir from the sanctuary, executed by Macao, was put up. This balustrade, composed of bronze and silver, which has all the appearance of burnished gold, is most striking in its general effect.

The expenses of this church (completed in 1791) amounted to 2,446,000 piastres, or £489,200. Seen from the square, the edifice has the imposing appearance of churches of the latter portion of the sixteenth century. The façade, though simple, is very imposing, and contrasts favourably with the other sacred
edifices in the city; three doors intervene between Doric columns and open into the middle and lateral naves. Over the main door two stories superimposed and ornamented with Doric and Corinthian pilasters, support a most elegant steeple, crowned by three statues, representing the theological virtues. On each side, towers, severe in design, and topped by cupolas, rise to the height of 78 metres.* The interior is one mass of gold. The choir, which is immense, occupies the principal nave, and, by means of a costly composite gallery, is made to join the main altar, designed after St. Peter's in Rome. The two lateral naves, destined for the congregation, have no choir or seats of any kind and Mexican ladies, who are very regular in their attendance at church, are satisfied with kneeling or sitting on the damp stones of the pavement, whether from zeal or because it would not be "good form" not to do so, remains doubtful, whereas it is quite certain that their delicate constitution demands a less dangerous practice. The few men who are ever seen in the interior of a church generally stand; most, however, remain outside talking to one another, and waiting for the ladies, who on coming out reward them for their patience by a bewitching look or a graceful inclination of the head.

Among the works of art possessed by the Cathedral, may be mentioned a small picture by Murillo, known as the "Virgin of Belen," not a good specimen of the great master. The priests attached to the church look upon it, however, as their most precious jewel; to this may be added the "Assumption of the Virgin," of massive gold, weighing 1,116 ounces; a silver lamp hanging before the sanctuary, which cost £16,000; the tabernacle of massive silver valued at £32,000, besides diamonds, rubies, emeralds, amethysts, pearls, and sapphires in shoals, and a vast

* 247 feet.
quantity of gold and silver vases, representing fabulous sums of money.

On the wall of the left tower to the west, may be seen the famous Aztec calendar, found on the 17th December, 1700, whilst the new esplanade of Impedradillo was being constructed. By order of the Viceroy it was carefully encased and preserved in the steeple wall, and has proved to be one of the most precious monuments of Indian antiquity. Antonio de Gama, in a masterly treatise, explained the objects to which it was devoted, and poured a flood of light on the astronomical science of the Aborigines and their mythology. His work has been criticised, however, by Valentine of New York, and both are impugned by Chavero of Mexico, whilst others pass a severe judgment on all three. So true is it, that archaeological, like other questions, are ever open to hot dispute.

The Sagrario is a huge chapel close to the Cathedral, used for marriages, christenings, and burial services. The host is exposed at all times on the altar for the veneration of the faithful. The Sagrario deserves a passing note, for though vicious in taste, it has such a wealth of ornamentation and sculpture, as to make one forget the defects of its style considered as a whole. It is from the Sagrario that the last sacrament used to be carried to comfort the rich and powerful, in a gilt carriage, or beneath a gorgeous daïs, amidst a cortège of priests, who preceded and followed it, its presence being announced by the ringing of a silver bell. At its approach the traffic and movement of the town was suspended; every one, no matter the state of the weather, humbly knelt down in dust or mud; all were expected to join the procession and accompany the host to the house of the dying; the viceroy himself was not exempted from this formality, and chroniclers tell us that many were the times when he was thus compelled to head the marching column.
bajas, de color de plomo, parecen comunicar a la vida su tinte gris y melancólico. Fijé nuestra partida para el 8 de junio.

