

CHAPTER XXIV.

We looked our last upon the Capital one hot afternoon and climbed the mountains in the trail of the old brigands, to where Toluca sits in the shadow of her dead volcano. Along the road were caves hollowed in the mountain sides to which the Indians, during the rainy season, retreat from the inundations in the valley below. Above our heads towered Monte Cruces, or the Mount of Crosses, so called from the numerous headstones on the summit which mark the graves of the bandits and their victims. At our feet danced the Lerma River, and far off down the valley glowed the windows of the little villages reflecting the light of the setting sun. The views on this route are wondrously beautiful, and it was with regret that we saw the sun dip below the horizon. But Toluca had no need of the sun to lighten it, for electricity did the work perfectly. I doubt if there is a better lighted city in the United States. The government buildings are the finest in the republic, the zocalo and the

market place are worthy of attention, the portales are wide and spotless, the streets are clean, and, best of all, the air that sweeps through them is fresh and sweet. In fact Toluca needs only a comfortable hotel to make it in the eyes of travelers one of the very best of Mexican cities.

The City of Mexico is the capital of the Republic,



A MOUNTAIN HOME.

but Toluca is the capital of the State of Mexico. The latter city, although really very ancient, is, in many ways, more modern than the former, which takes on nineteenth century methods slowly and sullenly. Toluca, on the contrary, has an air of wide-awake progressiveness which I hope is not

deceptive; at all events as a proof of her early enterprise she shows, in one of her chapels, a shabby little organ said to have been the first organ ever built in America. It is true that her people still cling to a miraculous and horrible image of the Virgin painted on unnecessarily coarse cloth, to the bull-ring and to many of their old traditions, but electric lights, ready-made clothing, free schools and a brewery, if not all civilizing, are wonderfully Americanizing institutions, and Toluca has all these. Above the city rises more than 15,000 feet the extinct volcano Nevado, which can be ascended by the traveler. The trip takes about two days. The crater is a bottomless pit of water with a whirlpool and other attendant horrors.

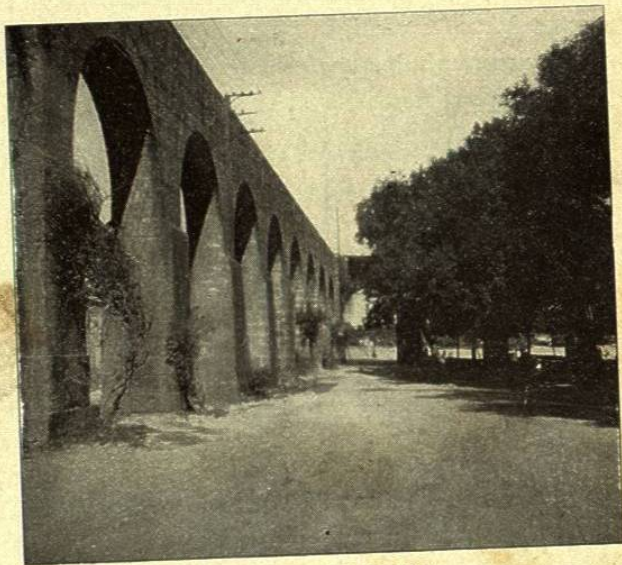
We were roused from our slumbers one chilly midnight to follow the *camerista* through the brightly lighted *portales* of the sleeping town to the street car. Here we sat in somnolent state for more than half an hour, while belated citizens and policemen bearing dimly burning lanterns through the illuminated streets, came to gaze upon us. In the eyes of these night prowlers, all heavily armed, we, with our harmless equipment of handbags and umbrella straps, must have seemed like a delegation from the peace party. Fortunately the delegation feared nothing from the warlike demonstrations around them, for human life is sacred in Mexico,

where the government considers itself responsible for the protection of strangers. We knew that not long before the Mexican republic had paid in damages a heavy sum to the family of an American who had been murdered by a native, and we were sure that not one of the dashing young swash-bucklers of Toluca would dare use his silver-decked revolver except in an extremity. The life of the poorest peon is as carefully guarded as that of an official, a fact which proves that at the core Mexico, in spite of its one-man dynasty, is more truly republican than we are.

