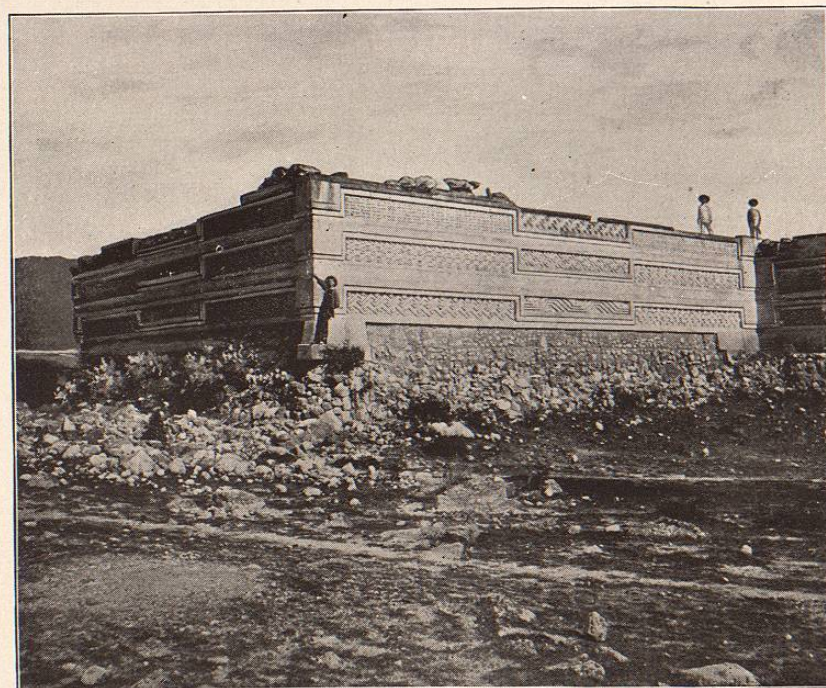


Six hours' ride from Oaxaca behind galloping mules brings one to the ruins of Mitla. There, as firmly and securely in place as they were on the day in which they were put in position, can be seen great stones eighteen feet long, six feet wide, and five feet thick. When the visitor has seen these walls, which have stood for centuries, and has witnessed the awkward efforts of the Indians of this generation as they pull and tug at a top block of onyx to get it on the cars, he is prepared to believe that these brown-skinned people of to-day have no knowledge of the ancients who built Mitla. There are no arches in this wonderful architecture of Mitla. Everything is square. In one of the courts of what is supposed to have been the temple is a row



RUINS OF THE TEMPLE OF MITLA.

of columns. Each column is a single stone seven feet in circumference and twelve feet high.

At Oaxaca are collections of idols, grotesque and quaint, and strikingly similar to those which come from Egypt and India. These idols are dug from what appear to have been burial-places in the country round about Oaxaca. The Indians of the present find them and bring them into the city to sell. The places where these idols are found are walled with sun-dried brick. Presumably there were bodies of people buried there, but nothing remains but the little soapstone and limestone images, carved from blocks with the

same straight lines that characterize the architecture of the ruined temple and the hieroglyphs. The ancient Mexicans left ruins of temples to astonish latter-day civilization. The modern Mexicans are giving demonstrations in a more practical direction.

The ruins of Mitla may be fairly classed with those of Yucatan and Honduras, the best in Central America. They cover many acres of ground, and are in every stage of destruction and decay. The hand of the vandal has done more to destroy them than the tooth of time.

Where vandalism has not disturbed them, the walls are perfect as when erected. Not in all the wall now remaining is there the slightest settling crack or mar from faulty construction. The thing that most attracts attention on coming in range is the perfect design of fretwork or moulding running through the whole structure, all formed by geometrical lines, the pattern being known as Grecian the world over. Some writers have called this work mosaic, but, while each and every member of this moulding or fretwork is cut from stone, and cut to fit the adjoining stone, all are set in the wall, fitting as perfectly as paper in a tablet, without mortar or cement. So well has the work been done that, after the lapse of centuries, it requires a close inspection to find the joints. The ruins contain a few columns of the most primitive order, with a slight diminish, but no sign of base or cap.