A pocos pasos de la aldea de Papallacta hay una hermosa y verde llanura. Hice que se reuniesen allí mis indios y los formé de frente por numeracion de orden: los macheteros, que abren y despejan el camino con sus machetes; los cargueros, que llevan los fardos de proviciones, las ropas, los instrumentos, etc.; los cadeneros, mi compañía de agrimensores. Cada uno de estos indios, excepto los de mi reducido estado mayor, trasporta una carga de cuarenta kilogramos. Este fardo, metido en un cuévano ó en una saca, va sujeto con dos cintas, una de las cuales pasa por el pecho y los hombros y la otra por la frente del conductor. Armados de un machete pendiente del cinturon encarnado y anaranjado que sujeta a la cintura la camisa y el calzoncillo, cubierta la cabeza con una especie de birrete conico y provistos de un largo palo de madera de hierro, aquellos hombres nerviosos, recios, de mirada sombría y cabellos rasos y negros, presentan un aspecto original y verdaderamente hermoso.

Las mujeres de mis conductores lloran amargamente. Unas están acurrucadas; otras, hincadas de rodillas, invocan a la Virgen. Cuando la india vierte lágrimas, gime y solloza, y agitan todo su cuerpo sacudimientos nerviosos.

El cielo estaba nublado y en calma y los cenicientos nubarrones daban un aspecto triste a la escena de separacion que se representaba en aquel extraviado valle. Distribuí a las mujeres monedas, y prometí a todos una buena gratificacion si llegábamos sanos y salvos al puerto del Napo.

La cadenilla de agrimensor brillaba sobre la verde alfombra, y la brújula, los barómetros, el sextante, pacificos instrumentos del trabajador, contrastaban con el armamento de mis tenientes y cazadores. Va a dar principio la marcha á pie al través de las estribaciones de la Cordillera.

Apéns habían trascurrido dos horas desde nuestra partida cuando ya estábamos calados hasta los huesos. A veces andábamos metidos en el barro hasta las rodillas, sacando á duras penas las piernas enlazadas de aquellos endiablados terrenos. A fin de no perder tiempo en echar puenteclillos, cruzamos los primeros vados con agua hasta la cintura.

Esta region es quizás la más accidentada del mundo. Imagínese el lector las ruinas de una ciudad inmensa al día siguiente de un cataclismo; paredes en pie desollando entre escombros, techumbres derrumbadas, escaleras hundidas. Agrándese este caos hasta lo infinito, y supónganse, en lugar de paredes, peñascos de seiscentos ó mil metros; para figurar las piedras desmoronadas y las escaleras ruinosas, inmensos pedruscos rodados, colinas escarpadas, y en vez de la yerba y el musgo que crecen en las grietas, árboles de cincuenta metros de altura, una maleza arborescente y bejucos desde los más finos hasta los más vigorosos. Y en medio de este terreno accidentado, con sus barrancos, sus hondonadas y sus abismos, torrentes que se precipitan con atronador estruendo desde lo alto de las cumbres inaccesibles, minando las paredes de rocas y arrastrando en su blanca espuma moles de piedra y troncos de árboles. A veces, los derrumbamientos ennegrecen, ensucian la onda limpida; pero en breve recobra su brillo cristalino, y esta misma corriente que se desvía al tropezar con un guijarro, rompe los troncos
But that was in the good old time, which I am old enough to have seen, when priests and monks, their heads covered with huge hats, à la Don Basilio, filled the streets with their portly, dignified figures, their faces ever open to a smile. That time has gone by; monks and priests, shorn of their dress and privileges, have disappeared and become private citizens. The Church on that occasion was not proceeded against by slow degrees; the Government, feeling at home in a country peculiarly religious and Catholic, decreed on the same day the suppression of all religious communities, the confiscation of their goods, and the disestablishment of the Church, and though a large majority mildly protested, nobody cared; not so the monks and priests, who whirled anathemas and fulminated the excommunica maxima against whomsoever should lend a hand to the demolition of the convents—nay, even against those who would be found bold enough to pass through the streets thus opened on ecclesiastical property. The Leperos, however, engaged in these demolitions, had recourse to an ingenious device to nullify the spiritual thunderbolts of their ancient patrons. They bedizened themselves with amulets, scapularies, and chaplets as a protection against the wiles of the devil, and thus attired they proceeded gaily to the destruction of cell and chapel, whilst weeping dueñas, indignant at being witnesses of such sacrilege, poured out their unavailing supplications.

