

CHAPTER XIV.

If we take at the Plaza the mule-car marked Atzacapotzalco—please pronounce slowly and distinctly—and follow the route along the main causeway, past Alvarado's Leap, the Church of the Martyrs, the Pantheon, and the little Church of San Cosme (upon the steeple of which the young Lieutenant, U. S. Grant, during the siege of Mexico planted a cannon), we will come to the Garita Gate. Just beyond this gate is Popotla, formerly a great broom market, now famed for the "tree of noche triste," under whose spreading branches Cortés sat down that fateful night and wept. The tree is in its decadence. Tradition has it that an infuriated Spaniard-hater once upon a time attempted to burn it, but the "higher criticism" of modern history insists that the tree was burned by a party of tourists who had the irreverence to boil their tea kettle in the sacred trunk. At all events the tree is badly scorched, and so mutilated by relic-hunters that the government has found it

necessary to protect it by a high iron railing. Just beyond Popotla is the old town of Tlacopan, now called Tacuba, the residence of the Archbishop of Mexico.

A short ride brings us to Atzacapotzalco, which was, in the days of Montezuma, the quarters of the famous goldsmiths, whose cunning work so enchanted the Spaniards. It was also the Aztec slave market, where the captives taken in war who were not reserved for sacrifice were made profitable merchandise. The present inhabitants of Atzacapotzalco have still the air of being slaves—only they buy and sell their master, the tyrant pulque. It is amusing to sit in the plaza and watch the people in the market place selling fruit, vegetables, cotton cloth, flowers, and pottery. The word Atzacapotzalco signifies "ant hill," and one is struck by the ant-like efforts, in the wrong direction, of many of these poor people. Sometimes the little zocalo is a veritable battle-ground. We saw one day a tall, fine-looking policeman dragging a drunken man to jail. The officer was followed by a horde of howling women who trod on his heels, stood in his path, and ever and anon snatched his prisoner from him. But not the slightest change passed over the policeman's face. He only seized the prisoner more firmly in his grasp, and with the air of brushing away annoying insects, held on his

course, and the whole struggling, vituperating, rabble at last disappeared under the arch of the prison door. Near Atzacapotzalco is the spring in which Guatemotzin is supposed to have hidden his treasure from the rapacity of the Spaniards. Over the buried treasure the spirit of the Indian maiden Marina is said still to stand guard. This patient spirit divides her time, spending part of the day at Chapultepec and part at Atzacapotzalco. Poor Marina is decidedly an overworked ghost.

Atzacapotzalco is the terminus of the street-car line from the City of Mexico. Another line to Tlanepantla starts from the plaza and if the traveler does not object to dust—which, however, is not excessive for Mexico—he will find the ride to that quaint little city an enchanting one. Along the road there are curious moldy churches, crumbling walls, old monasteries and convents, orchards of strange fruits, and, stretching far and wide, great fields of maguey. If pulque is good anywhere it is good at Tlanepantla; in fact, we liked the Tlanepantla brand better even than the far-famed brand of Apam. Tlanepantla is noted for its bull-fights, which are said to be festivals of merriment, rather than festivals of murder, and for the sake of the tortured animals of the country I hope the report is true. The oldest church in the town was built in 1583. The view of the volcanoes from the

ancient city—especially in the afternoon—is one of the finest effects in the valley of Mexico.

As we entered the house of a friend in Tlanepantla one day, we found the sunny court filled with fettered men and armed soldiers. Our consternation was great, and we expected to see our friends brought out immediately for execution on the charge of high treason. Our hostess explained, however, that it was merely the chain-gang delivering wood bought that day at the market. What a field of speculation such a system of marketing opens up, to be sure. The delivery of butter by brigands, of poultry by parricides, and of furniture by felons must be a thrilling experience.

Another interesting trip is by horse-car from the City of Mexico to Tacubaya. Tacubaya lies on high ground, and during the great flood—which lasted from 1629 to 1634—it was decided to move the Capital thither, but when the flood subsided the plan was unfortunately abandoned. Tacubaya is more like one of our suburban towns than most suburban towns in Mexico, and there are in the quiet city really handsome houses, and gardens that answer to the exalted American idea of them. The city is called the Monte Carlo of Mexico, but we saw no gambling—perhaps because we did not know where to look for it. At all events the play is not so public as in other Mexican towns, where

it is constantly before the eyes of the blindest innocence.

At Tacubaya we were astonished to see the energetic car-mules whisked off, and their place filled by a dummy engine which carried us over to Mixcoac, and thence to San Angel. We had on the road another beautiful picture of the valley of Mexico, which is certainly a basinful of fairy land. Mixcoac is a market-garden town and fruit and flowers are plenty and cheap. We strolled around San Angel and sat for awhile in the little plaza. A school for *niñas* (young girls) was in an old convent building near us, and we talked some time with the pupils, who were having recess in the wide corridors. These Mexican girls were very modest and pretty, and needed only a few exercises in physical culture to be charming. San Angel is another residence town for rich people doing business in the city. It has an old church, the interior of which was scaffolded to the dome for regilding, repairs, and frescoing. The barber-shop style of decoration will soon ruin all these fine old Mexican churches.

