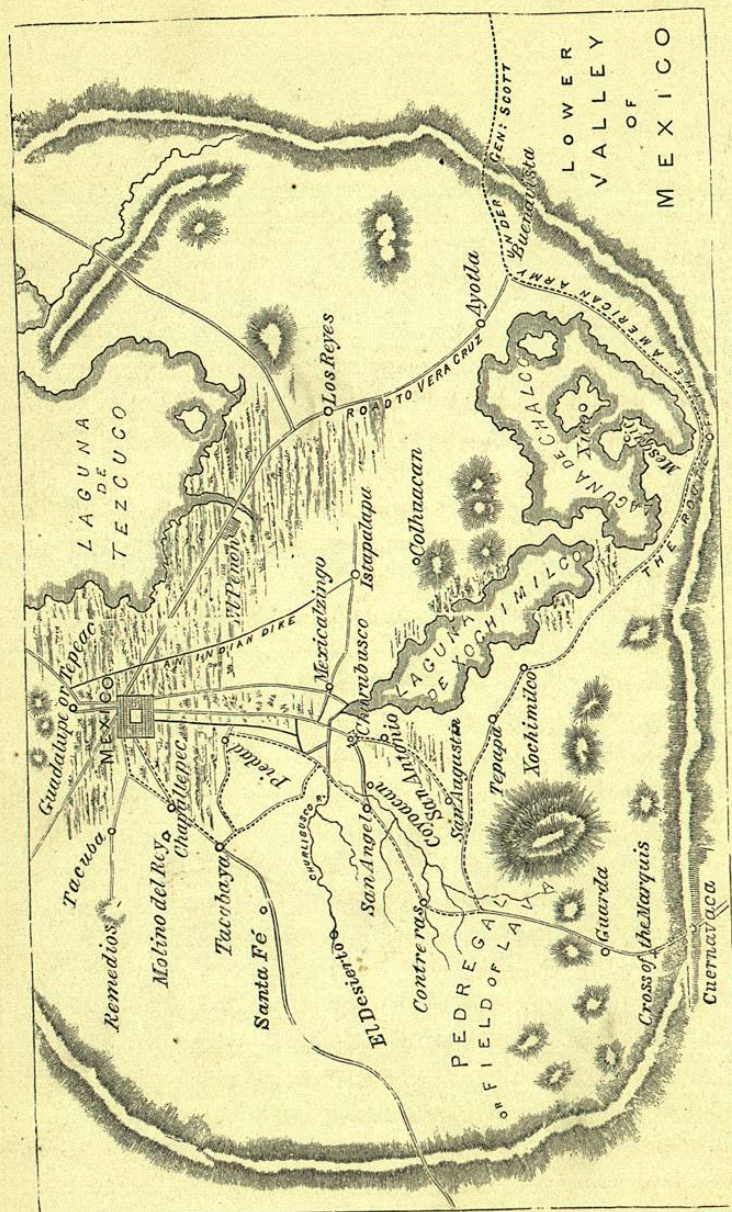


BOOK II.

IN AND AROUND THE CAPITAL.



THE VALLEY OF MEXICO, FROM THE AMERICAN OFFICIAL MAP.

I.

FIRST WEEK IN THE CAPITAL.

Hotel Gillow.—Cost of Living.—The Climate.—Lottery-ticket Venders.—First Sabbath.—First Protestant Church.—A Praise Meeting.—State of the Work.—The Week of Prayer.

MEXICO begins well, though perhaps a good beginning may result in a bad ending. It was Saturday evening, at setting of the sun, that we landed at the Buena Vista station, just outside the city. The last rays had left the top of Popocatepetl, but were lingering yet in a rosy cloud above the snowy deadness of Iztaccihuatl. These two giant guardsmen are set to watch this lovely valley that circles beneath them, a girdle of hundreds of miles, itself encircled with a lower but not inferior range of mountains. The drive into the city is through a long avenue of green trees, past the Alameda, or park, half a mile square, well crowded with trees in their best June apparel, down the streets of San Francisco and Profesa, round the corner of the elegant Church of the Profesa, into the Hotel Gillow, a new hotel built on a part of the convent property belonging to the Church of the Profesa, and confiscated; but in this case built upon by the gentleman whose name it bears, whose son is a priest of this convent, who manages, if he does not own, the building, and who thus assists in desecrating a portion of the estates of the Church.

