

his side? In our neighbor's opinion all desirable things are hidden in the *manana*, therefore let us hope that in the *mananas* to come Mexico may find a glorious future for her government and her people.

H. W. S.

Rockford, Ill., November, 1899.

MEXICAN VISTAS.

CHAPTER I.

When we—Ahasuerus and I—made ready for a winter in Mexico, we neglected one important precaution—we were not vaccinated; a mistake which, later, caused me much anguish of spirit. Many a night, as I tossed sleeplessly on my hard pallet while the wicked flea pursued me, I imagined myself in the first stages of the smallpox. I arranged my worldly affairs, disposed of my humble belongings, and in my mind's eye saw myself going home as fast freight. My first bit of advice, then, to the traveler intending to visit Mexico is—be vaccinated.

While temporarily disabled by vaccination it is a wise thing to study Spanish—not the Spanish of Cervantes or of Calderon—but those minor classics as presented by the Meisterschaft or any good Natural Method Primer, for it is very convenient, even if you cannot discuss abstruse subjects in the

Castilian tongue, to be able to check your baggage, order your meals, buy tickets, read the posters, and be ready with the usual forms of courtesy.

There is a difference of opinion as to the best time to visit Mexico. We went in the winter. The Mexicans assured us that we made a mistake. If we had gone in the summer, we should, without doubt, have also made a mistake. But whether in the winter or in the summer, it is well to go by one route and return by another. The ideal way for those who love sea travel is to enter Mexico by land and leave it by water. In such case, however, it is prudent to make some previous arrangement with the War Department, for a certain tourist who could not endure the long overland journey was compelled to wait in Mexico all last summer for the cessation of hostilities between the United States and Spain.

Of course it is well to carry with you a camera; but use it, except for natural scenery, as little as possible, for the Mexicans, who are both proud and sensitive, object to being photographed. It is sometimes possible for a few centavos to obtain a sitting from the children or even from a peon, but it is courteous as well as politic to defer to the prejudices of the people. Above all, do not forget your smoked glasses, and if you have plenty of trunk room it is wise to take a pillow, for the Mex-

ican pillows, both in form and substance, are like bricks.

The value of the Mexican coins is soon learned. The centavo—a copper coin—is the Mexican cent; the media is six and one-half centavos; the real, twelve and one-half centavos; dos real, twenty-five, and cuatro real, fifty centavos. The big silver peso, or Mexican dollar, is worth—according to the market value of silver—anywhere from forty-two to forty-seven cents of our money. The traveler in Mexico has ample opportunity to study the advantages and disadvantages of the Bryan creed. When he crosses the border he will be for once in his life rich. His dollars will be doubled, and the wear of his pockets as well.

One peculiar thing in Mexico is the fact that each town has practically the monopoly of its special line of goods. You will be sorry if you do not buy drawn-work in Aguas Calientes and opals in Querétaro. The dulces of Celaya, which taste like condensed milk, are better in their native place than elsewhere. Leon is the saddle town, but while acknowledging the superior beauty of Leon saddles I must insist that the carved leather belts, card cases, and bags made in Mexico are inferior to those made in California, which are almost as cheap, are certainly less clumsy, and, most important of all, have no odor, and consequently do not

require antiseptic treatment. Of course the shops in the City of Mexico handle, to some extent, all Mexican goods, but the prices are higher and the assortment less varied than in the towns where they form a staple.

The question what shall we eat and wherewithal shall we be clothed in Mexico is easily answered. By all means wear your most disreputable garments and eat what is set before you, giving thanks that it is no worse. But the question of drink is an ever-recurring problem. The American constitution, unlike that of the Latin races, requires water. This weakness, in a land where the water supply and the sewage have a way of getting mixed, and where all the springs and fountains are used as public laundries, is, to say the least, unfortunate. The natives drink pulque made from the century plant, and great fields of this plant—a species of agave—cover the country. Indeed, a Mexican pulque plantation is more valuable than an American distillery or brewery, and, perhaps, does more harm than either. The blossom stalk of the plant, just before blooming, is cut down, and the sap that flows from it is gathered by men and boys, who insert a gourd into the cup-like cavity at the base of the stem, and placing their lips to one end of it draw the liquid into the gourd by suction. The gourd is then emptied into a sheep or pig skin

which imparts a rich flavor to the sap. After one day's fermentation the liquid becomes pulque—a sweet, stringy, nauseous drink. The second day, however, it tastes like koumiss, and is quite appetizing; but in either stage, if enough is taken, it produces an intoxication similar to that of morphine. Nevertheless the wise ones say that pulque should be used by the traveler, both on account of its anti-bilious qualities, which adapt it specially to the climate, and as a specific for kidney trouble. The milky draught did not tempt us, however, so we drank Apollinaris and siphon water (which we suspected were manufactured and charged at the nearest fountain), sour Spanish wine and yeasty beer. All the time in the dry air of the high altitudes, we perished of thirst and dreamed continually of the hydrants and the pure water of home.

