

CHAPTER V.
COLONIAL PRODUCTS.

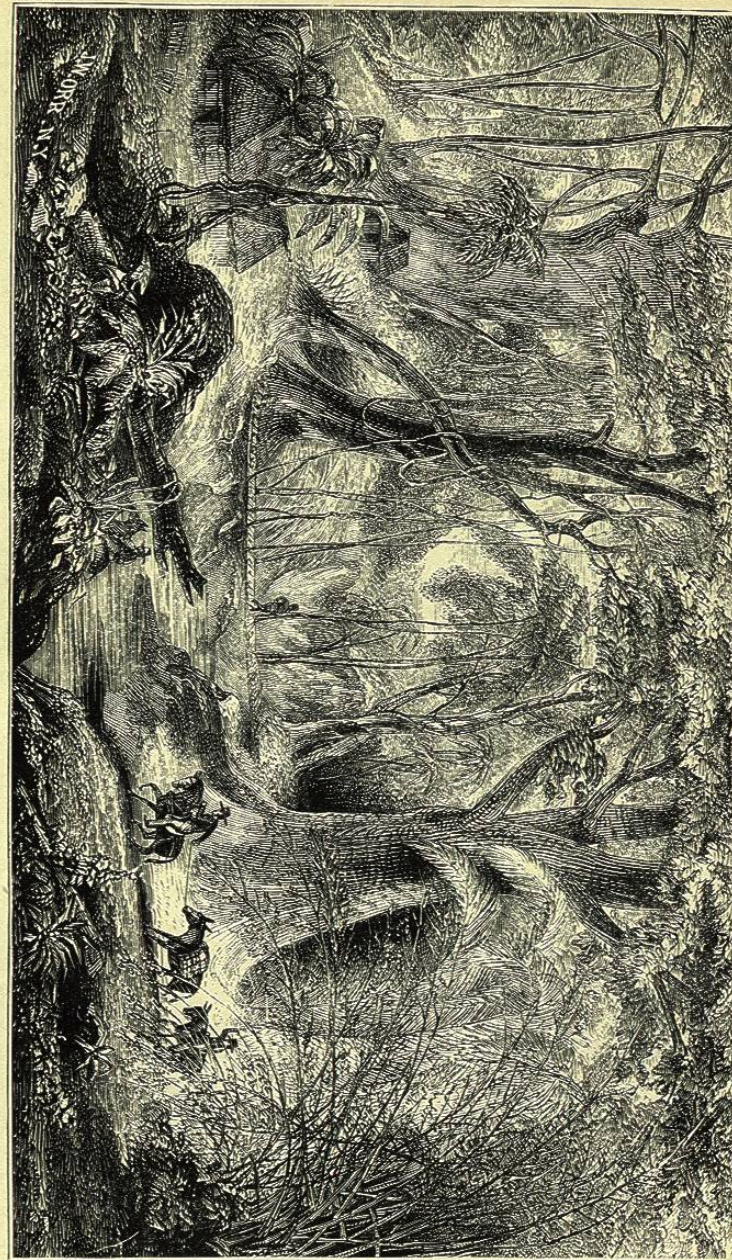
ESTATES IN THE VALLEYS OF CUERNAVACA AND CUAUTLA — MEXICAN HACIENDAS. — SUGAR REGIONS — COFFEE — ITS YIELD. — TOBACCO — ORIZABA — CHIAPAS, ETC. — INDIGO — COTTON. — MANUFACTURES ENCOURAGED IN MEXICO. — NO NEW AGRICULTURAL POPULATION — NEW MANUFACTURING POPULATION. — PRODUCTION OF COTTON — VAINILLA — JALAP — CACAO — COCHINEAL — ITS PRODUCTION AND QUANTITY. — SILK — FRUITS — AGRICULTURAL PROSPECTS. — GRAZING, AND NOT AN AGRICULTURAL COUNTRY.