If a clergyman of the Roman Catholic Church may build, or control, and even give his family name to a hotel on sacred soil, a clergyman of the Holy Catholic Church may occupy a room in it without danger of profaning either it, or himself, or his church, or his landlord. So I enter a somewhat too sumptuous apartment for my means or my church. Yet, as it is the only one opening on the street, I take it till a less ornate one is vacated.

*Ya pareció!
Es metódica
el autor de
esta obra -
Ya le voy a
el anteojo -*

That is already done, and this writing is in a square and handsome parlor, for which the sum of forty dollars a month is paid; too costly for a long stay, but as Methodist preachers never continue in one stay, it may answer for a temporary sojourn.

Yet, costly as it is in this city, it is less than half, if not less than a third, what a like apartment could be rented for in a city of the States. With board at its *fonda*, or restaurant, at thirty-five dollars a month—four meals a day if you wish, and all you ask for at each meal—the whole expense is less than two dollars and a half a day, better for room and food than could be got in New York for four dollars a day. This may be reduced a little, yet not much. Board can not be much less, this ranging only at about one dollar a day; but rooms, unfurnished, may be had for a fourth of this amount, and furnished, if you take one looking on a court instead of the street, in any of the hotels, for about one-half. In this hotel they are twenty-five dollars; very clever rooms, too.

This long preamble is given for two reasons: first, to give you assurance of the practical nature of our mind, so that any fantasies of eulogy over Mexico and its environs into which we may subsequently fly may be considered exceptional, and not normal; and, second and chief, that any of our ice-bound, snow-driven, sleet-covered, cold-racked, and so-on-suffering friends of the North, who may have made more money than they are willing to give the Church, though not more than they ought to give, may know where to come and spend it and the winter.

It is a paradise of climates. The air is just right every day. A light cape is all you want across your shoulders, and that is to be worn in the house rather than out-of-doors, for the houses are cooler than the street. Flowers and fruits are everywhere, and very excellent in taste and looks. Great bouquets of violets and other delights, packed in the mechanical French fashion, learned, it is said, from the French, and improved on by the Aztec, are offered you for a York shilling and upward. The flower-girls stand or sit at the corners of the streets, sometimes old men and women, with their big and little bouquets on the sidewalk about

Esto le he dicho mil veces -

them. Strawberries, blackberries, and green peas are cheap and good, blackberries fifteen cents a quart, and others in proportion, while bananas and oranges, and the fruits less familiar to us, are piled up on the table and forced upon a gorged appetite.

My windows stand open as I write, and the street cries come up into my ears. If I knew Spanish I might perhaps interpret them, but since, although I know English, I never can understand the street cries of New York, I fear all the Spanish I can ever learn will not give me the inside of the calls of the street. I suppose this I hear the most frequently is from the lottery-ticket venders, who



MEXICAN FLOWER-GIRL.

stand along the sidewalks, and are the most numerous class of operators in the city. They call the various lotteries the holiest names: Divina Providencia, Virgin of Guadalupe, St. Joseph, The Holy Spirit, The Trinity, Purissima Concepcion, and such like. The most popular of these is that of the Virgin of Guadalupe. The venders wear a badge bearing their number, and for a *medio*, or six and a quarter cents, you can run the risk of getting or losing from one to ten thousand *pesos*, or dollars. These lotteries are largely operated by the Church, and are one of its sources of income. The sale of indulgences is another. The right hand and the left rob in the name of God, feeding the poor victims with false hopes of a fortune in this life, and with falser hopes of a fortune, thus acquired, in the life to come.

The morning after my arrival opened, as every morning does here, bright, mild, charming. The bells rang merrily, and my spirits were in corresponding mood. The Church of Jesus drew

my steps to its door. This church worships in a chapel of the old Church of San Francisco. You pass through a garden full of beautiful shrubs and flowers in full bloom and leaf, making the courts of the house of the Lord fragrant with these lovely creations of the Lord. This garden is about thirty feet wide by a hundred long. Our Lord lay in a garden of like sweets. Here he dwells to-day. And as we pass through we breathe that beautiful thought, from one whose pen we hope again to see serving the Lord :

"And as Thy rocky tomb
Was in a garden fair,
Where round about stood flowers in bloom,
To sweeten all the air,

"So in my heart of stone
I sepulchre Thy death,
While thoughts of Thee, like roses' bloom,
Bring sweetness in their breath."

