

The observatory stands on the highest point within the limits of Tacubaya. The view from the roof of the new observatory is remarkable, taking in as it does the salient features of the historic valley of Mexico.

In the not far-distant future the Penon baths will be one of the great attractions of Mexico. For some reason Mexicans generally have never bestowed much attention on mineral waters. Their character is brought out in bold relief by the history of the Penon spring or baths, the existence of which seems to have attracted some attention more than a century ago, as in 1792 Mr. Gabriel D. Ocampo, doctor of medicine of the Royal Pontifical University, expressed himself as follows:

"The large quantity of mephitic gases by which, as experience proves, candles are extinguished and small birds suffocated or otherwise killed is, in my opinion, the active cause which restores as if by magic the lost activity of paralyzed or semi-paralyzed limbs. This is the gas which restores the necessary equilibrium in the circulation of the liquids and the muscular action of the solid parts of the body, and not only of those parts generally, but of the small fibres of which they are composed; causing thereby if not a total extirpation of gout and rheumatism, a notable and beneficial relief of the same, a restoration of appetite, of the digestive powers, and the vital force."

These boiling springs are said to contain sulphate of lime, carbonic acid, and muriate of soda, and the Indians make salt in their neighborhood much as they did in the time of Montezuma, with the difference, as Humboldt informs us, that they use copper caldrons, while their ancestors used vessels of clay. The solitary-looking baths are ornamented with odd-looking heads of cats and monkeys, which grin upon you with a mixture of the sinister and facetious that is rather appalling.

On one of the sites where these mineral springs are to be found still stands a little church or chapel which dates back to the beginning of the colonial period, and suggests that, like the Pocito de Guadalupe, the Penon waters may have been used, with prayer and supplication, for effecting miraculous cures. But the baths have been in a state of almost total disuse as far back as those now living can remember, having been destitute of every accommodation until the present beautiful and commodious buildings were erected a few years since by Mr. Manuel Romero Rubio, who has transformed not only the old-time baths but also the surrounding country, over which flowed the waters of Lake Tezcuco. These waters still neutralize to a certain extent the herculean efforts that are being made to convert what was a short time ago only a swamp into a beautiful park or garden, for, as the waters are saline, the atmosphere is destructive to a greater or lesser extent of vegetation. Wonders have been accomplished, however, and Penon is already one of the prettiest and most interesting as well as most health-giving spots in or near the city of Mexico.

Among other attractions to be found at Penon is the manufacture of flooring-tiles, as beautiful in design and finish as those used by the Moors in the historic halls of Spain. There are patterns of every description and color. Then there are roofing-tiles, thin as slate but hard as iron, plain and glazed; there are also street-paving blocks and artificial stone, blocked for finishing work without further need of sculptor's or mason's chisel. There is a lime-kiln with four furnaces; there is a factory for making Portland cement; there are salt-pans for the manufacture of salt and sal soda by the process of evaporation. The hill of Penon is encircled by a railroad track, on which tramway cars as well as freight cars run, and the hill is a quarry from which enormous supplies of stone are daily shipped.

## CHAPTER XV

## THE STATE OF MEXICO

**I**N considering the state of Mexico we must remember that it is not mere acreage or population, public institutions or temples or monuments of any kind, however imposing, however venerable, however historic, however beautiful, that constitute a state.

It has been the men of thought and action who have brought Mexico from under the yoke of the Spaniard (who in three hundred years wrung so many million dollars in treasure from her suffering people) and made of the down-trodden province a free and independent country among the nations of the globe.

There are many delightful spots and interesting places in the state of Mexico. Here are found lofty peaks and deep barrancas, broad meadows and narrow vales, inaccessible heights and cultivated fields, succeeding one another in delightful variety. Porphyry, basalt, and lava are common, and "firm as the everlasting hills" could find nowhere a more fitting application.

Molino de Flores is a charming country-place belonging to the family of Cervantez which lies off the line of the railway, about three miles west of Tezcuco. Its chief beauty is a rocky ravine, plentifully shaded, in which, beside a rustic chapel, is a waterfall. The gardens watered by the stream are laid out with much taste and filled with flowers. In their midst stands the large and handsome residence, and a short distance below the waterfall is the mill. At times when the residence is not occupied strangers are admitted to the grounds by the steward.

The beauty of the scenery is indescribable. The path winds ascending through a wilder-



SEÑOR GOBERNADOR-GENERAL JOSÉ VICENTE VILLADA.



ness of trees and flowering shrubs, bathed by a clear and rapid rivulet; every now and then, through the arched forest-trees, we catch glimpses of the snowy volcanoes and of the distant domes and lakes of Mexico.

