

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.

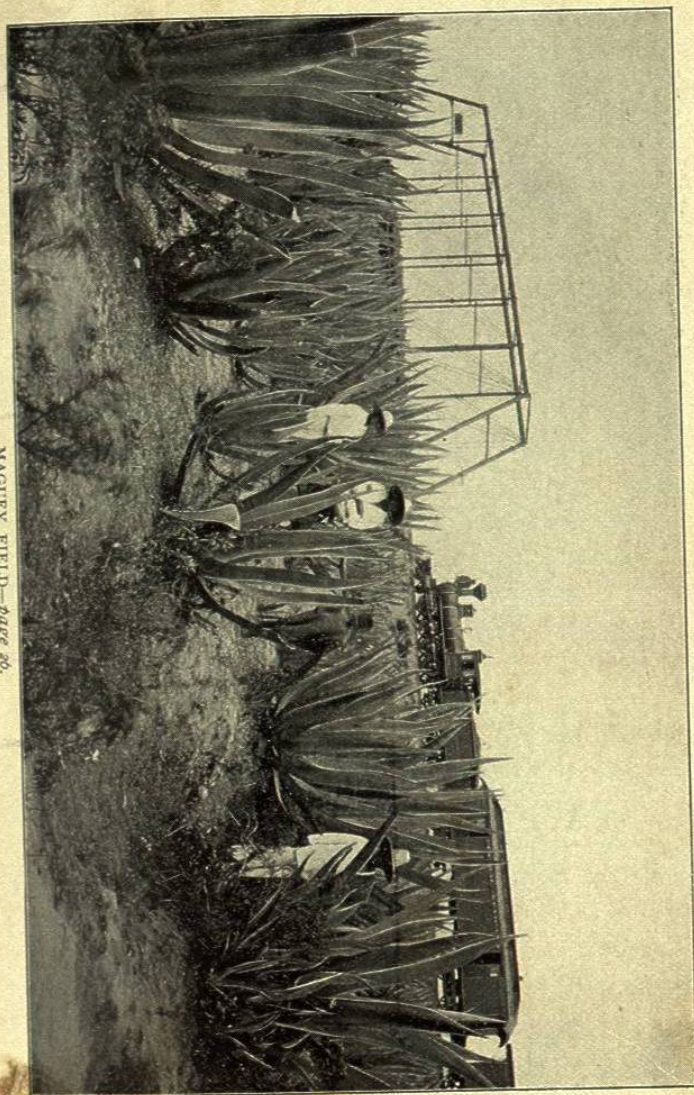
There is no record of the people who occupied Mexico before the coming of the Toltecs. We know, however, that the Toltecs, a wandering tribe from the north, invaded the country about the year 650, and that at the time the Goths and Lombards were overrunning southern Europe they had already established 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



years, but if a sovereign died before the expiration of that time the law provided that a republic should replace the monarchy for the unexpired term. In acknowledgment of his wise reign Mitl, the good king, had his official life prolonged seven years, and after his death his widow was allowed to fill out the unexpired term. She was succeeded by her son, a dissolute prince, under whose sway the Toltec supremacy rapidly declined. Internal dissensions contributed to sap the life of the nation, and before William the Conqueror fought the battle of Hastings, the Toltecs were scattered. More than half a century later Mexico was again invaded by a northern horde, the Chichimecs, a tribe of barbarous hunters, dressed in the skins of wild beasts and living in caves. The Chichimecs in time gave way to the Aztecs, who also came from the north, and sweeping down upon the great central plateau, conquered the country.

The Aztecs founded a powerful empire, which lasted two hundred years, or until the coming of the Spaniards. This empire Cortés destroyed, and governed the conquered nation in the name of Spain. After his death, the government was administered by a succession of Spanish viceroys, sixty-four in number. The last of these viceroys bore the extremely un-Spanish name of John O'Donahue, spelt in Spanish, Juan O'Donaju.



MAGUEY FIELD—page 20.