The San Mateo horse-car line takes us to the town of Coacān, whither, after the capture of the Capital, Cortés and his captains retired to celebrate their victory. These martial missionaries and original expansionists were not too godly to turn

their banquet into a drinking bout so scandalous that the good priest and confessor of the army not only put them under rigid penance, but afterward preached a sermon denouncing their misdeeds. In Coyacan Cortés lived with Marina while rebuilding



CORTÉS' PALACE, COYACAN.

the City of Mexico, and here, in a little garden attached to his house, he is said to have drowned his wife, who to his displeasure had followed his rising sun to Mexico from her humble home in Cuba. Tradition has it that her body lies over yonder in the little graveyard. Prescott, however, defends Cortés from this accusation of murder, explaining that "the high altitude made the climate very unhealthy for Donna Catalina, so that she died in three months after her arrival in the country, an event very much to the advantage of Cortés." Doubtless "high altitude" had a hand in the poor Donna's taking off, for she was of humble birth and tastes, and the Conqueror desired a noble wife. Still, I am inclined to believe that a busy man like

Cortés did not spend his life in wife-murder, as the guide-books would have us believe.

A short distance from San Angel, near San Mateo, is the battlefield of Churubusco, where there is an old church and monastery. In the church are some very curious wooden figures of the patron and patroness, Don Diego del Castillo, and Donna Helena de la Cruz. In front of the monastery is a monument to the Mexicans who fell in the battle. Three weeks after the battle of Churubusco the Americans, marching on to Chapultepec, gained the victories of Casa Mata, and Molino del Rey. Upon the capture of the powder magazine, from which the latter place takes its name, the young Lieutenant, U. S. Grant, was the first to enter the fort. Five days later the army scaled the heights of Chapultepec, which seemingly a dozen men might have held in the face of a much more numerous foe, and the City of Mexico lay in the hollow of their hand.

There are so many interesting pilgrimages in Mexico that a tourist should really take his household belongings—above all, his cook—camp in a town until the neighboring country has been explored, and then move on. As most of us, however, have limitations, both of time and money, it is well to choose the places to visit. An interesting town is Tlalpam, the former capital of the State

of Mexico. It is a flower town, but it has also cotton, woolen, and paper mills. Long ago a Whitsuntide gambling fête was yearly held here, which became so outrageous that the government suppressed it.

Texcoco is another ancient Aztec city whose inhabitants, together with the Tlascalans, became allies of the Spaniards and thus made the Mexicans slaves of the Castilians. This town, from which Cortés launched the brigantines with which he captured the City of Mexico, was the royal residence of that poet, warrior, and prince, the great Nezahualcoyotl, who built a temple to the "Unknown God, the Cause of Causes." No image was allowed in this temple, and its altars were never stained with human sacrifice; the only offerings were of flowers, gums, and sweet spices. The son and successor of Nezahualcoyotl was Nezahualpilli, a man of Roman virtues and austerities. Nezahualpilli's son fell in love with a lady of the court, the Lady of Tula, with whom he carried on a poetical correspondence, which the historian says was a capital offense. We are left in the dark as to whether the crime lay in the existence of the correspondence, or whether the offense was in the fact that the correspondence was in verse. At all events the unfortunate prince paid for the indiscretion with his life. Although the king steeled his heart

against the voice of nature, and allowed the cruel sentence to be carried out, he shut himself up in his own palace for months, and commanded the windows of his son's rooms to be walled up so that no one might ever again look from them. This stern monarch, severe in all things, once put to death a judge for taking a bribe, and a magistrate for deciding a suit in his own house.

In the days of the great Nezahualcoyotl a league was formed between the three powers—Texcoco, Mexico, and the little kingdom of Tlacopan. In this coalition Texcoco may be said to have played the part of Athens, Mexico of Rome, while Tlacopan was the silent and humble member. The Texcocan prince was naturally, by the dignity of his character as well as by the superiority of his code of laws and general government, the head of the league. But at the time of the coming of Cortés the Aztec prince, Montezuma, had extended his power and possessions to the decided disadvantage of his neighbor, whose territory he had seized, and whose supremacy he had arrogated to himself. Nezahualpilli, depressed and humbled by the aggressions of his faithless colleague, soon died, and a contest between his two sons for the throne ensued. The claims of the elder were supported by Montezuma, who by this decision incurred the

hatred of the younger son Ixtlilxochitl, a hatred which caused the young prince to declare himself an ally of the Spaniard.