The ruins of the old Carmelite convent, standing on the slope of a hill, are surrounded by noble forests of pine and oak and cedar,—long and lofty forest-aisles, where the monks of former days wandered in peaceful meditation. But they removed from this beautiful site to another equally beautiful and wilder, also called the *Desierto*, but much farther from Mexico; so this fertile region belongs to no one, and lies here deserted in solitary beauty. Some poor Indians live among the ruins of the old cloisters, and the wild deer possess the undisputed sovereignty of the woods. It is said that a benighted traveller who had lost his way in these solitudes, and was miraculously saved from dying of cold, founded this rich convent of Carmelite monks in gratitude to Heaven for his deliverance, expressing his desire that all travellers who passed that way should receive hospitality from the convent. Certainly no place more fitted for devotion could have been selected than this mountain retreat; and when the convent bell tolled at evening, calling the monks to prayer, and awakening the echoes of the silent hills, its deep notes must have been all in unison with the solemn scene.

An old chronicler, Thomas Gage, an English monk of the Dominican order, who was smuggled into Mexico about the middle of the seventeenth century, thus describes, in his "New Survey of the West Indies," *Desierto* in its palmy days:

"Northwestward three leagues from Mexico is the pleasantest place of all that are about Mexico, called La Soledad, or by others *el desierto*, the solitary or desert place, and wilderness; were all wildernesses like it, to live in a wilderness would be better than to live in a city. This has been a device of poor Fryers named discalced or barefooted Carmelites, who to make show of their hypocritical and apparent godliness, and that whilst they would be thought to live like Eremites, retired from the world, they may draw the world unto them, they have built there a stately cloister, which being upon a hill and among rocks, makes it the more admired. About the cloister they have fashioned out many holes and caves in, under, and among the rocks like Eremite lodgings, with a room to lie in, and an oratory to pray in, with pictures, and images, and rare devices for mortification, as disciplines of wyar, rods of iron, hair-cloth girdles with sharp wyar points to girdle about their bare flesh and many such like toys, which hang about their oratories, to make people admire their mortification and holy lives. All these Eremetical holes and caves (which are some ten in all) are within the bounds and compass of the cloister and among orchards and gardens full of fruits and flowers, which may take up two miles of compasse, and here among the rocks and springs of water, with the shade of the plantains and other trees, are most cool and pleasant to the Eremites; they have also the sweet smell of the roze and jazmin, which is a little flower but the sweetest of all others; there is not any other flower to be found that is rare and exquisite in that country which is not in that wilderness to delight the senses of these mortified Eremites. All this lovely place is really a solitary place, a wilderness now, but even in its ruin it is one of the most beautiful spots to be found near the city, while the remains of the cloister and the 'Eremetical holes and caves' make it one of the most curious and interesting."

The way to Lerma is through a massive stone gateway, from which the gates were removed very long ago. The streets are broad but straggling, the houses comfortable rather than grand or even elegant, and the many eucalyptus-trees planted around the picturesque adobe and stone church go back probably to the time of Maximilian. Across the way from the church is the old graveyard which all tourists in Mexico soon hear about. There are indisputable records in

the convent in the city of Mexico to prove its age. The graves of the Spanish *conquistadores* are nine in number, and were marked with limestone slabs over two centuries ago. It is a custom among the Mexicans, who sell pebbles and cobble-stones from these graves to tourists, to throw on a fresh handful on the occasion of each visit hither. As a result, each grave is surmounted by a heap of small white stones a yard high.

Tetzcotzinco, about three miles east of Tezcuco, is the laughing hill (*risueña colina*) of Tetzcotzinco. Here is an enduring monument to the engineering skill and good taste of Netzahualcoyotl, in the shape of the wonderful pleasure that he caused to be built for his amusement and recreation. The remains of terraced walks and stairways wind around the hill from the base to the summit; seats are hollowed in shady nooks among the rocks, and every-



VILLAGE OF Tlapacozo.

where traces are found of ingenious contrivances by which the natural beauty and cool comfort of the situation are enhanced. The most important and most curious of these remains, at an elevation of eighty or one hundred feet, is that to which has been given the purely fanciful title of "Montezuma's bath,"—a circular reservoir about five feet in diameter and three feet deep, whence water was distributed through many channels to the hanging gardens below. In order to supply the little reservoir stupendous works were executed. Near the laughing hill, distant one-half or three-quarters of a mile, is another small hill, and beyond this, twelve or fifteen miles, is the mountain-chain that encircles the valley.

From the side of the reservoir, the side of the hill in which it is hollowed is cut down and levelled, as though graded for a railroad, for about half a mile; thence the grade is carried across a ravine to the adjacent hill on an embankment fully sixty feet high; thence the side of