

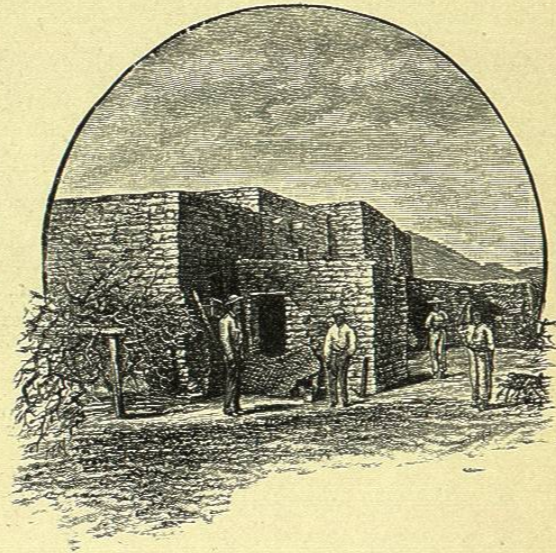
when the Moors conquered Spain. They did not desire the advancement of the people, and, bent on conquest, introduced few improvements except those connected with their warlike enterprises.

In their turn the Spaniards have impressed the character of their civilization upon the Mexicans.

A further retrospect, and we find ourselves face to face with Bible scenes. The gleaners follow closely after the harvesters, as then; the story of Ruth may perhaps find many a parallel here.

Some Mexican writers have remonstrated against the introduction of labor-saving machinery, fearing it would militate against the interests of that large proportion of the population—the laboring class. But as the undeveloped resources are so immense, it will probably be long before interference in that direction will be felt, for the cry still goes up for more laborers for both mines and *haciendas*.

One of the principal causes of this want may be attributed to the constant recurrence of feast-days, the observance of which occupies at least one-third of the time. It is anything but a pious spirit that induces the laborer to take advantage of these occasions, but rather his innate love of ease and dissipation. These days are to him more holidays than holy days. But it is astonishing how little these people can exist upon. In spite of their small wages being in this way so mate-



ADOBÉ HOUSES.

rially decreased, they manage to live, and not uncomfortably either, on a mere pittance; whole families, sometimes, spending but twelve or even six cents a day.

The following extract is from a late letter to the *Boston Herald*, by Mr. F. R. Guernsey, the regular correspondent of that paper. Mr. Guernsey has resided in Mexico for several years, and is a very close observer and accurate narrator. This is what he says on the subject of introducing foreign labor: "What Mexico needs is such a flood of immigration as is being poured on the shores of the Argentine Republic, that Mecca of the Italian farmer class. A proposition was recently made here for the introduction of Irish immigrants into the State of Oaxaca, where large tracts of land could be secured for them at very low rates, and coffee and tobacco culture introduced on a large scale. I have no doubt that a large Irish colony, started in Oaxaca under intelligent supervision and with due provision for getting their crops to market, could be built up into a prosperous community. The Irish, being mostly Catholics, would not provoke religious hostility among the natives, and their sympathetic and gay temperament would commend them to the nation at large. There is land enough, and to spare, in this favored country for all Ireland, and here the sons of Irishmen would become men of property and influence. There are many Irish names in Mexican history as there are also in Chilian annals. An 'O'Donaju' was famous here in old days, and along the west coast of South America the 'Lynches' and Cochranes' are noted names. The 'Morans' are a noted family here. Other names common here suggest Irish ancestry. This matter might well be studied by persons interested in settling Irish emigrants on land of their own, and so giving to their children an honorable career beyond the reach of grasping landlords. Several colonies in this country are prospering, especially that founded at Ensenada, Lower California, under the auspices of the International Company, a Connecticut corporation. The railway system of the country, as it increases, will make markets for regions now isolated, and thus render agriculture more and more remunerative."