As before stated, it was from Texcoco that Cortés



GARDENS OF LA BORDA, CUERNAVACA.

started on his second and successful expedition against the City of Mexico. Here too he dwelt for a season, when in disgrace with his Spanish sovereign, and here, for a time, his bones lay buried.

The Texcoco of the present day is a pretty little town with a plaza containing some statuary, the "laughing hill"—a favorite resort of Nezahualcoyotl, and a stone basin called "Montezuma's Bath."

CHAPTER XV.

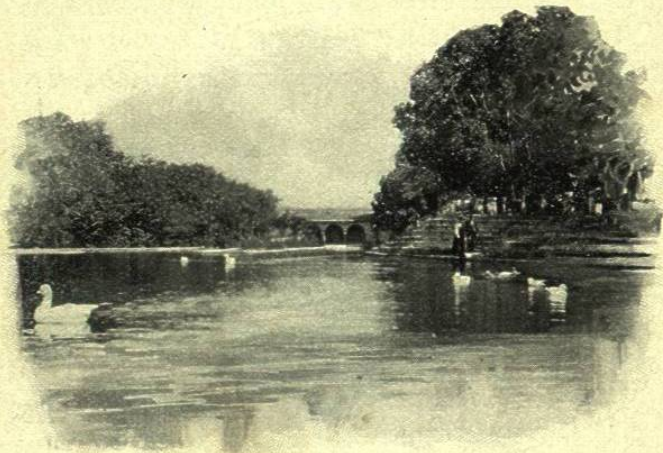
The hot morning we left Mexico for Cuernavaca we were delighted to find ourselves in a clean, bright, American car, which from comparison with the Mexican cars seemed a veritable palace. Of course in this criticism of the Mexican coaches I do not include those of the through trains north of the City of Mexico, which all carry Pullman cars.

The line to Cuernavaca—"the battle route"—passes the fields of Casa Mata, Molino del Rey, Padierna—where there is a monument to the United States' soldiers—and Contreras, while within a short distance can be seen the field of Cherubusco. After leaving Contreras the road constantly climbs, giving at every turn magnificent views of the valley of Mexico, with its seven shining lakes, its white volcanoes, its castle-crowned hill of Chapultepec, and the green villages dotting the plain. The route passes for a long distance through the desolate lava waste of the extinct vol-

cano Ajusco—thrown up in an eruption sometime during the last century—and at El Guarda, an old outpost, the elevation is 10,000 feet above the sea. Just beyond La Cima—the highest point on the route—the road begins to descend, and soon after we pass the Cross of the Marquis, the ancient boundary of Cortés' grant in this valley. The forest of Huitzilac was, a generation ago, the favorite haunt of brigands.

For nearly two hours before reaching Cuernavaca the city lies at the traveler's feet, every turn upon the mountain side bringing him a little nearer to the enchanted land. From the vegetation of the temperate zone we look down on a little bit of tropical still life, and we realize the marvels of the Mexican climate which piles the temperature and the products of one zone upon those of another. It is well to remember that it is better to visit Cuernavaca early in the season, for we found the March weather in that delightful city a little oppressive. It is only fair to add, however, that we met there invalids who did not agree with us, but who found in the altitude of 5,000 feet and the dry warm air a cure for their ills. The town is picturesquely situated on a tongue of high land, cut on each side by deep barrancas or cañons. From these barrancas the country slopes gently down to the hot coast lands.

The people who live in Cuernavaca are never weary of sounding its praises. Said an American resident to me: "I lived in California; I froze in winter and roasted in summer. I tried Florida, and the fleas devoured me alive; here in Cuerna-



LAKE IN GARDENS OF LA BORDA,

vaca a flea is unknown." As about a dozen fleas were at that very moment lurching upon my person I did not accept her statement with the enthusiasm she expected. Nevertheless I am too old a traveler to be prejudiced by such little discrepancies, and am willing to admit that Cuernavaca is in most respects ideal, and that the water is beyond criticism.

