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PREFATORY NOTE

WHEN, in 1892, I first visited Mexico for the *New York World*, to collect the material for their great special illustrated edition of Mexico,—the most notable feature of modern journalism,—I realized how meagre is the knowledge of the general public outside of Mexico of the beauties and resources of that fair republic, and comprehended for the first time that books on Mexico have invariably covered either limited areas of country or circumscribed periods. I determined to visit once more that garden spot of the western world, and issue the following book. For this purpose I took as my sole companion and interpreter my daughter, Miss Ida Dent Wright, and together we made a complete tour of the republic by rail- and water-ways and on horseback, travelling more than a thousand miles in the unfrequented parts of Mexico, and gathering valuable data and novel experiences at every turn.

To President Díaz and the members of his cabinet I am deeply indebted for distinguished courtesies.

To Major Robert B. Gorsuch, who has been my faithful adviser and kind friend in all matters of importance in connection with this great undertaking, I owe many thanks.

I am also indebted to Valletto & Cia, Mr. N. Winther, and Schlattman Hermanos, who have furnished me many beautiful photographs.

For valuable editorial assistance I am indebted to Miss Helen M. Winslow, and to the *World* for permission to use some of my data published August 2, 1892. I am also indebted to Mr. E. C. Butler, of the *Mexican Herald*, to Mr. E. H. Thompson, of Yucatan, to Señor Coronel Don Ramón Corona, and to many citizens of Mexico, for their unfailing and daily kindnesses.

M. R. W.

INTRODUCTORY

MEXICO, land of mystery and romance; land of mingled tradition and history; land of vast forests and fruitful valleys; of snow-capped mountains and inexhaustible mines; land of sapphire skies and unrivalled climate; land of tropic luxuriance and noble patriotic hearts; of thee would I sing; thy praises would I carry to the farthest end of the broad green earth. All countries have their virtues and their beauties; all lands have their prophets and their poets; but none more worthy are than this magic and marvellous region where nature's affluence bears perennial witness to her storied treasures, her mineral resources, her unequalled scenery, her splendid fabric of a national and imperishable importance among the free and noble countries of the world.

Although sacked by ruthless hands for centuries, Mexico is still the typical embodiment of loveliness and truth; a country of ancient and beautiful architecture, a region of Alpine snows and tropic sun, a nation of incalculable wealth and of strong and noble men; none other has a more tragic or famous past; none a more glorious and affluent future. Through all her old traditions and achievements, and against all she has suffered from oppression and grinding tyranny in the past, the illuminating light of progress is throwing the strong radiance of advancement across mountain and valley, lighting up her wonderful resources, and showing a glimpse here and there of still more wonderful possibilities in the future.

This land, thanks to the unconquerable spirit and freedom-loving temper of Mexico, to-day stands waiting for science and commerce to walk in, hand in hand, and possess it; to develop its present resources into the glorified future of which already its republican government has laid the foundations.

Mexico, fair Mexico; quaintest and most delightful spot in the whole world. A stranger within thy gates, I know thy hospitality, thy generous, whole-souled kindness, thy inestimable character, and the true manly and womanly hearts with whom thy destiny rests. Again and again have I said *adios* to thy sapphire skies and snow-crowned hills, only to be drawn back by an irresistible impulse,—an impulse of love and admiration. And by this impulse am I impelled to tell the world through these pages something of thy unrivalled charm, as a lover sings of the charms of her who has captivated his heart.

Many people have gone a little distance into Mexico and written books about it. They give us glimpses of some small portion of the Mexican country along the beaten tracks, and already mapped out by many a guide-book. This is, perhaps, one reason why no complete book on Mexico exists to-day. With all modesty, I think I may claim, after travelling through the wilds of Mexico more than a thousand miles away from the railroads, across mountains and among the native races, with no company but my daughter and the official escort kindly provided me by the Mexican governors, that in offering this book I am giving the public not only the most complete book ever written about this wonderful country, but also ample evidence that two American ladies may travel anywhere and everywhere in Mexico sure of meeting with nothing but courtesy, respect, and the kindest attention.