The chapel we enter on the side near its lower end. It is high arched, prettily frescoed about the altar, and is seated with chairs for about four hundred. It is nearly full. The worshipers are chiefly native, not over ten or fifteen Americans being present. They are dressed mostly with some attempt at cleanliness, their garb of the week being changed for the Sabbath. A few are in the soiled clothes of their daily toil. They are dark-colored, Indian in whole or largely, and all sit as promiscuously as they ought to do in more enlightened congregations. They are singing "lustily." John Wesley would have declared that they kept that word in his Discipline. They all sing, and sing with all their might. I never heard camp-meeting excel them in this heartiness and gusto. The words were simple and sweet, and the tunes likewise. None of them were familiar till the last one, in which I detected an air I had known, and, after a little, found it was, "I'm a pilgrim, I'm a stranger." I give you a verse of this. You can all sing it, and will find it not difficult to translate. It begins, "I am going to heaven—I am a wanderer—to live eternally with Jesus :"

"Voy al cielo, soy peregrino,
Viveré eternamente con Jesus.
El me abrió ya veraz camino
Cuando murió por nosotros en la cruz.

CORO.

"Voy el cielo, soy peregrino,
Viveré eternamente con Jesus."*

They sung some four or five times, as often as in an American social or prayer meeting, intermingling their hymns with prayers read by the minister from a small pamphlet, with readings from the Old and the New Testament Scriptures, four Psalms, and a short, earnest sermon on The Wise Men—a recognition of the calendar of the Romish Church, which makes this the Sabbath of the Epiphany. The two ministers who officiated were dressed in white robes; one of them was white, and one an Indian. That was a good sight, these two brethren of diverse colors associated in this service. When shall the like be formally established in our more Christian America? I was gratified above my expectations at the spectacle.

The bedizened altar furniture was gone, and an open Bible occupied the place of the idolatrous host. Above it, in a circlet of immortelles in silver letters, was the name of JESUS. The service of song was full of Him. The prayers, lessons, and sermon were alike possessed.

Whatever the ultimate form of this movement, it undoubtedly has the right beginning, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone. It needs direction, organization, education; but, as an outburst against a system which has so long suppressed this vital-

* "I am going to heaven, I am a stranger,
To live eternally with Christ.
He opened me the true way
When He died for us upon the cross."

CHORUS.

"I am going to heaven, I am a stranger,
To live eternally with Christ."



FIRST PROTESTANT CHURCH.

ity, it is divine. The Virgin is not here. The Son of God is alone, as becomes His nature and work. It is a protest against that false mediation and intercession. He has taken the work into His own hands. They sing His praises, they implore His salvation.

It is noticeable, too, as an incident of this movement, that they all are so full of song. The Roman Catholic Church does not cultivate or allow in its service congregational singing. It is as gay of plumage as tropical birds, and as songless. A trained choir gives elaborate masses and compositions with wonderful power in a few great centres of its worship, but its people do not sing. These converts are full of song.

It was delightful to taste the freshness of this spring of salvation, breaking forth from this long-parched ground. It was like Elijah's little cloud brooding smilingly over a land from which the rain of

grace had been shut off, not merely for three years and six months, but for three centuries and a half. May it soon burst in blessings over all the land!

I stepped over last evening to a chapel opposite my hotel, where one of these congregations was holding service in connection with the Week of Prayer. It was after nine, and the regular meeting had closed. But there stood a group of twenty or so in the upper corner, "going it," like a corner after a revival meeting, in these same songs of Zion. Their leader appeared to be a young brother of twenty (the regular pastor was not present), and they all put in with all their heart and voice, a few sitting about on the benches enjoying the exercise. It was so perfectly Methodist that I wished to go forward and tell them it seemed just like home. But a slight difficulty, somewhat like that which troubled Zacharias on one occasion, and which would last about as long if I staid here, prevented my making myself known and helping on the melody. I might have sung, however, for the tune I had heard the Sunday before, and the words I could pronounce, if not translate. The favorite hymn, which both congregations sing with great gusto, has this for its chorus:

"No os detengais, no os detengais,
Nunca, nunca, nunca;
Christo por salvanos dió
Su sangre cuando El murió."*

The way they bring out the "Nunca, nunca, nunca," is a lesson to many a languid and fashionable quartette and choir, a feebleness that has replaced and half destroyed our hymnal vitality. A half-dozen, who sing only a trifle better than the congregation, take away its office. Let these Mexican Christians lead them back into the divine way. They allowed parts to be sung by two or three

* "Do not detain us, do not detain us,
Never, never, never;
Christ for our salvation gave
His blood when He died."

voices at San Francisco, and the whole congregation joined in the chorus. It was an inspiration and a lesson to our degenerate worshippers.

No one will fail to recognize the spirituality and scripturality of these outbursts of grace in their long-oppressed souls. It is of the Lord, and, like all His doings, is directly and vitally antagonistic to the prevailing superstition. That prays to the Virgin; this to Jesus. That never allows the Bible to be read or heard of; this makes the reading of the Word of God a prolonged portion of the service. That suppresses the singing of the people; this powerfully employs that service of Christ. That has the prayers muttered in an unknown tongue; this repeats them jointly with the congregation in their own language. That has no sermon in this country, or very rarely; this puts the pulpit and its teachings as a part of every service.

I should judge that regular training, visiting, and educating were needed, that the work requires the culture, system, and force of a regular Church order; but I hope no forms or forces will ever repel, but only increase, the ardor and joy which inspired the hearts of these worshippers on that glad morning of the New-year.

The afternoon was spent in an English service, the second in that language ever held in this city. Rev. Dr. Cooper, of Chicago, conducted it. It was in a private house. He is an able and experienced divine, and his word that day was sweet unto the taste of the little company gathered in that upper room, a handful of seed on the top of this mountain-land, the fruit whereof shall yet shake like Lebanon.

A suggestion was made at that service that the Week of Prayer be observed in this city. It was a novelty, surely, that this Week of Prayer should be kept in this lately most hostile town, where five years ago one could have hardly kept erect when the procession of the Holy Ghost passed through the streets without endangering his head.

But a change has come. The Presbyterian missionary, Rev. Mr. Phillips, opened his parlors, and an Episcopalian, a Methodist, a

Congregational, and a Presbyterian minister joined with a few laymen and sisters in offering daily prayer, according to the programme set forth by the Evangelical Alliance. It was good to be there day by day, to hear the songs of Zion in a strange land, to feel that we stood at the fountain-head of this river of life which is breaking forth here at the touch of God for the cleansing of this nation.

The Congregational minister is Rev. Mr. Parks, sent out by the British and Foreign Bible Society to scatter that divine seed over this barren soil. He is a sower going forth to sow. He finds all sorts of soils. One colporteur in a three months' tour could not sell a single Bible. He contrived to give away a few hundreds. Another was beaten and driven out of Puebla, the second city of the country. Others find soil less rocky and less hardened by the wayside treading of centuries of Bible hatred, and some good soil is discovered, as these new movements show, which is yielding fruit already—some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundred fold.

Among those that attended these little meetings was Mr. Petterick, a devoted Wesleyan, and Colonel Rhett, a Confederate officer, in command for a time of the defenses of Richmond, who, though he perhaps can not yet see that slavery is a sin, being a South Carolinian (which people, like their kin in Massachusetts, never change), still is willing to let that system "go," and is devoting himself with a praiseworthy zeal to general Christian activity.

This Gospel Week will not be forgotten in the history of the Church in Mexico. It has shown to every foe of our Christ that the charge they may make against the division of Protestant Christianity is not true. Most of its leading bodies have here harmoniously sung and spoken and prayed. They are a unit in aim and endeavor, in spirit and in life. They are less separated than the orders of the Romish Church; Jesuit and Carmelite, Benedictine and Franciscan, being more hostile to each other than any of our American Churches. This Union Week foretells the Union Year and Union Age of the Church in these United States of Mexico. May it be more and more one in faith, in work, in reward, here and over all the world!

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