The excitement lasted but a week, and the Leperos thought so little of it that they did not refrain from bearing away to their housewives the wainscoting of the religious houses, and the newly made streets were used like any others.

But it will be asked, what of the monks? Most have become citizens and taken wives, and are now heads of families; some have gone into exile; whilst others are business men. I have even met a few, who, having turned Protestants, were employed
as guides by the Boston and New York Biblical Missions. As for the clergy, contrary to the received opinion that on being deprived of their emoluments and tithes they would be richer than before, they have become as poor as their vows require, as humble as they profess, reading their services as heretofore to crowded congregations, and every one is or seems to be satisfied.

But to return to our edifices. The Church and Convent of S. Domingo (Dominick) stands in Custom House Square, blocked up at all times by carriages, carts, mules, and a motley crowd. At this point, when pronunciamentos were the rule, rebels used to take their stand, and sheltered behind the high steeples of the church, shot at their fellow-citizens lodged on the azoteas (flat roofs) of the neighbouring houses. They did their work so often and so well that the desolation of these cloisters is complete. The pictures which once were their chief ornament are mostly in holes, and the walls blackened with shot and powder. S. Domingo has the hardly enviable privilege of having been the seat of the Inquisition. Here, in 1646, the terrible tribunal celebrated its first auto-da-fé, when forty-eight persons were burnt at the stake. These human sacrifices, which were only abolished at the beginning of this century, were not better than the revolting practices of the Aztecs, save that Catholic priests were content to burn their victims without eating them, but to make up for this they branded them with eternal infamy.

The Convent of S. Francisco, which at one time extended over fifteen acres of ground, is situated between the street bearing the same name and S. Juan de Latran y Zuletta Street. It is intersected by beautiful cloisters, courts, and gardens, and was formerly the most important as well as the richest convent in Mexico: having two churches, the interiors of which were adorned
with gigantic altars of finely-carved gilt wood; three exquisite chapels, and elegant cloisters covered with pictures, thus forming one of the most remarkable monuments in Mexico. But alas! all that wealth is gone, the ruthless hand of democracy has pulled down cell and chapel; streets run in places once occupied by its altars; its flower-beds are turned into a nursery-garden, and its silent cells are tenanted by poor families, whose women and children fill the air with their shrill and discordant voices. All that remains is the façade, with its magnificent gate—a curious mixture of Renaissance pilasters, covered with figures in high relief, surmounted with composite capitals, divided by niches adorned with statues, besides a marvellous wealth of ornamentation, not in the best taste, but highly finished. Their chief interest, however, lies in their being the work of the Indians, rather than the production of a Spanish chisel. Indians, according to Mendieta, were no contemptible artists; “with tools made of tin and copper, they could cut not only metals, but the hardest substances. They carved their vessels of gold and silver, with their metallic chisels, in a very delicate manner. They imitated the figures of animals, and could mix the metals in such a manner, that the feathers of a bird, or the scales of a fish, should be alternately of gold and silver.”

They worked the various stones and alabasters with guijarros (a tool made of silex and flint), in the construction of their public buildings, entrances and angles of which were frequently ornamented with images, sometimes of their fantastic and hideous deities. Sculptured images were so numerous, that the foundations of the Cathedral in the Plaza Mayor are said to be entirely composed of them.* They also painted from nature, birds, fish, and landscape, and after their conversion to Christianity, says

* Geronimo Mendieta, Historia Ecclesiastica Indiana, lib. iv. chap. xii.
Mendieta, they reproduced admirably our images and reredos from Flanders and Italy.

The religion of the Aztecs imposed upon their followers certain forms, in their delineation of the human figure, or the personification of the Deity, which they were not permitted to discard; this explains why we find so many rude images side by side with the most exquisite work of ornamentation.

But to return. No one would stop to look at the Convent de la Merced were it not for its cloisters, the finest in Mexico;
they are composed of white, slender columns, in Moorish style, with indented arches, forming galleries which surround a paved court, the centre of which is occupied by an insignificant fountain.