After a weary wait in the darkness, a yawning driver, wrapped in a serape and buried under a sombrero, made his appearance, and the mules galloped on their way. There was another long wait at the station, and when the train finally came along we found that the section on the Pullman which we had bought and paid for two days before had been sold again. Fortunately the sleeper was not crowded, so we had no difficulty in obtaining other quarters. I merely mention the fact as an example of Mexican business methods.

We were awakened at daybreak to eat a most unsatisfactory breakfast at Acambaro, whence we proceeded sleepily on our way toward Morelia. As usual in Mexico the chilly night was succeeded by a broiling day, and all the charms of the scenery could

not allay our discomfort. Nevertheless there are many things on the route between Acambaro and Morelia to interest the tourist. Lake Cuitseo, with its green shade trees, and the mountainous islands rising from its shining breast, is forty miles long and ten miles wide. Its banks are the home of



THE AQUEDUCT, MORELIA.

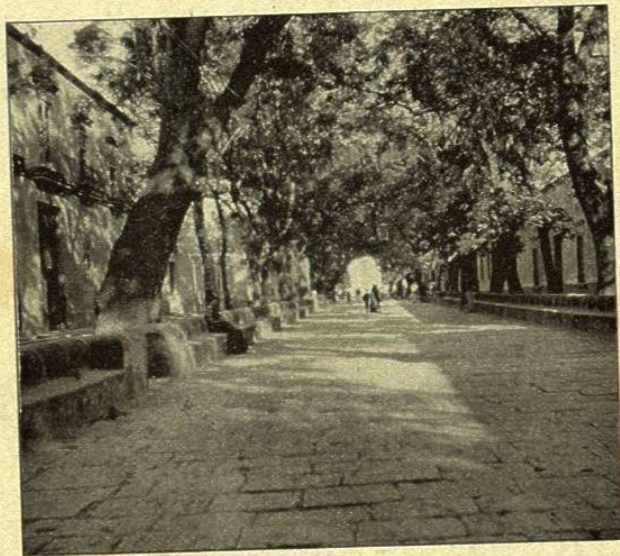
innumerable water fowl, and its rocky islands are inhabited by fishermen who live in a little world of their own and subsist upon the fish caught in the lake. The shores are, for the most part, salt marshes, from whose sedges rises the smoke of

numerous hot springs. Around the famous springs at the foot of the lake are erected crosses, marks of gratitude from the sufferers who have found healing in the waters. For some distance before reaching Morelia the track runs beside a tree-bordered stream. In the shade, waiting for their newly washed clothing to dry, sat men, women and children as naked as bronze statues.

Morelia is another beautiful Mexican city, clean, shining, and with few beggars. We were housed in the Hotel Osguerra, a mansion which was built, to the displeasure of the Morelians, by an extravagant bishop for a private residence. Like many other mansions, it became such a burden to the purse and the conscience of the ecclesiastic that he was only too glad to turn it into a hospital, and give it to the church, and later, with a thrifty desire for a paying investment of the ecclesiastical funds, the holy possessor turned the building into a hotel. Opposite the balcony of the stately rooms assigned to us was the flower-mantled zocalo, and above its riotous luxuriance of vegetation rose the stately domes of the Cathedral. In the center of the zocalo is a monument to the memory of those heroes who have aided Mexico in her struggle for freedom. As for the Cathedral it is the old story—scaffolding, lime-dust, decorators, vandals.

The Calzada of Guadalupe, the favorite prome-
18

nade of Morelia, is in its way as perfect as the Champs Elysées. Along the sides of the stone-paved avenue extend stone benches and balustrades, and above the heads of the crowds who flock thither day and night, arch the branches of the giant trees. The beautiful Calzada is crossed



THE CALZADA, MORELIA.

in one place by the equally beautiful aqueduct, which strides along on its slender legs, for some distance beside the avenue. The promenade ends in a cluster of pretty parks, one of which, Aztec Park, is a very curious specimen of the tree-trimmer's art.

