

One of the finest pieces of engineering work in this country is the Metlac bridge, across the river of the same name, and erected by the Mexican Railway.

Nowhere in Mexico is there a more beautiful spot than the city of Jalapa. When the atmosphere is clear, one can see the shipping in the harbor of Vera Cruz with an ordinary spy-glass and the white caps of the waves with the naked eye. The elevation of Jalapa above the sea is a little more than four thousand feet. It is situated on a shelf of the mountain, the summit of which at Perote, a distance in a direct line of about twenty miles, is four thousand five



HACIENDA OF SAN ANTONIO, IN VERA CRUZ.

hundred feet higher than Jalapa. The whole horizon, except in the direction of Vera Cruz, is bounded by mountains,—among them Orizaba, which is distant from Jalapa about twenty-five miles, though, owing to the remarkable clearness of the atmosphere and the sun shining upon the snow with which it is always covered, it does not seem to be five miles. All the tropical fruits grow there, and are cultivated with great care and skill. It is not exaggeration to say that it is impossible for one who has not been on the table-land of Mexico to conceive of a climate so elysian. There is not a day, and scarcely an hour, in the year when one could say, "I wish it were a little warmer, or a little cooler." It is never warm enough to make you pull off your coat, and rarely cool enough to button it.

Perote is thirty-five miles from Jalapa, and is eight thousand five hundred feet above the sea-level. This name was made familiar to American readers as the place of confinement of the Texan prisoners and of General Santa Anna himself. Its great elevation and the vicinity of the mountain of Orizaba make the climate uncomfortably cold at night. It has a very large and strong military fortress.

English merchants and other inhabitants of Vera Cruz go to live in or near Jalapa during the reign of the *vómito*. There are some old churches, a very old convent of Franciscan monks, and a well-supplied market-place. Everywhere there are flowers,—roses creeping over the old walls, Indian girls making green garlands for the Virgin and saints, flowers in the shops, flowers at the windows; and, above all, everywhere there is one of the most splendid mountain views in the world.

The Cofre de Perote, with its dark pine forests and its gigantic chest (a rock of porphyry which takes that form), and the still loftier snow-white peak of Orizaba, tower above all the others, seeming like the colossal guardians of the land. The intervening mountains, the dark cliffs and fertile plains, the thick woods of lofty trees clothing the hills and the valleys, a glimpse of the distant ocean, the surrounding lanes shaded by fruit-trees, aloes, bananas, and chirimoyas, mingled with the green liquidambar, the flowering myrtle, and hundreds of plants and shrubs

and flowers of every color and of delicious fragrance, all combine to form one of the most varied and beautiful scenes that the eye can behold.

Then Jalapa itself, so old and gray and rose-covered, with echoes of music issuing from every door and window, and its soft and agreeable temperature, presents, even in a few hours, a series of agreeable impressions not easily effaced.

Jalapa is indeed a rare old place. It seems to be built on edge, with streets like stairs climbing the hills, while terraced houses cling to the hill-sides. Nevertheless, Jalapa with her twenty thousand people has acquired considerable importance as a market for coffee, cotton, and other staples. Indeed, this is so true that the railway line between Puebla and Jalapa and Vera Cruz is not sufficient as a means of communication with the outside world, and an electric railway is being put in.

In the Jalapa canton are some of the most picturesque places in the republic. The Actopan River in its volcanic bed, the crystal Jalancingo, and the Zuacinto wind along under arches of noble forest-trees toward the Gulf. The cascades of Orduna and Calichal hang like



PARK AND THEATRE IN ORIZABA.

curtains of light against a great cañon, and the quaint towns of Coatepec and Misantla, with reminiscences of Victoria, are some of the salient features of the landscape. The ride from Coatepec, over a narrow mountain pathway up to Jalapa, curtained in clouds, is a wild one, and almost persuades the traveller that an electric road would be a modern miracle. Electricity in this oldest and quaintest of regions seems like the wand of amber with which the ancient Greeks used to perform feats of magic.

Jalapa itself is a curious place, very ancient and yet very modern. It is like an old man



who has found the elixir of life and imbibed the strength of youth with all the ambitions and force of manhood. Tradition makes it a town away back before the period of the Aztec. It is certain that Cortez stayed there the second night of his famous march from the sea.

After this the Franciscans built a great monastery and established a new religious life. In those days the market at Jalapa was known throughout Mexico. When the republic was formed Jalapa was raised to a new dignity, and was made the capital of Vera Cruz; but as the activity increased along the sea-coast the industries of Jalapa declined, until it became merely a picturesque village among the hills. With the railroad and modern speculators Jalapa underwent another change. New factories sprang up, stores and markets were opened, and agricultural interests assumed a new phase of activity. Quaint, old-fashioned Jalapa has awakened from a two hundred years' sleep and become suddenly a city of manufacturing importance. The factories give employment to more than a thousand people, and old-time thrift has mingled with modern prosperity.



MUNICIPAL PALACE AT CORDOBA.