The Convent stands in the middle of a densely populated suburb, forming a striking contrast to the tumult and hubbub outside. The feeling of profound desolation which is felt at gazing on these walls is beyond description, for the silence is only broken in the rare intervals when an aguador comes to fill his cantaros and chococholes (earthen pots and jars) at the fountain. The white picturesque tunic of the monks which relieved the solitude of these endless galleries has for ever disappeared, and now its vast passages only give access to empty cells.

The walls of the galleries are covered with innumerable pictures, the figures in which are of life-size, representing martyrs of the order of S. Domingo and its most celebrated saints. They are not pleasant to look at, presenting to the eye nothing but distortions, funeral piles and dislocations; all the tortures, in fact, which the perverted ingenuity of man has devised to harass his fellow-creatures. Among them, some are lifting to heaven their gory heads, whose blood is streaming down to their feet, whilst others are stretching out their freshly-stunted arms and calcined limbs. At no time can the priests of Huitzilopochtli have sanctioned more harrowing suffering, or consented, in their religious frenzy, to more revolting practices.

The Convent de la Merced used to possess a good library, and many precious manuscripts of Indian antiquity; but the superstitious ignorance of the monks allowed it to fall into decay, and documents of highest interest to the historian and archaeologist were used as waste-paper or consigned to the flames.
The choir of this church had one hundred seats of carved oak, and was considered one of the finest in the world. The Government is converting the church into a library, which, when completed, is expected to be one of the finest monuments of the city.

Among buildings of public usefulness, the School of Mines, El Salto del Agua, Chapultepec Military College, the Art Academy, and the Museum may be mentioned.
CHAPTER III.

THE INDIANS.


El Salto del Agua is the only monumental fountain in Mexico; it stands in the centre of a low suburb removed from the chief thoroughfares, and terminates the aqueduct which brings from Chapultepec ("grasshopper’s hill") an abundant supply of water to Mexico. El Salto del Agua is an oblong building, with a very mediocre façade; a wide spread-eagle in the centre supports the escutcheon bearing the arms of the city. On each side twisted columns with Corinthian capitals bear two symbolical figures, representing Europe and America, besides eight half-broken vases.
According to historians of the conquest, El Salto del Agua, and the Aqueduct which it terminates, replaced the ancient aqueduct of Montezuma, constructed by Netzahualcoyotl, King of Tezcuco, between the years 1427 and 1440. At that time it was brought through an earthen pipe to the city, along a dyke constructed for the purpose, and that there might be no failure in so essential an article, a double course of pipes in stone and mortar was laid. In this way a column of water the size of a man's body was conducted into the heart of the capital, where it fed fountains and reservoirs of the principal mansions.*

Since the name of Netzahualcoyotl has been mentioned, it may not be out of place to give a brief account of a prince whose accomplishments, character, and adventurous life, would make him a fit hero for romance rather than the subject of sober history. He was descended from the Toltecs, of whom we shall speak later. He ruled over the Acolhuans or Tezcucans, as they were generally called, a nation of the same family as the Aztecs, whom it preceded on the plateau, and whom it rivalled in power and surpassed in intellectual activity. He was himself at once king, poet, philosopher, and lawgiver, and was a munificent patron of letters, and Tezcuco was, in his time, the meeting-place of all that was intelligent in Anahuac, as was Athens in the days of Pericles, Florence and Rome under the Medicis. Netzahualcoyotl held a conspicuous place among the bards of Anahuac, for the tender pathos of his verse, the elegance and rich colouring of his style, and the tinge of melancholy which pervades most of his writings. His large and enlightened mind could not accept the superstitions of his countrymen, still less the sanguinary rites of the Aztecs; his humane temper shrank

* Clavigero.
from their cruel rites, and he endeavoured to recall his people to the more pure and simple worship of their forefathers. But he shared the fate of men far in advance of their time, and had to yield before their ignorance and fanaticism, contenting himself with publicly avowing his faith and nobler conception of the deity. He built a temple in the usual pyramidal form, to the "Unknown God, the Cause of Causes."