The difficulty of transportation remains a serious drawback to every enterprise to be carried on in the republic. This is so obvious as to render credible the statement that an over-crop is as detrimental as an insufficient one. When there is a large surplus, much waste must ensue for lack of the means of transportation. If the crop is a short one, the natives must go on foot and carry "corn from Egypt." In any case it is the masses of *pobres* who suffer, and the need for not only more railways, but also for wagons and roads, is a real one. If only the hoarded wealth of the country were thus applied, Mexico would not long be in the rear of other countries.

Under the present land tenure, the owners almost escape taxation, while the peon, or the man who takes the products to market, must pay enormous taxes, at the gates of the cities, where the tax gatherers are located. A barrel of flour may be taxed a dozen or twenty times before it reaches the market. Every State, city, and municipality through which it passes has its own laws of taxation. Every page of a merchant's ledger or cash-book must have a stamp. Every receipt must have one at the rate of one cent for every \$20. Tickets of all sorts—even to the theater—contracts, bills, and a number of other things must have stamps. But the man who owns houses pays no taxes except when they are rented. This, it may be added, is the reason of the high rents.

The lack of water naturally limits and impedes manufacturing, and the scarcity of fuel places a dead incubus upon it. The government has nurtured and given all the aid and encouragement in its power to such enterprises, but it is difficult if not impossible to rise superior to such great natural obstacles. Wood commands from \$15 to \$18 per cord, which is, of itself, enough to interdict the use of steam. But there is a solution in the future to this question of fuel. There is no wider field for enterprising capitalists than the opening up of the vast coal deposits that exist in the various States. In Durango there are very fine deposits of hard coal. In other places many varieties are to be found; and the States of Oaxaca and Puebla abound in coal of a fine quality. Surely this will prove a great blessing to the country,

and a powerful agency of progress. Petroleum also exists in great abundance, but is still undeveloped. Though Mexico is a land of light, still more light is needed.

The culture and manufacture of silk promise success in the future. Mulberry trees flourish in many localities, and the climate is so fine that silk-worms require no protection.

There are sections well adapted to the growth of cotton, but it is cultivated only to a limited extent; the principal part of that used being supplied from the United States.

The mining and working of the precious metals had been carried on for centuries before the discovery of the New World. We read that the conquerors were amazed and their cupidity excited by the richness and splendid workmanship displayed in the costly peace-offering of Montezuma. Bernal Diaz enumerates among them "thirty golden ducks exactly resembling the living bird; also, a round plate about the size of a wagon-wheel, representing the sun, the whole of finest gold, a most extraordinary work of art; and a round plate, even larger than the former, of massive silver, representing the moon,

with rays and other figures on it, as well as a quantity of gold trinkets," all displaying the most beautiful and skillful workmanship.

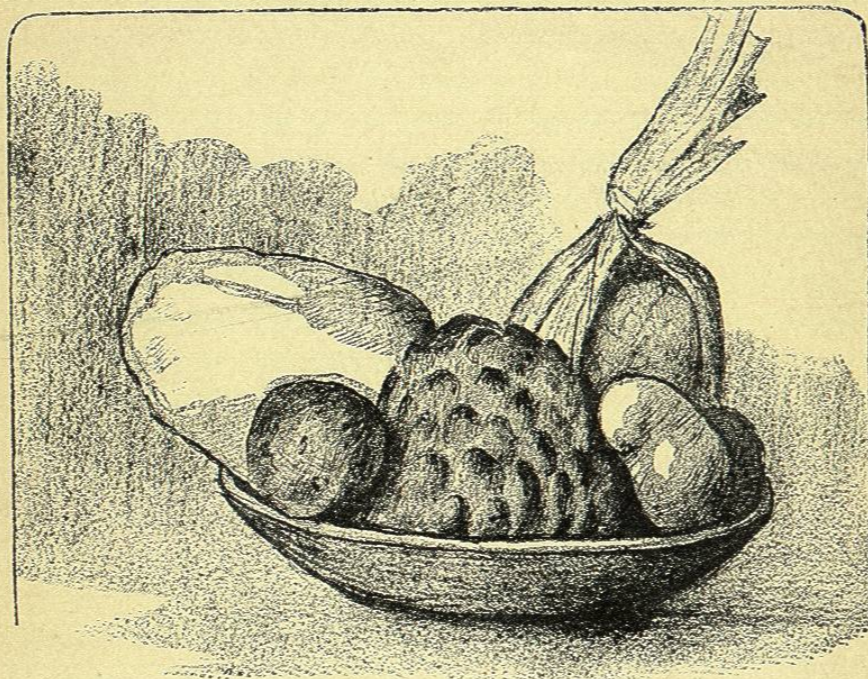
Mining investments for Americans have generally proved a sad experience. But still they venture, working and waiting, hoping against hope. They give up comfortable homes to labor and toil as never before, deprived of every comfort, and at last are forced to leave the scenes of their unfruitful labors ruined in fortune and hopes, and with en-