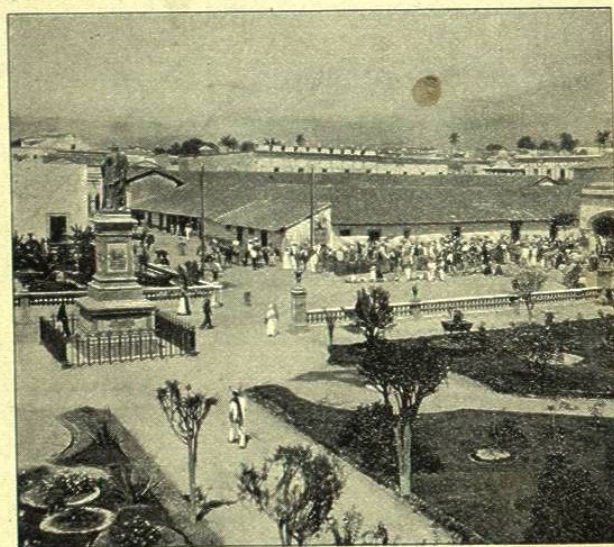
The gardens of La Borda are a delightful retreat from the heat of the morning hours. These gardens, which were laid out in the last century by Joseph La Borda, a Frenchman who made a fortune in the silver mines, cost a million dollars. They are an imitation of the stiff architectural style of the gardens of Versailles, but the lavish tropical vegetation does its best to drape and soften the harsher features. There are stretches of cement walks bordered with vases of blooming plants, stone balustrades overhung with tropical fruits and flowers, and artificial lakes with wide sweeping steps leading down to the brink. Here in these fragrant aisles the proud and passionate Carlotta ate out her heart in solitude, while Maximilian dallied with a Mexican mistress in his pretty summer house three miles away. To the average woman, and, I sincerely hope, to the average man, what a conundrum is Maximilian. He could die like a hero, but he could not live a pure and loyal life; he could give up existence for what he called his "faith," but he could not give up one ignoble desire for the fond heart which his misfortunes drove to madness.

In Cuernavaca is the old palace of Cortés, still the handsomest building in town. Here, under the title of Marquis of the Valley, the Conqueror, when disgusted with his treatment by the Audience, retired, and spent a few quiet years in the cultivation

of his vast estates. He introduced from Cuba the sugar-cane, and gave his attention to sheep-raising and the cultivation of the silk-worm. In one of the rooms of the palace Cortés is said to have murdered a wife; but although he had several Indian mistresses he had only two wives, and the second one outlived him. In regard to this accusation, therefore, I think we must bring in the verdict not guilty. In this palace lived the beloved second wife of Cortés, the beautiful Donna Juana, to whom he gave as a marriage gift the five finest emeralds in the world. It was an unfortunate gift for the ardent lover, for the queen of Charles V. coveted the jewels, and the imprudent marriage-offering doubtless affected the later fortunes of the Great Captain. Poor Donna Juana had an anxious and lonely time of it during the long absences of her restless mate, and it was with a sad heart that she saw him embark with her little son for his last disastrous voyage to Spain. Cortés, like Columbus, was fated to know the bitterness of unappreciated services. Charles V. refused to give audience to his complaint, and the proud old man was driven to supplications most touching from one of Cortés' character. "Who is that?" queried the Emperor on one occasion when Cortés endeavored to press into his presence. "One who has given you more kingdoms than you had towns before," was

the stern reply. After seven years of waiting upon the favor of a faithless monarch the broken-hearted old man died at Seville, and the Mexicans were avenged.

In front of the palace of Cortés is one of the most picturesque market places in Mexico. The little



MARKET PLACE, CUERNAVACA.

zocalo at the sides of the palace entrance has a velvety sward, and realizes the American idea of a park. The pansies grown there are the largest I have ever seen. Immediately in front of the palace is the statue of one of the former governors of the

State—a keen-eyed, war-visaged, one-armed soldier. Water is abundant in Cuernavaca, and the tinkle of the falling streams is heard along the streets bordered by high walls which conceal the dense growth of tropical orchards.

The evenings at Cuernavaca are magical. As the twilight gathers, the Mexicans, like the Jews, seek the housetop. There, on the flat roof, under the shadow of the grim Cathedral bearing in its tower the old clock presented by Charles V. to Cortés, and looking down upon the narrow streets where the great Captain and his cavaliers had so often ridden on their ruthless way, we saw the sun go down. We saw the light die on the breast of the "sleeping woman," Ixtaccihuatl, and the red flush fade slowly from the cheek of her watching lover, Popocatepetl. Then the western sky broke up into drifting fleeces of crimson and gold, the fires of the charcoal burners blinked from the hill-sides, the deep bell boomed from the Cathedral tower, the voices of the street, the bleat of the goats and the tinkle of the cow bells came faintly through the soft air, and all at once we were up, up, up, at the foot of the stars. From these enchanted heights the white-jacketed mozo recalled us, and in a languid dream we descended the long flights of stairs, crossed the dim, flower-scented court, and

ate our frugal supper by the light of a smoky kerosene lamp.

There are beautiful rides around Cuernavaca and the services of a confidential and congenial little donkey can be procured for a small sum. There are also, for those who do not mind rough roads, picturesque drives of a few miles to waterfalls, caves, lakes and ruined temples. The delights of the landscape are inexhaustible. Add to this an almost perfect winter climate, an altitude not too high for active exercise, and comfortable hotels— the Alarcon is an American house—and you have all the things essential to the comfort and happiness of a traveler.