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS CONTINUED. — COLONIAL PRODUCTS.

SUGAR.

It is generally admitted that the cultivation of SUGAR commenced in China. The cane became first known, through Marco Polo, in the middle of the thirteenth century; and it was soon after introduced into Nubia, Egypt and Ethiopia; whence, about the 15th century, it reached Europe. It was first planted in Sicily, and carried to Spain, Madeira, and the Canary Isles; and, twenty-eight years after the discovery by Columbus, it was introduced into Hayti, by Pedro Atienza, and speedily spread over the West Indies and other parts of America.

THE SUGAR CANE is one of the most valuable agricultural products of Mexico, and we are convinced from personal observation that the estates in the *tierra caliente*, where it is chiefly raised, are the richest, as well as most beautiful, in the republic. There is scarcely a lovelier prospect in Mexico than that which spreads before the traveller as he descends from the northern mountains into the valley or Cuernavaca, which lies south of the valley of Mexico, and may be reached easily in the course of a day. On every side, as far as the eye can reach, fields of the freshest verdure are spread out, dotted with the white walls and towers of the magnificent *haciendas*, which have been founded in this valley ever since the conquest. Screened from the cold winds of the upper table land by the protecting barrier of mountains which hem in the vales of Mexico and Puebla, the valley of Cuernavaca basks, on their southern slopes and feet, in a tropical climate. Winter never destroys the foliage in this sheltered region. Pleasant streams gurgle through its midst and afford sufficient supplies for irrigation. On the plain the tender green of the young cane, waves in the sun-light like a mass of purest velvet; whilst the palm and the plantain mingle their



MEXICAN FOREST SCENE.

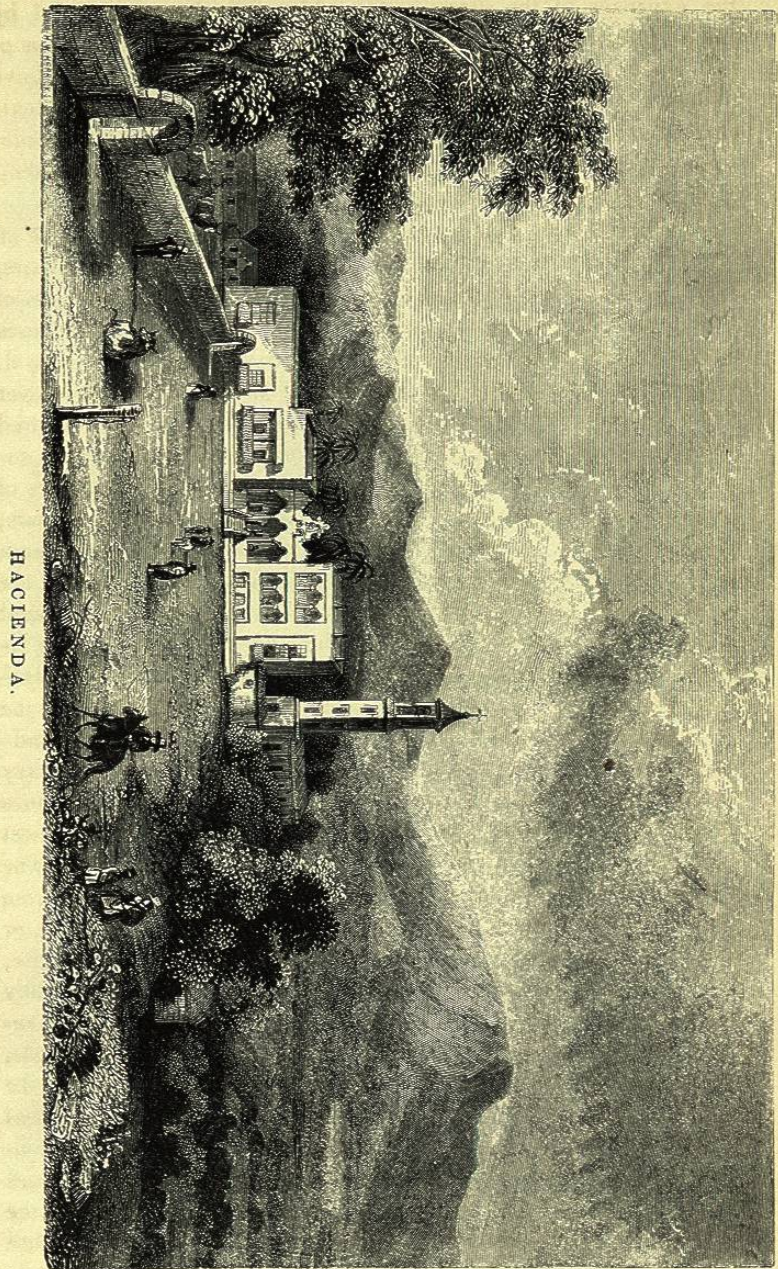
pensile and massive foliage amid the densest groves of oranges, aloes, and forest trees. The valley of Cuernavaca is one of those picturesque regions which are so well calculated to bring back a fanciful beholder to the scenes he has conjured up in youth whilst perusing the story of Paul and Virginia, or the glowing descriptions of the Arabian Nights.