AN AMERICAN MINER.

ergies broken and crushed. Some of the most utterly miserable-looking men to be seen are these unfortunate American miners. A few have been successful, but they make the exceptions to the rule. Mining laws, however, are said to be excellent, and are quite as favorable to the foreign capitalist as to the native.

In the production of fruits alone Mexico has advantages over other countries. In many places by stretching out the hands one may



BASKET OF FRUIT.

gather both temperate and tropical varieties. While many have been imported, a large proportion are indigenous and daily tickled the palate of Montezuma. But peaches, apples and other temperate fruits are in a neglected condition, and consequently lack flavor. For the rest, nature is sufficient for her own free gifts.

The infinite variety and constant succession of fruits, all the year round, offer an attraction to growers as well as to those engaged in canning and preserving. Besides those familiar to home growth,

as peaches, pears, lemons, and oranges, or known to us through commerce, as the banana and pineapple, new, strange and delicious fruits meet the eye and invite the taste. At first Americans generally have a distaste to the native fruits of Mexico, but after a time relish them very much.

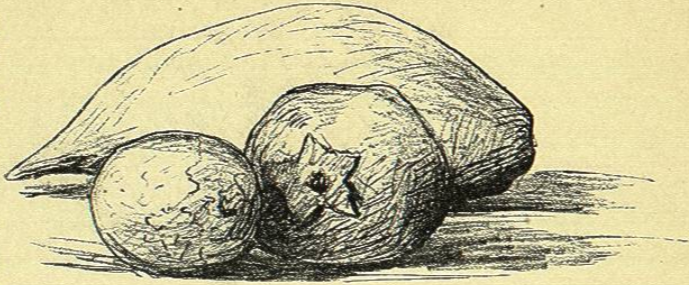
The accompanying illustration shows a few of the most peculiar of these fruits. The long, white one on the left is a lemon from Jalapa; it is nearly ten inches in length and about five inches in its largest diameter. The one in the center of dish is the *chirimolla* (custard-apple), delicious, and bears a stronger resemblance to a delicately flavored custard than to anything else. Another species of this fruit is the *anona*, which is seen on the right; it is brown, while the former is green. Both have the shape and appearance of the pineapple, and flourish in the latitude of the orange and lemon. Both have black seeds. The *anona* is so soft it is always brought to market enveloped in palm-leaves. The small fruit on the right, in front, is a mango, and the small one to the left is the *aguacatl*, or vegetable butter, commonly called *aguacate*, grows in almost all parts of Mexico. Some are green, others black; some as large as a man's fist, others the size of a marble. If the skin is removed and the substance spread on bread with a little salt, it is a good substitute for butter; it also makes a delicious salad. By putting the seed in a bottle, as with hyacinth bulbs, this fruit may be grown in all warm latitudes. Then there are the various kinds of zapotes; *chico* (small), brown skin; *prieto* (black pulp, green skin); *amarillo* (yellow pulp and skin), long,



