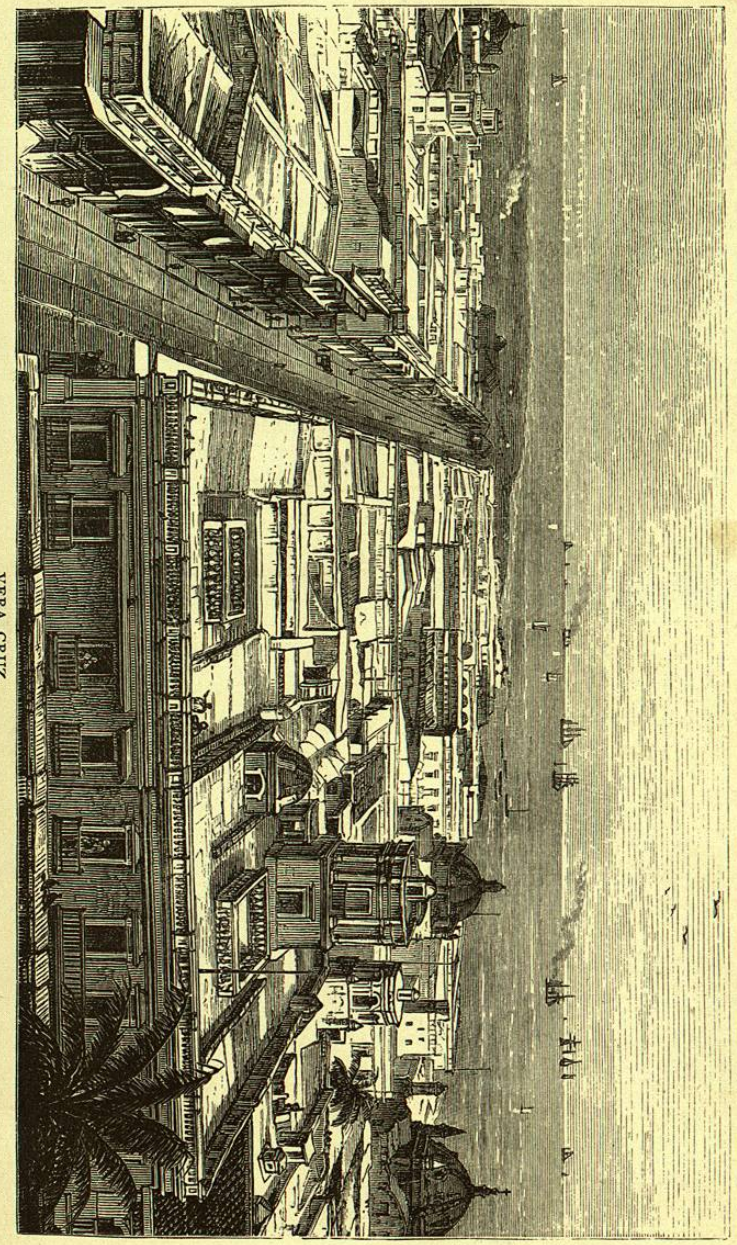
their own place. Yet all this could be cured by a few score thousand dollars. The castle lies two miles, perhaps, from the shore, and reefs extend a third of the way toward it on the northern side. A breakwater could easily be built over the rest of the way, and the harbor of Vera Cruz laugh at the peril of the north wind, and enjoy its refreshment. Some time the government will make this improvement. Yet "*mañana*" (to-morrow), they would say here: their word for all enterprises and duties.

Our Norther has subsided, and we enter the sunny bay, on the last Saturday morning in December, as warm and delicious a morning as ever broke over New York Bay in June, as George L. Brown's painting of that city superbly represents. The walls of the city of the True Cross break on the eye—a speck of superior whiteness amidst the glittering sand-dunes that inclose it, but a whiteness that does not increase as you approach. Small palms scantily scatter themselves among the sand-hills, and thin grass and a parched vegetation, though far-away hills lift a solid terrace of green to your fascinated eyes, and, towering over all, Orizaba raises its snow-capped spear, a peak of unequaled beauty. All the zones are around and before you, from Greenland to Abyssinia.

