

them better than that of Oaxaca. It has been easily accessible for so short a period that its circumstances are essentially what they were before the railway was built. Through three centuries of its history it has grown as an interior town in the fullest sense of that term. It lies in one of the most beautiful and fertile valleys of Mexico, or rather at the meeting-point of three valleys. It is shut off from the ocean on the south by a solid range of mountains; it is separated from the cities of Central Mexico on the north by a mass of rough and broken country. The region of which it is the centre is a part of the world by itself, and the community which occupies it is practically a self-sufficing body of people. The population has grown so slowly through its long existence that it has learned to satisfy its wants as they have appeared by its own products. The hand-looms which have been used for generations are still in use.



TEMPLE OF LA SOLEDAD.

The pottery which the inhabitants of this region must have learned to make centuries ago is still made and turned to all conceivable uses, from cooking-stoves to children's toys. Articles made from the potter's clay serve most of the purposes of our articles of iron or tin or wood or brass. If you wish a bell, you will buy it of the potter. If you wish a whistle, you will buy it of the potter. If you wish tiles to cover the dome of the cathedral, you will buy them of the potter. Apparently simple materials are also made to serve a large number of ends. The maguey plant is a familiar instance of a single kind of material put to a multitude of uses. So skilfully, under the pressure of necessity, have the resources of this region been utilized, that if a wall of absolute exclusion were built along the ridge of the encircling mountains the life of the community would go on without noteworthy inconvenience to the bulk of the inhabitants. The well-cultivated cornfields would produce, as they do now, an abundant supply of the staple

food. The flocks and herds would multiply as they do now, and their skins would be turned into sandals, shoes, and other articles of clothing. On the physical side there would be few wants unsatisfied. As now, few would be rich, and each would have something.

The condition of Oaxaca is typical of the condition of all Mexican towns that have grown up where they are by reason of their rich agricultural neighborhood. This condition of things is the basis of the remark by an engineer who has had great experience in locating railways in Mexico, that it is never worth while to go out of the way to reach a Mexican town, but quite worth a special effort to reach the great plantations. This would be permanently true if the towns were to remain as the railways find them. But they do not so remain. The coming of the railway means for the town a transformation of its life. And so the city of Oaxaca is rapidly growing and developing by contact with the outer world.

The Isthmus of Tehuantepec is that narrow neck of land in tropical Mexico which lies between parallels 18° and 16° N., dividing the Atlantic and Pacific waters. The shortest trans-continental railroad on this hemisphere (already referred to) is built there, and its trains run across in about six hours. It is the verdict of all who have been there that it is not only a magnificent and beautiful country, but has also the most delightful tropical climate they have ever been in. The railroad is destined in a very short time to be the most important little road in America. Twice the United States government spent a great deal of time and money making a survey across that neck of land with a view of cutting a canal, once in 1852, and again in 1871, when Captain Shufeldt, of the United States Navy, was sent with a large expedition to make surveys. Again, Captain Eads spent a great deal of time there on his plan to build a ship-railway. Now that the isthmus is opened up by a railway, which will soon be followed by steamship communication, that portion of Mexico, more than any other, will participate in the wonderful progress Mexico is now making.

The mountain scenery in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, and the numerous beautiful rivers fringed with the perpetual green foliage of the tropical plants, with the interesting variety of birds and other game found there, the delightful climate all the year round, and the perpetual fresh breezes from the two oceans, will make that part of Mexico the most delightful section on this continent to live in. Besides the rich coffee plantations dotted all over the isthmus, you will see hundreds of elegant homes surrounded by magnificent flower-gardens, owned by people in this part of the country, who spend their winters here every year.

The Mexican Coffee Trading and Planting Company's plantation, so far, promises to be one of the largest and most important on the isthmus. The company own twenty thousand acres of land, situated on the banks of the now famous Coatzacoalcos River, and only about four miles from the Tehuantepec Railroad. They have already begun planting, and have one million five hundred thousand plants started in the nurseries.