The buildings are very extensive, and are magnificent in the skill and art shown in their construction. They were so designed as to face a central square. They were not connected

at the corners, but the centre court was protected by a wall of rock and mortar which filled the spaces. Each building had only three openings, all facing the court. There were no windows or other means of lighting the interior. The walls were made of a very tenacious adobe, veneered both within and without with finely cut stone laid in regular courses and interspersed with panels which are filled in with what may be denominated herring-bone work, in a profusion of patterns, each cut to fit its particular place, whether a square or a scroll, and the joints are so perfect that only the thinnest kind of cement could be used, if indeed any were used; and to-day, after centuries of earthquakes, these joints are so perfect as to call forth the admiration of all who behold them. The lintels over the door-ways are each of one solid stone, and, with all our modern appliances and engineering skill, it would be considered a great triumph to



PALACE OF THE GOVERNOR.

place them in their position. It is therefore marvellous when we consider that the quarry from which these immense rocks were cut is on a mountain fifteen hundred feet above the valley and distant some five miles. They were brought this distance and elevated to their position by means unknown to us. Without doubt many underground rooms and passages exist. There is what appears to be a passage-way leading down to these subterranean chambers, and tradition says they extend for miles. At the west of these buildings there is a large adobe mound having a broad flight of cut-stone steps leading to the top. About half-way up is a platform. These steps are on the east side of the mound and face the principal buildings. Just across the creek to the south are the remains of several mounds, in the midst of which is a teocalli, which at one time had a broad walk winding around its sides until it reached the top. The walk is still to be seen in several places, although the greater part has fallen down.



Small mounds abound in the vicinity. Few works of art, such as vases, fragments of statues, and the like, have been found in this vicinity. Inside the ruins no iron is found, and no iron tools. Granite utensils, red copper axes and chisels, and fragments of pillars and architraves, have been found near Mitla.

Some two or three miles to the east, in the Hacienda de Zaaga, under a part of the house, an ancient tomb was discovered. We do not know what was found in it. In form it is a Latin cross. The arms of the cross are about nine feet long, the head eleven feet, and the entrance about nineteen feet. The width is four feet four inches, and the height five feet six inches. The



THE GREAT COTTON-MILLS OF OAXACA.

roof is formed of a large dressed stone, and the interior was at one time covered with cement. The walls are of finely dressed stone, and are ornamented with panels, like the buildings at Mitla. The Greek cross is used in ornamenting some of the panels.

Still farther east, and commanding the only pass through the mountain in this direction, is what seems to have been a fortification, with walls from twelve to twenty feet thick and about ten feet high. There seems to have been a terrace around the inside, of such height that a person standing upon it could see over the top. A little farther up the mountain is a magnificent tomb in the form of a perfect Greek cross, built of immense rocks, different from any other that I have ever seen. The whole interior is carved in relief, resembling the letter T. This tomb was probably never finished, as the roof is lacking, although several large stones lying near were evidently intended for this purpose; also, great stones are encountered in the direction of the quarry, which is on the opposite side of the mountain and over a mile distant.

The pretty town of Oaxaca, with straight, well-built streets, is two hundred and eighty-eight

miles southeast of the capital of the republic, and nearly a mile above sea-level. It was founded in 1486, under the name of Huaxyacac, and fell under the Spanish rule in 1528. It has a rapidly increasing population of thirty thousand. The state library is there, and contains thirteen thousand volumes. The streets are regularly laid out, wide and spacious, and the houses are for the most part handsome and substantial, though largely of adobe. The principal buildings are the cathedral, the Santuario de la Soledad, and other churches and convents gorgeously decorated. There are, also, the *cabildo*, or city hall, the episcopal palace, the government buildings, and several handsome plazas embellished with flowers, trees, and fountains.



ANCIENT PILLARS AT MITLA.

The surrounding country is exceedingly picturesque, being literally covered with gardens and cochineal groves. The hospital at Oaxaca is one of the best in Mexico, and education is zealously promoted.

Oaxaca, old as it is, is extremely pleasant. Its houses are white, and on the balconies every day may be seen groups of young people, well dressed and cheerful, giving a festive air to the whole city. The government building is exceedingly beautiful, recalling those of the time of the viceroys. In the Plaza de Armas is a beautiful monument to the patriot Juarez, which is one of the most elegant in Mexico. The park of Guadalupe is very delightful, large and stately, with flowers and groves of beautiful trees, while the cathedral is one of the most striking features of the town. There are a great many schools in Oaxaca, including a scientific institute and a fine seminary. There are also an historical museum, a public library, and a branch of the National Bank of Mexico.

Probably the present condition of no Mexican city illustrates the early condition of all of