Jalapa became the seat of a fair in the eighteenth century, which was intended to hold the same relation to the trade between Spain and Mexico that the great fair at Porto Bello, on the isthmus, held to the trade between Spain and South America. In order to avoid the effects of the unwholesome climate of the coast, goods arriving at Vera Cruz were transported to Jalapa, to be there exchanged for Mexican products destined to be exported to Spain. Jalapa was chosen for this purpose, although an inland town, because of its agreeableness and healthfulness as a place of residence. It is sufficiently warm to permit many tropical plants to thrive, and, as it is favored with rain at all seasons, the neighboring valleys and hill-sides are perpetually fresh and green. From the plaza, where one has the higher part of the town above him and overlooks the lower part and the broken country in the distance, the world appears a very beautiful place. Although great wealth is produced on the coffee plantations not far away, Jalapa still figures as a resort for pleasure and a place of waiting till the ships go out. And in this character it is becoming more conspicuous since the completion of the Inter-oceanic Railway from Mexico to Vera Cruz, which, in descending from the table-land to the coast, passes through Jalapa.

Orizaba is another charming city, which claims to have been admired by Cortez. At least, he stopped here on his march to the city of Mexico, leaving a small force behind him. Lucky was it for them that Sandoval came along with more soldiers soon after, or Cortez's garrison would have been murdered. It was not a new town even then. The old church of Santa Teresa dates back to 1564. This church still stands, but is unused, a new one having sup-

Orizaba, like Jalapa, lies about midway between the two extremes of the coast and the plateau, but in most other respects the two towns stand in sharp contrast with each other. At Jalapa the view ranges over a wide extent of hills and valleys; at Orizaba it is limited by the closely surrounding mountains. Jalapa has a number of important industries, but Orizaba is one of the busiest manufacturing towns of Mexico. Its cotton- and jute-mills employ a large number of laborers. Lying on the line of the oldest railway in the country, not far from Vera Cruz, and with easy access to the interior cities, it has unusual facilities for obtaining imported raw material and for reaching markets for its finished products. The rapid stream which passes through the valley furnishes adequate water-power, and in this lies one of its special advantages as a manufacturing town.

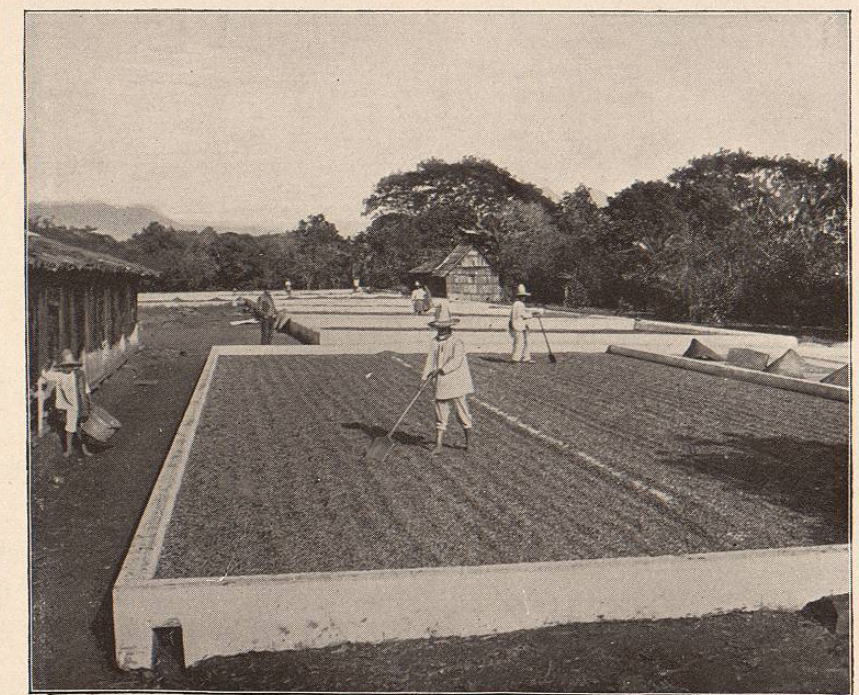
planted it; but it forms a most picturesque old ruin, such as Mexico abounds in. Maximilian, too, favored Orizaba, and used often to resort here. It is still a favorite watering-place for inhabitants of Puebla, Jalapa, Vera Cruz, and Mexico.

It is a flourishing city, too, numbering over fifty thousand inhabitants. From several points within its limits may be seen the snowy glistening peak of Orizaba; and the Orizaba River runs through the town, its rocky banks gay with tropical flowers and fruits. The city is surrounded with mountains, the chief of which, next to its patron saint, is Cerro de la Escamela. The city is set like a jewel in a charming valley in the midst of these mountains, and is everywhere surrounded with coffee and sugar plantations and other luxuriant tropical vegetation. With its exceptional situation and delightful climate, no more desirable place can be found in Mexico.

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The town of Coatzacoalcos, at the mouth of the Coatzacoalcos River, is one of the few places that look like an American town. The port of Coatzacoalcos is destined to be the principal one on the Gulf coast. It is a natural and safe harbor for vessels of large tonnage; the water is from four to seven fathoms, with plenty of room for large vessels. The place is growing rapidly, especially since the Tehuantepec Railroad has been built across the isthmus.

The large dry-dock to accommodate vessels of fifteen hundred tons' capacity, for the Mexican government, at Tlacotalpan, is located on the Papaloapan River, in the southern part of the state. This river is of sufficient depth to permit of large ocean vessels navigating its waters, and a steamship line has been inaugurated to carry freight and passengers to Tlacotalpan. This city is picturesquely located, and is the general distributing point for a surrounding country of many miles in radius.



DRYING COFFEE.