The sheared evergreens are cut in exact copy of the different Aztec gods, a style of ornamentation which speaks better for the sharpness of the pruning-knife than for the taste of the pruner.

In one of the larger parks the band plays in the evening, and pretty bright-eyed women and gallant young Morelians flock to hear the music—which, I grieve to say, is distinctly bad. On the outside of the ring, on rough benches, sit the peons, regarding the scene with that air of dignified interest so different from the enthusiastic vivacity of the Cuban. The population of Morelia is, however, notwithstanding its seeming gravity, little given to anxious foresight, and it seems not at all to fear the prowling microbe. I was intensely interested one evening in watching the proceedings of a woman who was selling a high-colored, popular drink. A decent-looking Mexican of the middle-class bought a glass of the mixture. The woman added water and sugar to the liquor, stirred the whole with a brass spoon, tasted it, putting the spoon far back in her mouth, added more sugar, tasted it again, and with a final stir handed glass and spoon to the unconcerned purchaser, who swallowed the drink without blenching.

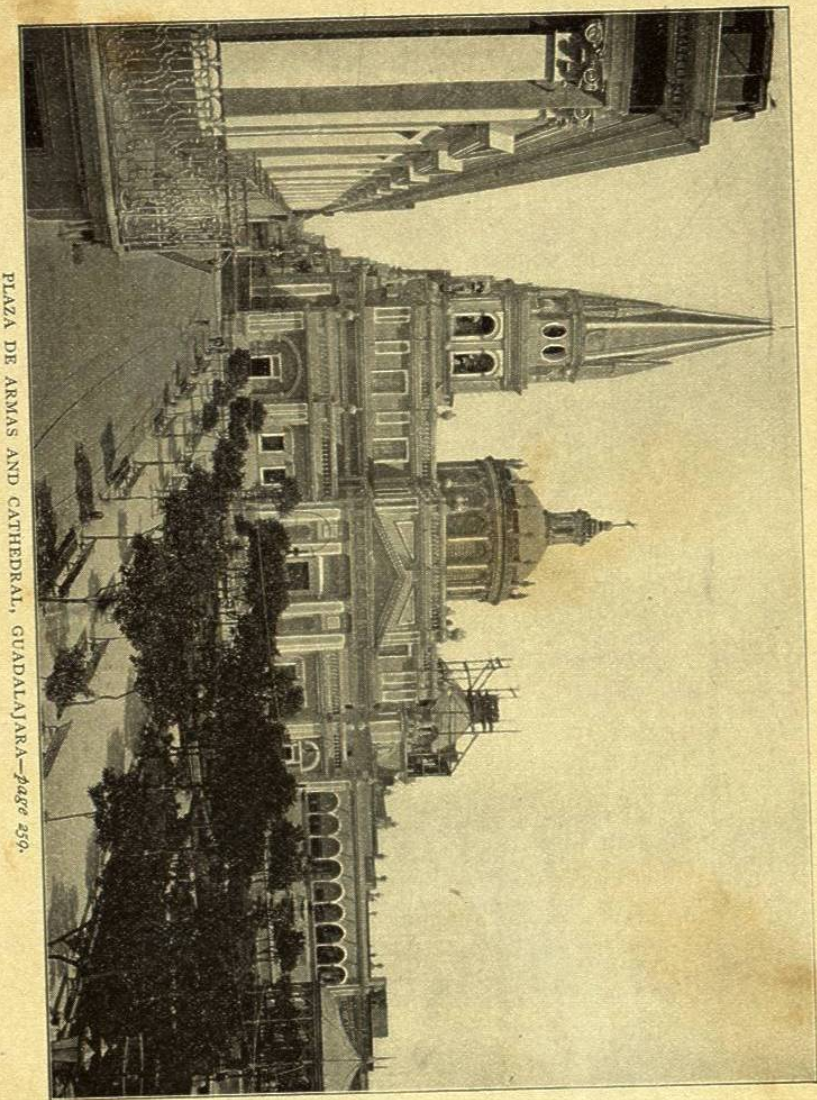
There is a beautiful drive beyond the group of parks, which, as neither horse nor carriage is obtainable in Morelia, seems to be a waste of money

and energy. In the neighborhood of the concert park are the ruins of a romantic old chapel.

