

mines, its cotton factory, and its aqueduct. I do not know just where the opal mines are; indeed I could not hear of any one who had ever seen an opal mine, or who knew just how, or where, the stones were obtained. It is sufficient for the non-elect to know that there are opal mines somewhere near Querétaro, and that, for a consideration, more or less satisfactory to the purchaser, the gems can be bought by the traveler. Buying Mexican opals is, however, like adopting a baby; it may turn out well and it may not. The only safeguard for an intending purchaser of the precious stones is to engage as traveling companion an expert lapidary.

The Hercules cotton factory in the suburbs of Querétaro is the largest in Mexico. All around the factory, in a climate wonderfully adapted to the raising of cotton, lie waste lands; yet more than half of the cotton used in the manufacture of the fabrics comes from the United States. The aqueduct, whose graceful outlines can be seen long after passing the town, was presented to Querétaro by a public-spirited citizen. It brings water from the mountains several miles away and distributes it to all the public fountains and reservoirs. It is unfortunate that the generous gift is so little appreciated by the people and the city government; certainly Querétaro's inhabitants are dirty and its streets are by no means clean.

CHAPTER VIII.

One of the interesting sights between Querétaro and the Capital is the great drainage canal of Nochistongo. It is called the drainage canal that does not drain, but it has in its time drained the Mexicans of both life and money. It was begun two hundred years ago. The first few years of the enterprise the lives of 75,000 Indians were sacrificed; but in spite of this price paid in blood and brawn, within twenty years of the beginning of the canal, the City of Mexico was overflowed to the depth of three feet, and the streets were passable only in boats. This flood lasted five years, and the Spanish king ordered the city to be removed to the higher ground near Chapultepec, but the order was never carried out. At the present day the canal, one of the greatest engineering works in the world, an enterprise which was begun by the celebration of masses, and with the blessing of the Church, is one of the magnificent ruins of Mexico.

It was not yet daylight when we crossed the double rim of the valley of Mexico, and saw before