Personally I should like the Mexican better if he spent more money on baths and less on cigarettes; but doubtless the Mexican would find me more attractive if I spent less on baths and more on rouge and face powder. It all depends upon one's point of view, and the Mexican has reason to think very poorly of water in any form. We considered ourselves fortunate that, upon our arrival in the Capital, we were able to secure rooms with a bath; but the water had so fetid an odor that while bathing it was necessary to tie a handkerchief over the

nose, so we were in the end driven to patronize the baths of Pane y Osorio on the Paseo. This water, which comes from natural springs, is sweet and clear, the tubs are clean, and the service all that could be desired. To an American, whose thoughts are constantly directed to the subjects of pure water and proper sewerage, the apathy of the Spanish-American in this respect is incomprehensible. The great sewerage canal which has been so long in progress will, if ever finished, be a boon to the City of Mexico; for with proper sanitary conditions the Capital will be one of the healthiest cities in the world.

Do not expect a home diet in Mexico. The Mexican bread, which is raised with pulque instead of yeast, is generally sour and sad-colored, while, on account of the lack of refineries in the country, the sugar, though sweet and pure, is very dark and coarse. Tea as served by the natives is a singular brew, and the coffee, which has the rich flavor of furniture polish with an after tang of liniment, is about as bad as can be conceived. At many of the hotels and restaurants the extract of coffee is served with hot goat's milk, and, according to the testimony of the wise ones, this long-suffering animal also furnishes the lamb and mutton chop of the country.

Nevertheless Mexican cooking, when good, like

French cooking, which it much resembles, is delicious. (When I speak of French cooking I mean real French cooking—not that horrible conglomeration of sauces which many Americans call French cooking.) To be sure we did not care for those heavy little pancakes, the tortillas, nor for *chile con carne*—beef with red peppers—but we liked the frijoles, and the soups were perfect. The salads too—of chicory, curly lettuce, creamy alligator pear, tomatoes, and little shreds of onion—are very appetizing. The fruits are sickeningly sweet, which just suits the Mexican, who has a sweet tooth. The granaditas are little pomegranates inclosing a most delicious pulp. The zapotes, which are yellow and green inside, and of a cheesy texture, look on the outside like baked potatoes, resembling in this respect the Cuban sappodilla, albeit they lack the beautiful salmon-pink heart which makes the Cuban fruit so enticing. The mangoes and chiramoyas, although insipid to the stranger, are favorite fruits with the Mexicans, who also delight in the melons, which are really very good, although coarser than ours. We had in the tropics a curious fruit called papaya. It is the melon from which vegetable pepsin is made. It looks tempting and tastes like what it is—a medicine.

At first glance the Mexican house seems very charming and peculiarly adapted to a warm climate;



HOME OF AN ARISTOCRAT, MEXICO.

but the patio, or court, is open to the stars, and the temperature of the table-lands of Mexico does not demand such a sweep of air. Indeed the climate of the plateau is much like that of southern California—perhaps a little milder—and one who has been in California in the winter will realize how uncomfortable is the cold weather in a country which has not a single fireplace or chimney. In fact, although dressed more warmly than at home, we often shiv-

ered in our furs. Nor is the patio better adapted to the warm lands near the coasts, especially as the Mexicans use the court for a stable. One sultry morning, as we were passing a beautiful house in one of the cities of the *tierra caliente*—a house which we had often eulogized as the typically elegant Spanish home—a troupe of donkeys came plunging through the open door of the court. We looked in and saw the paved patio covered with straw, refuse, and the filth of a barnyard, while the fragrance of all the blooming flowers could not conceal the fact that thirty donkeys had spent the night in the court. Indeed, my susceptible nose too often apprised me of the fact that somewhere behind all the vases and bronze balustrades of the picturesque houses dwelt, in the fullest intimacy of family life, the cattle and the horses. The floor of the patio and of the rooms opening off from it are paved with brick, and as they are seldom swept—especially if cared for by a woman—they are ruinous to gowns and petticoats. The beds are, almost without exception, snowy clean, and the sheets and pillow-cases are starched—not at all a bad idea in a warm climate. Americans usually complain of the hard beds, and we ourselves bore upon our persons impressions of all the different patterns of spring-beds used in the republic. It is a cheap and novel method of tattooing.