The harbor is empty of shipping; only four or five vessels lie on its dangerous sea. The famous castle, San Juan d'Ulloa, is a large, round fortress, of a dingy yellow. A castle impregnable, it is said, except to assault, which was never attacked that it was not taken. Cortez professed to expend thirteen millions upon it; and Charles the Fifth, once calling for his glass, and looking through it, westward, was asked what he was looking for. "San Juan d'Ulloa," he replied. "I have spent so much on it, that it seems to me I ought to see it standing out on the western sky."

We anchor off the costly folly, and are greeted by officials and friends. Boats soon put us on the mole, and we are in the sea-port of the United States of Mexico.

This city consists of sixty acres, be they more or less, inclosed with a begrimed wall, from ten to twenty feet in height. Boston Common is not far from the size of Vera Cruz; its burned district



VERA CRUZ.

considerably larger. It has one principal street running back from the shore a single block. A horse railway passes down this Calle Centrale once a half hour or so, and for a real, or twelve and a half cents, takes you the near a mile that street extends. But it takes no one, as all who have money have no desire to leave the block or two about the plaza; and all who are obliged to go from centre to circumference have no money. So the Spanish Yankee fails of success in this enterprise.

One street runs parallel with the Centrale the entire length of the city, and two shorter ones fill out the arc that the rear wall makes. Eight or ten cross these at right angles. That is all of the True Cross, viewed geographically. Numerically, it has fifteen thousand inhabitants, of whom over one thousand are foreigners, and only about five thousand can read or write. The Indian population predominates in numbers, and the Spanish in wealth and influence, though the Mexican is a conglomerate of both, and each in its separate or blended state is without social degradation or distinction.

Its chief street has two arcades, with little markets and tables for brandy or coffee sippers. It has a score or two of stores, some with quaint names, such as "El Pobre Diabolo" (The Poor Devil), over a neat dry-goods house, whose merchant thereby humbly confesses he does not make over "one per shent" on every two. Another has B. B. B. as his initials: "Bueno, Bonito, Barato" (good, pretty, cheap).

The streets are narrow, as they should be in hot countries. Tiny rivulets trickle down their centres, and disinfectants in the sickly season nightly cleanse these open sewers.

Another and a more important source of its cleanliness is the buzzard. I had been taught to detest the buzzard, perhaps because it was black. I had heard how unclean a thing it was, and was exceedingly prejudiced against it. But I find, to my surprise, that here this despised and detested creature is the sacred bird, almost. It darkens the air with its flocks, roosts on the roofs, towers, steeple-tops, everywhere. A fine of five dollars is levied

against one who shoots one of them. It is the most privileged individual of the town. The reason why? It is the street-cleaner. It picks the offal from gutter or sidewalk, and nothing escapes its hungry maw. Its business may not be cleanly, but its person is. It never looks soiled, but its black wings shine, and its beak is as white as "store teeth." It looks like a nice house-maid whose service does not make her soiled. It is a large bird, looking like the turkey, though of a different species, and of a broad, swift wing, that sustains it in long flights. It appears very solemn, the priest of the air, especially when it sits on the cross of the churches, one on each arm frequently, and one on the top. Once I saw two thus sitting on the top, one on the other, as quiet and churchly as though each were carved in stone. Hood says,

> "The daw's not reckon'd a religious bird,
> Because it keeps a-cawing from the steeple."

But the buzzard comes nearer that desert, and by its solemn air, clerical garb, and sanitary service, may claim a place in, as well as on, the sanctuary. Perhaps some foes of the cloth might say its greediness and determination to have the last mite, if alive, was also a proof of this relationship. At any rate, unlike the daw, it is the protected if not the petted bird of the city, and helps keep off the pestilence, which has a blacker hue and more horrible nature than the worst of its enemies ever attributed to it. Honor to this faithful black servant of man, as to those featherless bipeds of like hue, that are more worthy of our praise for their more excellent service.