MANGO AND SEED.

very large seed and delicious; *blanca* (white), green skin, white pulp, and the zapote of Santo Domingo. All have a different skin, flesh and flavor, but the yellow and white are the

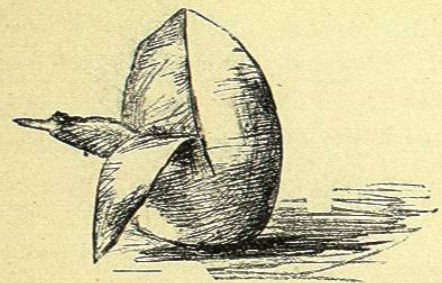
most delicious. Along the Gulf coast there are miles of forest of the *chico zapote*. It is a very large and valuable tree, having dark, rich foliage, and for timber growth is almost unequalled. Pieces of the wood have been taken out of the ruins of constructions that were already ruins when the Spaniards came, and they were



YELLOW, BLACK, AND WHITE ZAPOTES.

still as solid as though in use only a year. The mango is a large and lovely tree and is indigenous; the fruit is a reddish yellow, kidney-shaped, with fibrous flesh, and a large stone much the same shape. The flavor is at first objectionable to strangers, because of the strong turpentine taste, but this is finally overlooked. As it hangs on the trees in the hot lands nothing can be more beautiful than these great bright bunches of twenty-five or thirty hanging from the boughs.

The *mamey* is another attractive looking fruit of oblong shape, meat of salmon-red color, but a little education is also necessary for its



MAMEY AND SEED.

enjoyment. When taken from the tree the fruit is warm throughout. The *xicama*, another curious fruit, looks exactly like a turnip, but with none of the flavor of the latter. The *granadita* is delicious, and bears a striking resemblance in appearance and flavor to our "May-apple." There are about forty varieties of oranges, be-

sides several of lemons and limes. Then there are *capulins* (wild cherries), the juice of which is used in *tamales*; the *tejocote*, *ciruelas*, *cidras*, all small fruits, besides *cicapnatl* (peanut), as also many other delicious nuts; the *calabaza* (pumpkin), one of the chief articles of food for the poor; the *cana* (sugar-cane); the *cacao*, from which chocolate is made; the *guavaba* (guava); *granada* (pomegranate); several kinds of figs, pears, and grapes; also, *charvicannos* (apricots), *mora* (mulberries), *sarsamora* (blackberries), *grosella* (raspberry). The *accituna* (olive) thrives anywhere on the table-lands. Then there are the *sandia* (watermelon), the *camote* (sweet potato), the endless and delightful varieties of the *tuna* (prickly pear), and the maguey (*agave Americana*), known to us as the century-plant, which furnishes everything from a needle and thread to a house-top, as well as a variety of food and drink. Of the latter, several varieties are made, chief among which is *pulque*, the national beverage. The manufacture of this liquor is as peculiar as it is interesting. Just before flowering time (which occurs much oftener than once in a hundred years) the heart of the plant is extracted and a sap rises to fill the cavity. The *tlachiquero*, whose business it is to collect this sap two or three times a day, places one end of a gourd syphon in the cavity and the other end to his lips, and, by suction, draws the juice up into the body of the gourd. It is then emptied into a sheep skin which he carries upon his back, and from this put into a vat, also of sheep skin, which, like the other, has the wool turned inward. The odor imparted to the liquid by these skins, as may be imagined, is anything but agreeable. On bringing it to the lips for a draught, the first impulse is to seize the nose, without which precautionary measure it is doubtful if the induction into this beverage would ever be made. It is much pleasanter to the palate, however, than to the olfactory, and its effects upon the system are generally beneficial. It possesses medicinal properties and is considered a specific for Bright's disease. The cultivation of the maguey is quite a source of income, as a single plant yields about one gallon of sap a day, and rarely more than one hundred and twenty-five quarts in all, after which it dies.