In the year 1810 Hidalgo, a parish priest, inaugurated a rebellion against Spain. The following year Hidalgo and his three generals were captured and executed; but the cause for which these brave men died did not die with them, and the struggle continued until 1821, when Spain acknowledged the independence of Mexico.

The first president of the Mexican republic was Augustin Iturbide. Soon after his election a move was made to change the republic into a monarchy, and the crown was offered to a royal prince of Spain. This offered kingdom, which, so far as territory was concerned, was one of the greatest in the world, was refused, and in 1822 Iturbide foolishly allowed himself to be proclaimed emperor. The new emperor and his wife were solemnly crowned in the great Cathedral of Mexico. But Iturbide was soon obliged to flee for his life, and in 1824 he was captured and shot. The other Mexican emperor, Maximilian of Austria, was, in 1867, also executed by the decree of the Mexican republic. Between these two hapless emperors there were more than fifty presidents and dictators, and three hundred revolutions.

As a result of the war with the United States, occasioned by a dispute over a small strip of land between the rivers Nueces and Rio Grande, Mexico was obliged in 1848 to cede half of her immense



territory to this country, and the United States afterward bought from her the southern half of Arizona. In spite of this shrinkage in real estate Mexico has still on her hands more land than she, with her present methods, can care for.

After the execution of the Emperor Maximilian at Querétaro, President Benito Juárez, a full-blooded Indian, ruled Mexico wisely and firmly. He died in 1871. In 1876 General Porfirio Díaz headed a successful revolution, and was elected to the presidential chair. Since then Díaz, who is a patriot and a wise ruler, has been many times re-elected president.

President Juárez, upon his election, immediately gave his attention to the enforcement of the laws against brigandism. Upon the principle that "it takes a thief to catch a thief," the shrewdest criminals were, upon conviction, compelled to serve on the police force. This plan, which invested criminals with a sense of responsibility in the government of the country, worked finely. Brigands taken prisoners were compelled to serve against brigands, a scheme which was speedily fatal to the brigandism fostered by long periods of disorder occasioned by the wars. By edict Juárez also freed the government from the power and the exactions of the church. For a time—although Mexico is a Catholic country—no priests were allowed to walk



HOME OF A PEON.

the streets in priestly robes, the ringing of the church bells was regulated by law, and the rich decorations of the churches themselves were confiscated for the good of the republic. Unfortunately, there now seems to be a growing revulsion of popular feeling. The long black mantle worn by the priest too often fails to conceal the vestment beneath, the bells are rapidly becoming once more a nuisance, and the church bids fair to attain



its old-time wealth and power. Republican institutions in Mexico have more to fear from this silent, inward force than from any other foe.

The people of Mexico are of three races. The white race, which comprises about twenty per cent of the population, is of Spanish or European extraction. The people of this race generally hold the government offices, and consider themselves the superior class; although social standing, as in Cuba, does not depend upon the race, and a dark skin is no shame in Mexico, where the question of caste is determined, not by color, but by social position, wealth, or culture. Juarez, the most beloved of all the presidents, was a full-blooded Indian, and Diaz himself is a half-breed. The Mexican creoles or mestizos, who comprise nearly one-half of the population, are the descendants of the Spaniard and the Indian. They are the working people of the country—the skilled artisans, the mechanics, the soldiers and the higher servants. As would naturally be expected in a conquered nation, the real owner of the soil, the Indian, or the half-breed in whose veins the Indian blood predominates, is the lowest of all the classes. He is the so-called peon, the man who does the hard work on the haciendas, the toiler, the drudge. The peon, though not really a slave, because of his attachment to the land, often remains for generations

on the same estate, and unfortunately this sentiment of loyalty to the sod, combined with the bonds of debt which eternally fetter him, lead to what is practically a life-long enslavement. When the peon drifts into the city he soon becomes a degenerate; and it is unjust to judge the race from the worthless types seen in the large towns. The mountain Indian is a much finer man than the Indian of the plain or the hamlet, although I fear that he has, with the Indian virtues, the Indian imperfections—a lack of ambition and a tendency to drunkenness.



WOMAN MAKING TORTILLAS.