The main plaza, which is also near the Cathedral, is called the Plaza of the Martyrs, in commemoration of a company of patriots who, in 1830, were executed upon the spot. Here also died, in the year 1814, by the decree of Iturbide, the patriot Matamoras. Indeed, Morelia is famous as the birthplace and the deathplace of heroes. The town, which was formerly called Valladolid, changed its name in honor of one of the best-loved of all the sons of Mexico—Morelos, the last man in the country to die by the Inquisition. The house where this brave man was born is designated by a plaque upon the wall. Within are shown portraits of the patriot and the handkerchief bound around his head when he was shot. Not far from the Cathedral is the old home of Iturbide, the first Emperor of Mexico, who, although a fearless defender of his country's rights, was shot for assuming imperial honors. Doubtless he thought, and with reason, that one who had suffered and sacrificed so much for Mexico was better fitted to be her ruler than a far-away Spanish prince. Unfortunately even the best of patriots are seldom Washingtons.

Morelia glories in the fact that she has the oldest college in Mexico. In the city is also the penitentiary of the State of Michoacan, of which Morelia is

By Detroit Photo Co.



PLAZA DE ARMAS AND CATHEDRAL, GUADALAJARA—page 250.

the capital, modeled after that of our own Pennsylvania. To a person who, after a long course of Mexican diet, still retains an appetite, the dulces of the town will appeal strongly, and perhaps there is no reason why they should appeal in vain. I am glad to add that, although Morelia has suffered much in the revolutions, she is now prosperous, and her inhabitants have the air of being well-fed and contented. On the whole Morelia seems to have the cleanest streets, the handsomest and most courteous people, the finest climate and the sweetest air in Mexico.

CHAPTER XXV.

The road from Morelia westward carries the traveler through the lake country of Mexico—a most picturesque region. About ten miles from Morelia are the famous hot springs of Cuincho, said to be a sovereign remedy for rheumatism; but there is no hotel at the place, and there are no bathing facilities. When one remembers the numerous hostleries that surround our springs and the volumes of “analyses” that are distributed around the country, one may well doubt if the Mexicans are really akin to us.

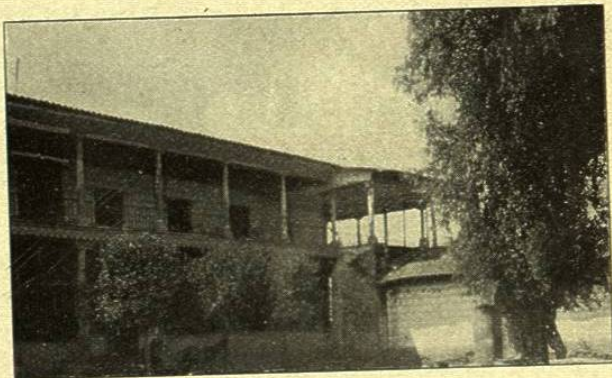
As we crossed the ranges of barren hills that lie an hour's distance from Morelia, we saw one of the native houses wrapped in flames. The owner and his neighbors were gathered around the blazing mass, wringing their hands and crying piteously. Doubtless the result of a whole life's work was represented in the simple household necessities that were feeding the fire, but even in the “lake

country” there was no water, and nothing could be done.

One of the dreams of our Mexican jaunt had been the trip to Tzintzuntzan to see Titian's great picture of the Entombment. Whenever our discomforts seemed too unbearable we consoled each other with the reminder, “In six weeks—in a month—in ten days, we shall see the Titian.” So when we reached the station of Patzcuaro and saw the beautiful lake on the hither shore of which lay the promised vision, our exultation was great; but it was destined to be of short duration. We had intended to make Patzcuaro our stopping place, but a glance at the bowlder-strewn road which we must travel three miles in a worm-eaten carriage and in company with a dozen flea-bitten passengers to reach the city sufficed us. We concluded to postpone our visit to Patzcuaro, and to sit instead on the wide verandas of the hacienda on the shore of the lake and contemplate the scene.