It is in this charming region that some of the opulent citizens of the republic, have succeeded the wealthy Spaniards in the princely domains and *haciendas* of the *tierra caliente*. In the neighborhood of Cuernavaca we find the estates of Temisco, San Gabriel, Trenta Pesos, El Puente, Meacatlan, San Gaspar, San Vicente Chiconcuac, and Atlajomulco. The valley of Cuautla unites with that of Cuernavaca, on the east, and contains, among others, the prominent estates of San Nicolas, Atlihuyan, San Carlos, Acotesalco, Pantitlan, Cocoyöe, Calderon, Casasana, Santa Iñez, Coahuistla, Mapastlan, and Tenestepango.

In the state of Oajaca there are the fine haciendas of Guendolein, Arragon, Chicomastlahuaca and Ayotla, besides smaller plantations; and, in the state of Vera Cruz there are many valuable estates in the neighborhood of Orizaba and Cordova. The last mentioned establishments produce annually from 40,000 to 50,000 arrobas of sugar; whilst those in the valleys of Cuernavaca and Cuautla de Amilpas, (calculated in all, at forty-eight, in number,) yield about 800,000 arrobas of sugar and syrup—besides 50,000 barrels of rum. These products, together with some indigo and coffee, raised in these two last named valleys, swell the value of agriculture in these branches to two millions and a half annually. On the estate of Guendolein, in Oajaca, 40,000 arrobas of sugar were yielded every year, which sold in the federal capital at about \$160,000. At Atlajomulco, in Cuernavaca, 880,000 square yards of land were cultivated in cane, which produced 4,600 cwt. of refined sugar, 7,800 cwt. of molasses, and 300 cwt. of syrup. From the syrup is distilled the common *chinguerito*, or a superior species of beverage known as *aguardiente de cana*. At the estate of Santa Iñez, near Cuautla, 4,000 barrels of this spirit are annually distilled and sold in Mexico at \$32 each, which, with a deduction of eight dollars for transportation and duties, will leave a return for the planter of 24 dollars per barrel. In addition to this production of ardent spirits, the estate produces annually about 40,000 loaves, of twenty-three pounds each, or 920,000 pounds of refined sugar; and here, as elsewhere throughout the planting districts, it is calculated that the molasses, syrup, and in some places, the *aguardiente*, pay all

the expenses of the estate. The chief difficulty encountered by the proprietors, and their *administradors*, is in the worthlessness of the Indian laborers, whose character as agriculturists we have noticed in the section of this work treating of the classes of Mexican society. Three hundred hands are employed at the *hacienda*, who are paid a *per diem* of two and a half or three *reals*, according to their qualifications or work.