Though Netzahualcoyotl was of a benevolent disposition, he was strict in the administration of the laws, even against his own children; indeed, he put to death his two sons for having appropriated other people's booty. Many anecdotes are told of the benevolent interest he took in his subjects, amongst whom he delighted to wander in disguise, and, like Haroun-al-Raschid, entered freely in conversation with them, thus ascertaining their individual wants. His last days were spent in the pursuit of astronomical studies and the contemplation of the future life. He died full of days after a reign of nearly fifty years, during which he had freed his country from a foreign tyrant, breathed new life into the nation, renewed its ancient institutions, and seen it advancing towards a higher standard of civilisation; and he saw his end approach with the same serenity that he had shown alike in misfortune and in prosperity. Such is the very imperfect account of a prince who was the glory of his nation; whose muse, by turns, invited men to enjoy the passing hour, or bade them beware of the vanity of all earthly pleasures, teaching them to look beyond the grave for things that will endure.

But before we go on to Chapultepec, we must call at Tacuba, and visit the famous Ahualhuete, a kind of cypress, under whose shelter Cortez, on the night of July 1, 1520, came to rest his weary limbs and mourn over the cause which had so greatly imperilled his safety and that of his troops, as to make imperative the evacuation of Mexico, in which many of his most trusty
veterans were sacrificed. The night was called on this account *Noche triste*, "Melancholy night."

But to explain. We will give a short sketch of the causes
which brought about this sad event, quoting largely from Father Duran, Ramirez, and Sahagun:

“it was in the month of May, the Mexican toxcall, when it was common for the Aztecs to celebrate their great annual festival in honour of their war-god Huitzilopochtli, which was commemorated by sacrifice, religious songs and dances, in which all the nobility engaged, displaying their magnificent gala costumes, with their brilliant mantles of feather-work, sprinkled with precious stones, and their necks, arms, and legs ornamented with collars and bracelets of gold. Alvarado, whom Cortez had left as lieutenant of his forces, during his expedition against his formidable enemy, Narvaez, was now petitioned by the Indian caciques to be allowed to perform their rites. Alvarado acquiesced on condition that on this occasion there should be no human sacrifice, and that they should come without weapons; he and his soldiers, meanwhile, attended as spectators, some of them taking station at the gates, as if by chance. They were all fully armed, but as this was usual, it excited no suspicion; but as soon as the festival, which was held in the court of the great temple, had fairly begun, and the Mexicans were engrossed by the exciting movement of the dance, and their religious chants, Alvarado and his followers, at a concerted signal, rushed with drawn swords on their defenceless victims. Unprotected by armour or weapon of any kind, they were hewn down without resistance by their pitiless and bloodthirsty assailants. Some fled to the gates, but were thrust back by the pikes of the soldiers; some were able to scale the walls; others, penetrating the sanctuary of the temple, fell on the pavement and simulated death. The pavement ran with streams of blood, 'like water in a heavy shower,' and the ground was strewn with the mutilated limbs of the dead. The Spaniards, not content with slaughtering their victims, rifled them of their precious ornaments. On this sad
day were sacrificed more than six hundred men, the flower of the Mexican nobility; not a family of note but had to mourn the loss of a near relation. The tidings of this horrible butchery filled the nation with stupefaction and dismay; they could hardly believe their senses. Every feeling of long-smothered hostility and rancour now burst forth in a cry for vengeance. The respect for the person of their sovereign made them desist from further attempts to storm the fortress. But they threw up works around the Palace to prevent the Spaniards from getting out. They suspended the market, to preclude the possibility of their enemy obtaining supplies. This accomplished, they quietly sat down, waiting for the time when famine would deliver the hated foreigner into their hands. The situation of the Spaniards seemed desperate, when they were relieved from their gloomy apprehensions by the return of Cortez, who with his comrades had succeeded in utterly crushing Narvaez. It was not too soon: a few days more and the garrison must have surrendered from lack of provisions, and still more from want of water. Alvarado was subjected to a cross-examination by Cortez, who contented himself with administering some words of reproof, and ordering him to his post; for the city again rose to arms. In this terrible strait, Cortez sent to the Aztec Emperor to request him to mediate with his subjects. Meanwhile the Spaniards endeavoured to effect a retreat out of a city thoroughly roused against them. This they accomplished under cover of a dark, drizzling night, after a fearful carnage and much bloodshed, lasting over several days; when the Spanish troops, accompanied by their Tlascalan allies, abandoned a city which had been so lately the scene of their triumphs, and each soldier, loaded with as much gold and jewels as he could carry, made for the gates. All was hushed in silence; no danger seeming to arrest their march, they were beginning to hope that a few hours would see them beyond the
missiles of the enemy. But, as they drew near the bridges of Tlascopan Street, they were assailed by thousands of Mexicans, and amidst a fearful tumult and destructive confusion, followed by shouts of impotent rage from the combatants and moans from the severely wounded, in which the best among the Spaniards lay buried in the murky waters of the canals, or fallen under the axes of the Mexicans, the Spanish leaders, followed by the disordered remnant of their troops, were allowed to defile to an adjacent village called Popolla, where Cortez, on beholding their thinned ranks and deplorable condition, gave vent to the anguish of his soul.