Lake Patzcuaro, dropped down among the bold mountains and dotted with rocky islands, is larger than the Swiss Lake Geneva, and is the highest body of navigable water on the Continent. The tall peaks of the islets were reflected in the shining mirror, there was a blue haze over all the picture, and not a puff of air disturbed the living canvas. The blue reaches of water, sizzling in the rays of an

August-like sun, blinded and sickened me; and when I learned that, in order to reach Tzintzuntzan we should be obliged to spend the night at the hacienda, rise at four in the morning and sit all day flat in the boat at the feet of the dirty Indians who would paddle us across the lake, I thought of the



HACIENDA AT LAKE PATZCUARO.

hours of starvation—for we had found the provender furnished by the hacienda impossible stuff—I looked at the lake swimming in the blue heat, and my decision was made. I assured Ahasuerus that if we attempted to cross that lake there would be three entombments instead of one, that I never myself approved of Titian's personal character, that I had seen scores of Titians, and that I didn't believe the picture was a Titian anyway, and in short that

I wasn't going a step. To my surprise Ahasuerus took my decision with edifying meekness and we hied us hungrily away. And that is the true story of our trip to Tzintzuntzan to see the Titian. If we had been in the first flush of triumphant arrival in Mexico we should doubtless have been more persevering, especially as we might have gone around the lake on horseback. Still a thirty-mile ride under the combined disadvantages of a Mexican saddle and a Mexican sun would have been, even to an enthusiast, a trying experience.

The guide-books all agree that Patzcuaro is a very curious old town, and so it is, and so are most Mexican towns. Patzcuaro does certainly possess the advantage of fresh fish two days in the week, but let not the famished wayfarer be too jubilant over that, for the "fish days" will surely come when he is not there. For the rest there is the usual assortment of smells and saints, booths and beggars, market women and mountebanks. The word Patzcuaro signifies "place of delights," but I think the ordinary traveler will take the "delights" soberly and without in the least losing his head. At all events, the familiar towers of Morelia looked very charming to us as we skirted the stream and rolled again into the pretty station.

We left Morelia one morning by the freight train, that we might be sure of making connections with

the northbound express at Acambaro, as a breakfast we had encountered a few days before in that city did not incline our hearts to stay over night there. Now Ahasuerus and I never did a particularly shrewd thing without fatal results, and on this occasion our usual fortune lay in wait for us. We had a hot box; we were shunted on to a side track, where we lay for hours; we sat all day in a hot, stuffy caboose; and we had the satisfaction of seeing the distrusted passenger train rush past us on its way to make the desired connection, which it did for the first time in three months. However, we did not propose to be cast down by trifles, so we turned to exasperating fortune a smiling face, and insincerely congratulated ourselves upon the admirable opportunity given us to see Acambaro. In support of this position we ambled aimlessly up and down in the deep sand, and then came wearily back, and ate an unwashed supper with unwashed hands, while the household, with many maneuvers and much bustle, prepared our room for the night. The room at last assigned us was Number 9. Besides ourselves it had various other claimants. It belonged to a conductor who "run on Number Four," and an engineer who "run on Eleven," besides a train dispatcher and a Mexican commercial traveler who openly and violently accused us of stealing his "grip." These several

claimants, at intervals during the night, made their claims known by kicks and blows upon our portal, and by loud and emphatic cries of "Open the door," "Come out of that, won't you?" "What are you doing with my grip?" and other embarrassing remarks. We might have thought ourselves in the house of a tailor, and that every one of him had come home late.

These individuals had hardly ceased the recital of their wrongs when it was time to get up and catch the morning train, so we stumbled sleepily down to our rolls and coffee. I never think now of those early risings without a bone-aching, swimming sensation. If the time ever comes when Mexico is sufficiently civilized to introduce night trains, the lot of the traveler will certainly be less woeful.