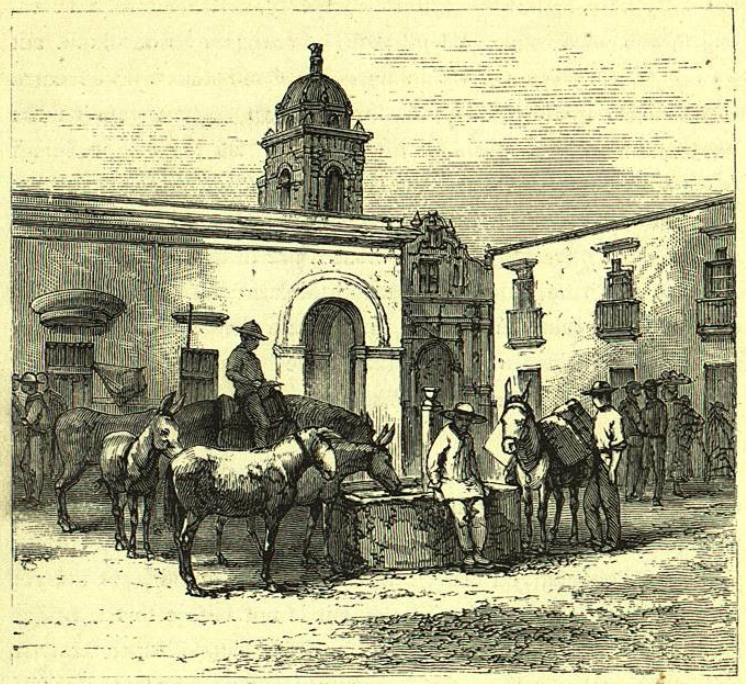
The houses hug the narrow sidewalks, each with a large portal opening into a roofless court, and with windows scantily piercing their second story. They very rarely go higher. Not a building inclosing the chief plaza is above this height. Hotel, warehouse, and governor's residence close with the second story. The third occasionally appears; but fourth and fifth, up to seventh and eighth, with Mansard roofs — two stories more — these Paris and New York luxuries are here unknown. Why? Because the earth gets

sea-sick here. Ex-President Hill's theory, that a fire is fed from below, and must be put out by pouring water on its base, and not on its summit, obtains here in regard to earthquakes. The earth shakes from below, and would topple down these towers on the haughty heads that dared to lift them up. So the city well-nigh reaches the Sybarite perfection Edward Everett Hale approves, and is hardly ever over two stories, and is much of it of his perfect perfection of one story. These houses are of mortar or stone, all of them, and very broad of base and thick of wall. They hug the earth so close that she can not throw them off. She must tip herself clean over, before she can turn these houses on the heads of their builders. Those builders' heads were level, and their works are also.

The wind flows through the open windows, cool as the midsummer sea-breeze—never cooler. The streets have donkeys, carrying water in kegs, milk in bottles, charcoal (their only fuel) in bags, grasses for thatch, and other burdens. A carriage I have not yet seen. One is said to exist here, but it is not visible to the naked eye. A few horses are used, chiefly by the haciendados, or farmers, riding into town. Even the ladies turn out on foot to the grand reception to the President on the opening of the railway to the capital. The horse-car is the only vehicle, and that is useless. The city is a Venice, but for its mules and asses.

The fountain at the head of Callé Centrale is a favorite resort for these few beasts, and for many water-carriers. There is abundance of water; and nowhere in this country, or any country, are there cleaner streets or superior baths. Yet buzzard and bath, free fountain and washed street, do not keep off the yellow fever. The walls, some think, cause it, as they shut out the winds—the only thing they do shut out, every foe easily subduing them. They should be leveled, if they kill thus those they pretend to protect.

The business of the city is quite large. Some houses do a million and a half a year; for here come about all the goods of Europe and America that enter Mexico. But the houses that get the trade



FOUNTAIN AT VERA CRUZ.

are foreign, and chiefly German, so that the people of the country are still poor, poorer, poorest.