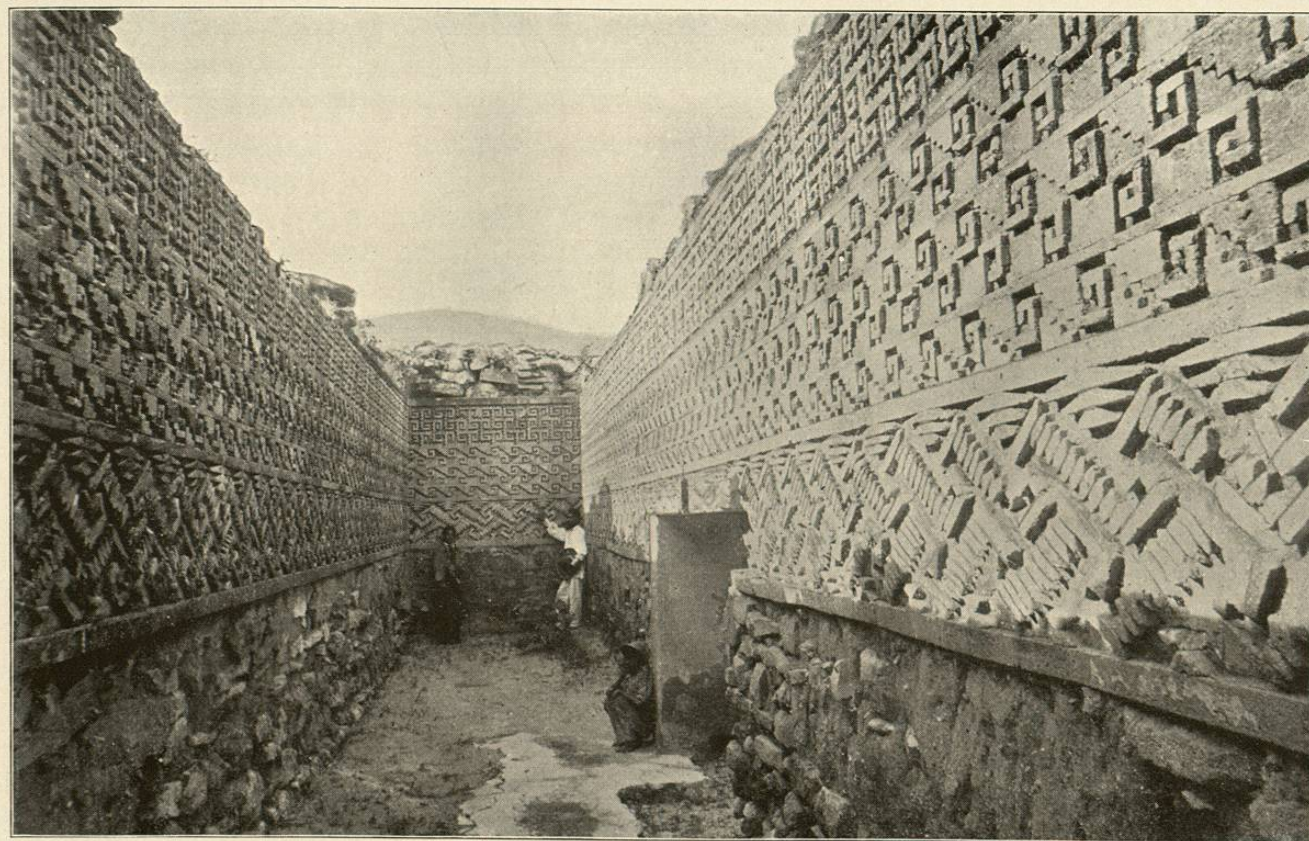
The distance from Oaxaca to Tehuantepec is considerably less than from Puebla to Oaxaca. The railway connection when made will give this southern half of Mexico an outlet to the Pacific which is badly needed. It will also complete, with the link building beyond the isthmus, through rail connection between North and Central America. Down the cañons of the Rio Salado and De los Cues and up the cañon of Tornellin the builders pushed their way, solving some of the most difficult problems ever encountered in railroad construction. They not only tunnelled to get passage for the trains, but they bored the spurs of the mountains in three places to give the rivers new channels. The bare gray and brown and red cliffs tower two thousand feet above the track. Tourists journey across the United States for brief half-hours in cañon scenery; on this Mexican Southern the traveller rides half a day through awe-



inspiring gorges. The train reels down and then staggers up grades which are only a fraction below the legal limit of four per cent. The route is through masses of rock; in some places the boulders are so poised that it seems as if slight jarring would dislodge them. The traveller, when the train starts down these curves, can look ahead and see the route and the stations an hour in advance of the schedule time.

The completion of the Tehuantepec Railway and its opening to traffic have not attracted as much attention as they deserve. The construction of the railway was a matter of national importance. It was carried out by the Mexican government at its own cost, by the advice of President Diaz, who recognized its strategic value.

President Diaz has distinguished himself as much in the council-chamber as upon the battle-field. After restoring peace and security to his country, he has especially studied its



STONE CARVING AT MITLA.

agricultural and industrial development. With this object he has encouraged the construction of railways in all parts of the country, by means of which produce may be carried to the best market.

Travel throughout the state is remarkably free from danger, and the officials, as well as the indigent natives, are uniformly kind and considerate in their treatment of strangers, gladly welcoming the investor, who, they know, in seeking to better his own condition cannot fail to better the condition of those with whom he is thrown in contact.

The state of Oaxaca is notable for having been the stronghold of the Mixtecas, a race of Indians who emigrated many centuries ago from the north and, displacing the Chochones, occupied the state, together with Puebla and Guerrero. They were an intelligent and progressive

race, and were governed by independent chiefs. The Aztecs afterward subdued some of the Mixtecas, but those of Oaxaca remained independent, and many of them still are found in parts of the state. Their chief towns are Huajuapán, Yanhuistlan, Tlaxiaco, and Tepascalula. Remains of their former cities, temples, and fortresses show that they had considerable cultivation. They believed in a heaven, called Sosola, and had sacred caves in the mountains. Probably they had something to do with the original Mitla. They had a distinct language, with several dialects. A Mixtecan grammar was published in 1593, and there are still existing religious treatises printed in Mixtecan in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Mixtecas of to-day are intelligent, quiet citizens.

Not far from the city of Oaxaca is the big tree of Tula. It is one hundred and fifty-four and a half feet around six feet from the ground; at least I know it takes forty men to reach around it.



THE JUAREZ GARDEN.

It is of the cypress family, and must have been here long before Columbus touched Western shores. On the tree is a wooden tablet, placed there by Humboldt, the great German traveller.

My first visit to the city of Oaxaca was made when the journey had to be performed on horseback. While compiling the material for this book, I was taken there in a special car over the fine new track, and noted the most astonishing changes. Everywhere villages were springing up, and manufacturing industries showed the spread of modern enterprise. Besides the generous assistance of President Diaz, much of this progress is due to Governor Gonzalez. This official, General Martin Gonzalez, who is almost like a member of the president's family, is a gentleman of distinguished ability, competent in every way to lead Oaxaca toward the highest social, economical, and industrial plane.