Cortez' fame has been much overrated; he was fortunate rather than great, for he was powerfully assisted at the very outset by the friendly attitude of the Indians, who welcomed in him the Deliverer long foretold in their legends, who was to rescue them from the thraldom and heavy burdens imposed upon them by the Aztec monarchs, to enable them to carry on their warlike enterprises and policy of annexation. He was helped, moreover, by two intelligent interpreters, Aguilar and Marina, in his intercourse with the natives; Marina proving subsequently a devoted friend, and a faithful and skilful negotiator with the Indians. It is equally certain that, from purely selfish motives of personal convenience and policy, as also to gratify the cruel rapacity of his followers, he not only allowed, but even ordered acts of bloodshed and treachery which must for ever stain his character. His courage cannot be doubted; yet his conduct in the expedition to Honduras, his pusillanimity on his return, argue a poor politician; whilst the revolting massacres at Cholula and Mexico sink into shade when compared with the murder of Guatemozin. Las Casas, who knew him well, calls him "that fellow;" which term of reproach is more opprobrious than a worse epithet.

But these things have detained us too long already; let us
now proceed to Chapultepec, one of the most delightful spots in the Mexican valley. Two roads, the Paseo Nuevo and the tramway, lead to it; we will take the latter as shorter and cheaper, which, starting from the Place d'Armes, goes through Belen gate, and sets us down at the very entrance of the Castle. Chapultepec, "grasshopper hill," is a volcanic hill some 1,625 feet long, and 100 feet high, covered with luxurious vegetation, crowned with groves of cypresses, *ahuahuctes*, some of which are seventy-five feet in diameter, and seem to defy the decay of ages.*

The view from the windows of the Palace, which stands on the top of the hill, embracing the valley of Mexico, is one of the finest in the world. In the highly rarefied atmosphere of these upper regions, even distant objects have a brilliancy of colouring and a distinctness of outline which enables one to take in the details of this marvellous panorama, studded with towns and hamlets, the white walls of which, together with the tops of porphyry rocks, glimmer in the rays of the sun. Stretching far away at their feet are seen noble forests of oak, sycamore, and cedar, whilst beyond, cultivated fields, beautiful gardens, lakes, and lagoons, girdle the valley around. Looking towards Mexico, the spectator has behind him the low chain de las Cruces; on his right, to the south, Pedregal and the Ajuscean hills; before him, to the east, the grand snowy tops of Popocatepetl, "the hill of smoke," and Iztaccihuatl, "White Woman," from its bright robe of snow; on his left to the north, Cerro Gordo, and nearer, the Sierra Guadalupe, where stands the most celebrated sanctuary of Mexico, dedicated to the Virgin.

This chapel rises on the site once occupied by the famous temple of Toci—the mother of a god—whose altars were thronged

* According to Bustamente, Netzahualcoyotl was the owner of Chapultepec, and planted the great *ahuahuctes*, from 1425 to 1440. But it is more logical to suppose that it was a Toltec plantation dating back to the ninth century.