The Lord's Day is an unknown institution in Vera Cruz. The Spaniards have given it the right name, properly distinguishing between the Sabbath, which they give to Saturday (Sabbato), and the Lord's Day (Domingo). We could follow their example. It would save much debate, and clarify and steady many a conscience, if we could see the Lord's Day in our nomenclature. We should then perceive its sacred delight and obligation. Yet if it turned out with us as with these, the name had better be left unchanged. *Stat nominis sacri umbra;* and only that shadow stands. All else is gone. The shops are open, the workmen busy. The church is attended once, as in the mummeries this morning. Then the circus came riding down the street; the clown and two pretty

boys ahead, preparatory to performing outside the walls. It was the first band of music I had heard on Sunday since that which awoke me in Detroit last summer. How sad and striking the resemblance! Shall our German infidelity and mis-education make our land like Mexico? Or shall a holy faith and a holy life make this land like the New England of our fathers? As Mr. Lincoln said, "Our nation must be all slave or all free;" and as One infinitely greater said, "A house divided against itself can not stand;" so America, North and South, the United States and Mexico, must be all Christian in its Sabbath sanctity, or all diabolic.

I walked out in the afternoon to the cemetery, feeling that the best church and congregation were to be found there. The way led over the alameda, or a short bridge across a tiny stream, which is lined with young cocoa-nut palms, and stone seats for loungers. Here Cortez once built a bridge ten feet or so long, for which he charged the government three millions of dollars, making even Tweed lower his haughty front before this Castilian grandeur of thieving. The Church of Christ stood a little beyond, with huts of the poor near it—a church where funeral services are mostly performed. A poor old man was kneeling on a bench near the door, with arms outspread, and agonized face, muttering earnestly. Oh that he could have been spoken to, so that he might have been taught the way of life more perfectly, and might have gone down to his house justified and rejoicing in the Lord Jesus, to whom not one of his muttered prayers was addressed!

The Street of Christ leads out half a mile to the Campo Santo. Well-named is that street, if lowliest people are nearest him, and if the grave is his triumphant goal.

The walls of the grave-yard are high and deep. Tall obelisks stand at either corner. The dead sleep not in the open area, which is unoccupied, but in the walls. Tablets cover the recess that incloses the coffin, and words of tenderness rather than of faith bedew the marble. Not the highest faith. No such beautiful words as are found on the monuments of the saintly dead of Prot-

estant climes shine forth here. Northampton has no rival here, that choicest of grave-yards in its simplicity of elegance and richness of Scriptural and Christian quotation. Mount Auburn is surpassed, however. I heard the Misses Warner once say they had found scarcely any motto of Scriptural faith and hope in that cemetery. It is as stony in its faith as in the hewn and polished walls that engirt each tiny lot. It has marble dogs, and granite sphinxes, and bass-relief expressmen, wreathed pillars, and statues of men of renown, but rare is a monument or a line of faith. It will strike others thus. Edwards, and Fisk, and Wayland ought to stand in marble among its statues, and Christianity speak from its faithless, glittering graves. Let those whose believing dead are buried there make them preach their faith from their sepulchres.

Yet in the Campo Santo itself I found food for meditation, if not in its inscriptions. I gathered its flowers, growing wild and beautiful over its area, and returned as from a Sabbath-day's journey, strengthened in the Gospel truth and work.

That evening, through the kindness of the American consul, a congregation of nearly thirty gathered in his rooms, and held a Christian service. "Rock of Ages" and "Jesus, lover of my soul," were sung, and the word spoken from "To you that believe, he is precious." It was the first service the Holy Catholic (not Roman) Church ever held in that city. It was good to be there, as many felt. We found young men at work on the railroad who were members of the Baptist Church. Those who were, in order or education, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Episcopalians, were also present. It seemed as if the day-star was about to arise over this long-darkened soil. If schools were established here by Christian teachers, and a service held regularly in English, the nucleus of a church would be organized, and the work soon be extended to the native population. This first Christian service has not proved the last. Already the Presbyterians have a flourishing mission. Others will doubtless follow.