The hotels in Mexico, which are upon the European plan, aim to furnish meals more or less palatable, and there are besides, in the vicinity of the inns, good restaurants. When one learns the ways of the cafés one can be very comfortable, and if the sojourner in the hotel does not make the fatal mistake of giving too large a fee to the servants—who are accustomed to receive a few pennies only—he is tolerably sure of good service. In most of the hotels the rooms are cared for by chambermen instead of maids. They are generally neat, careful and obliging. It is better to give the soiled-linen to the chamberman, who has usually in his employ some person who will wash it better than it can be done in the eminently unsatisfactory steam laundries. The linen will come back in a sieve-like condition from being rubbed upon the stones, but it will be delightfully clean and fresh.

The railroads of Mexico, like those of Europe, use first, second, and third class cars. Even the first-class cars are, however, none too comfortable, and the third-class are much poorer than the third-class cars abroad. Except on special or excursion trains no Pullman cars are seen south of the City of Mexico. The stage-coaches also sell first and second class fares, but although the accommodations seem about the same for both class passengers, it is better to buy first-class tickets—unless you wish

to get out and push when the stage sticks in a slough.

There are no electric roads in Mexico. The street cars are drawn by cheerful little mules which gallop along to the music of tooting horns and cracking whips. The yellow cars are first-class, the green cars second-class. The streets of the cities change their names every block, or if they retain the name, they number—as, San Carlos 1, San Carlos 2. This peculiarity of nomenclature is particularly bewildering to strangers, and one is obliged to watch the trails lest he should be lost.

On the whole, however, in spite of all inconveniences and annoyances, if one is strong, cheerful and a good traveler, I know of no more delightful and profitable trip than a journey through Mexico, especially if one can give time to go into the mountains or into some of the lost corners of the country which are not generally visited by the tourist. Nor need one fear to venture in remote places, for life and property are safer in Mexico than in some parts of our own land. The arm of the law is long and sure, and robbers and murderers are given a short shrift. The trial is held over the remains of the executed criminals, and the jury are apt to bring in a verdict of guilty without leaving their seats. Pick-pockets are said to abound in the City of Mexico, but we had no personal experience of them; indeed,

except in Vera Cruz, we found the people almost invariably honest, and although we often wearied of dirt and foul smells we liked both Mexico and the Mexicans. They are an extremely courteous people. The raggedest peon lifts his hat in salutation to his shabby comrade, whom he invariably addresses as "Señor." The strain of Indian blood in the nation gives it both gravity and dignity, and through the influence of education our neighbors are fast becoming enlightened. The compulsory education law is strictly enforced, and it is a common thing to see the policeman haling some truant off to school. The schools, which are supported by the government, are in many respects equal to our own.

While I will not deny that the charms of Mexico are greater in the retrospect than in the experience, still there is always for the traveler some interesting and novel spectacle. To stroll along the deceptively clean streets, to chat with the picturesque old women who are selling lottery tickets, to gaze upon the gay cavaliers with their peaked hats, spindle legs, and short-jacketed bodies—whom Palmer Cox must surely have taken for his model of the Brownies—is diversion enough. Then, too, there are long stretches of battlemented or stuccoed walls bearing upon their sun-flecked surfaces the inscription "No Fijar. Annuncios" (Post no bills); there are glimpses of flower-decked



A WAYSIDE SHRINE.

courts and dusky Cathedral interiors; and when one is weary, there is always the tiny zocalo or plaza near the Cathedral, and the embowered aisles of the great city parks, where one may sit among the roses, and watch the changing throng. When all these delights pall upon the traveler, he can take long excursions by the mule-cars to quaint, ill-smelling towns, whose half-clothed inhabitants will greet him, Mexican fashion, with outstretched, open hand. To the citizen of the United States, who has no preconceived prejudices, this Spanish-American world is a new and fascinating one.

These neighbors of ours, who speak a different language, think different thoughts, and live different lives from our own, are well worthy our serious consideration, our sympathy, and our friendship.

CHAPTER II.

There is no record of the people who occupied Mexico before the coming of the Toltecs. We know, however, that the Toltecs, a wandering tribe from the north, invaded the country about the year 650, and that at the time the Goths and Lombards were overrunning southern Europe they had already established in Mexico a mighty empire. These newcomers found the city of Tula already a flourishing town. They rebuilt it, gave to it its present name, and made it their capital. Mitla, which was named for the great King Mitl, was one of their sacred cities, and at Teotihuacan, another of their holy places, they built the famous Pyramids of the Sun and the Moon.

From the remains now found in Mexico, it is evident that the Toltecs were a civilized people. They excelled in the arts and sciences of those days, as well as in architecture. Strangely enough these far-away people were the first to introduce the republican form of government into Mexico. The Toltec kings were allowed to reign for fifty-two