The hacienda of Temisco, in the valley of Cuernavaca, is one of the oldest establishments in the republic, and, within a few years, has passed into the possession of its present owners for the sum of \$300,000. The extensive buildings, consisting of a commodious dwelling, constructed in the old Spanish style, and a large chapel, were erected soon after the conquest. The domain extends over eleven leagues of land in length, and three in width. Two hundred and fifty laborers produce yearly about fifty thousand loaves of sugar, of an average weight of 23 pounds. The annual expenses of the farming and management amount to thirty thousand dollars, which are repaid by the molasses, syrup, and spirits, as at Santa Iñez, while, in addition to the crop, about four thousand cattle are raised on the premises. On all these large estates a store is kept by the owner, at which nearly the whole amount of the Indian laborer's wages is received back in the course of the year. The planters, in many parts of the country, are no longer contented with the old system of extracting and preparing sugar; but, notwithstanding the enormous cost of transporting such large masses of heavy machinery, they have introduced all the modern improved engines used in the United States and the West Indies. The profits must be large that will warrant so extravagant an expenditure. The great haciendas disburse, in wages and other current charges, from 800 to 1,200 dollars weekly. The establishment of a *Trapiche*, or all the works required for a sugar estate, is so costly an enterprise, that it is not likely the cultivation of the article will become greatly extended by the opening of new estates in the most productive regions. Labor, as well as engines, will be required for this purpose, and it is quite improbable that the few indolent Indians in the neighborhood will be prevailed on to abandon their life of laziness for the toils of a sugar plantation. Besides this, the present production fully supplies the home market, and although the revenues and profits are extraordinarily tempting, it is doubtful whether the Mexicans are sufficiently enterprising in agriculture to adventure such enormous sums as are necessarily expended before a single cane is planted or a pound of sugar manufactured. As long as the



rate of interest is high, the roads bad, transportation costly and unchanged, and the condition of the country unsettled, these vast and valuable rural districts will, in all likelihood, remain untenanted and unwrought.

Baron Humboldt, whose analytical mind always strives to classify, systematize and *tabularize* his investigations, has endeavored to ascertain and limit the maximum *height* at which the cane may be cultivated; but it is probably true that all such attempts, are altogether visionary, in a country of great inequalities of elevation, shelter and exposure. Many local causes, altogether independent of relative elevation may produce the degree of heat requisite to bring cane to perfection, yet it is generally conceded that the produce of a plantation in the table land would not equal that of an estate near the coast. The valley of Cuautla, for instance, is bounded on the north by the lofty peak of Popocatepetl, against whose *snows* the fresh verdure of the cane, and the graceful branches of the palm are constantly relieved! In an hour or two after leaving the plantation of Santa Iñez, the traveller who passes thence towards the valley of Mexico, finds himself obliged to put on his cloak or *serape*, after having suffered from tropical heat during the preceding day. It might reasonably be supposed that the vicinity of such immense masses of ice and snow would naturally affect the temperature of the adjacent valley; but the frosty peak of Popocatepetl only serves to condense the vapors that drift inland from the sea and to set them free over the low and warm valleys which border its southern base, whilst its broad shoulders protect the plains from the cold blasts of the north wind.

COFFEE.

The soil of Mexico has been found adapted for the cultivation of coffee as well as sugar; but under the old Spanish dominion it never formed one of the articles of export, although it did not interfere with the productions of the mother country. In 1818 and '19 extensive plantations were commenced near Orizaba and Cordova, to which additions have since been frequently made. The plant was likewise introduced into the valleys of Cuernavaca and Cuautla by Antonio Velasco and the *administrador* of the estates of the Duke of Monteleone. The large *hacienda* of Atlatomulco, in the immediate neighborhood of Cuernavaca still pertains to the descendants of Cortéz; and here the experiment of coffee culture has been long and successfully tried. The average produce of each