The city is putting on its best bib-and-tucker, for to-morrow President Lerdo de Tejada is to arrive, and great is to be the re-

joicing. The government residences are being tastefully arrayed, and coats of white, yellow, and blue wash are spread over all the buidings surrounding the square. I never knew before how easily and cheaply one can renew the face of a soiled wall. That cathedral looks as if built yesterday. True, if it should rain to-night, it would be badly streaked, but it can not rain, for

> "To-morrow will be the happiest day of all the glad New-year;
> To-morrow will be, of all the year, the maddest, merriest day;"
> For Vera Cruz is joined to Mexico, and Lerdo comes this way.

This last line is not in Tennyson.

To-morrow came, but not the President. Every body dressed himself in his best; the streets were trimmed with lanterns; a green pavilion was arranged at the station; but he came not. Announced at ten, re-announced at five, the soldiers marched down the streets, all colors, officers and privates, and all mixed together, just as they ought to be in the United States. The people fill the balconies, house-tops, and walls. The boys jeer, and hoot, and whistle, as if they were Yankees. Still he comes not.

Somebody drops a real in the passage-way, kept open for him by the soldiers, and a bit of a black boy, very pretty and very prettily dressed, is pushed out for it by older boys, white and olive, who dare not risk the attempt themselves. A soldier holds him back. His mother, a bright, comely lady, stands behind him, watching him with mingled fear and admiration. She is afraid those olive-colored gamins, of fourteen years or thereabouts, full of roguery and rascality, will burn her boy's fingers in pulling that most desirable silver chestnut out of the martial fire.

While all, officers, soldiers, lads, and loungers, are intent on that shining mark, a bright boy, dirty and brown, in the employ of the street lamp-lighters, comes down the path to help locate some temporary lamp-posts, sees the real, catches it, and is off, amidst the laugh of the crowd. So the successful man is often the last on the field of conflict.

It grows dark, and we give it up, and so do many others. At

eight he comes, but nobody sees him, and Vera Cruz has spent a day in waiting, and spent it in vain. The sound of the vesper bells floats sadly into my ears, as I write close under the towers of the Cortez Cathedral. How long before more Christian bells shall sweetly summon more Christian disciples to a more Christian worship? How long?

The opening for Christian work is not surpassed by that of any city. It should be taken possession of by the true Church of the True Cross. The foreign element alone would make a large congregation. They can all understand English. The natives are horribly neglected, and would respond to earnest missionary effort. It is the sea-port of the country, and many sailors visit it. The danger from yellow fever is not great. Gentlemen who had resided there fifteen years laughed at the fear of strangers. It is certainly no greater for ministers than for merchants. It is a good centre of influence and departure. It should be speedily occupied. Let Cortez's dream be fully answered, and Vera Cruz preach and practice the perfect gospel of Christ crucified.

IV.

THE HOT LANDS.

From Idleness to Peril.—Solitud.—Chiquihuiti.—Tropical Forests.—The Falls of Atoyac.—Wild Beasts *non sunt*.—Cordova and its Oranges.—Mount Orizaba.—Fortin.

Vera Cruz soon wearies. Even the generous hospitality of our consul, whose table and couch have been mine for days, could not make it lovely long. The mountains draw like the Loadstone Mountain of the "Arabian Nights." The consul-general comes from the capital, and by due persuasion is enticed not to wait for the president's return, but to climb back after the old fashion, the stage-coach and the robber; for though the railroad is finished, that does not insure one a ride over it. Until the president returns over it, no one can, except he gets passage in a dirt-car, and takes the mountain morning coldness, without shelter, and almost without a seat. How long we may have to wait for his return, *quien sabe?*—(who knows?)—the universal answer here to all inquiries, as *mañana* is to all orders. So we get as far as is allowed us on the railway, and then take to the stage.

There are several reasons prompting us to this course. The stage is a vanishing institution. A week or two hence there will be no staging between the sea-port and the capital. We must indulge it now or never. Then we are told it is exceedingly dangerous. Robbers abound, and they will not fail to lose their last opportunity to black-mail the coach. So it will give the romance of peril essential to a first-class excitement. It is also a horrible road, and men affirm that they would endure any torment they or their friends could be subject to, especially the latter, rather than make the trip again—and then go and make it. Why not we?