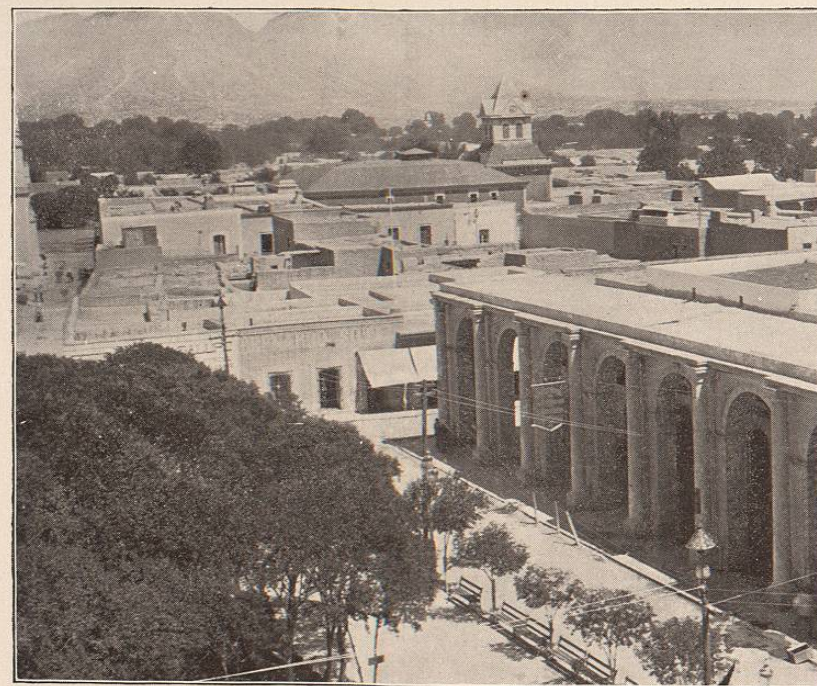


steps roughly cut out of it. On reaching the small plateau in front of the chapel there is a magnificent view, which fully repays one for the fatiguing ascent. In the chapel there is a large, old cross, which stood on the summit of the hill long before the chapel was built. Every spring about fifteen men dressed in Indian style, colored feathers on their heads, small mirrors on their chests, bring this cross, decorated with garlands of fresh flowers, down to the parroquia (principal church). Here it is newly consecrated, and then taken up again to the chapel. In descending and ascending with the cross the men, called Matachines, perform an Indian dance to the rhythm of a drum and flute. After having replaced the cross, the Matachines dance the remainder of the day under an arbor made of fresh boughs of trees. Nearly half the population of Parras assist at this ceremony or are spectators of it.

One thing Parras can really be proud of, and that is its unsurpassed climate. The winters are mild and dry. In December and January there may be a little cold spell, which lasts two or

three days, but the cold is hardly felt during the day in the warm bright sunshine which seldom fails. Perhaps three or four times every winter the quick-silver falls below freezing-point, but, as a rule, this happens only at sunrise. *Aguacates*, bananas, lemons, and oranges grow, although the summer sun is not fiery enough to make them sweet. All these trees, as well as the oleander, bloom during the winter; so do roses, violets, and geraniums in the gardens. Grape-vines covered with fresh young leaves and peach-trees in bloom at Christmas-time are not uncommon. The stranger wonders how everything can look so fresh and green when



PORTALES, SALTILLO.

there is so little rain,—sometimes in nine months hardly a good shower. Although the soil is exceedingly fertile, the people would not be able to raise anything without irrigation. There are in the southeast some springs which, if left alone, would form quite a river; as it is, they are put into leading-strings and made to do duty from their earliest infancy. A part of the water is led through ditches to the vineyards for irrigation; the other, by far the larger part, is gathered in a large tank back of a cotton-mill, to which it furnishes power and then irrigates the lower portion of the vineyards and fields. This water, however, is not sufficient to irrigate the whole valley, and to supply this want enterprising men have built *tajos*,—i.e., tunnels opened at the foot of these rocky hills and driven into them horizontally. Although labor is very cheap (an ordinary laborer not earning more than thirty-seven cents per day), these *tajos* cost immense sums of money, as they have to be worked often for years before they produce a sufficient flow.

The construction of the Mexican International Railroad was a very important event in the state of Coahuila. It penetrated a country that is rich in mineral and agricultural resources.

The state affords splendid inducements to the miner, manufacturer, and agriculturist, as well as to the home-seeker, the pleasure-seeker, or the health-seeker. The prosperous condition of the various enterprises situated on and adjacent to the line of this road testifies beyond question to the practicability of profitable investment.

Ciudad Porfirio Diaz, named in honor of the president of the republic of Mexico, is the northern terminus of the road, and one of the most enterprising cities on the Mexican border. The custom-house and post-office buildings, including other federal offices, are splendid specimens of modern architecture, and perhaps the finest public buildings in the republic. The International Club, a handsome and substantial building, equipped with a modern gymnasium, an elaborate reading-room constantly supplied with the leading periodicals and dailies of Mexico, the United States, and England, a bowling-alley, a billiard-room, and a tennis-court, furnishes pleasant and profitable diversion for the *habitués*. The Mexican International Reservation is one of the most attractive features of the city. It abounds in beautiful homes, which are rented exclusively to the railroad employees at minimum rates.

Fuente, four miles from Ciudad Porfirio Diaz, is a quaint and attractive village, located on the picturesque Rio Escondido in the fertile Rio Grande valley, which is so well adapted to agriculture. Cotton, corn, and wheat are raised in great abundance and find ready and profitable markets. The famous Fuente coal-mines, which contain an almost inexhaustible supply of coal, are located at this point.

Nava, twenty-five miles, and Allende, thirty-two miles, from Ciudad Porfirio Diaz, are situated in a rich agricultural region, susceptible of the highest cultivation, by virtue of the ample supply of water which, at a minimum cost, may be utilized for irrigation. This section is particularly adapted to the raising of cotton, corn, and wheat. The enterprising agriculturist could scarcely find a more desirable section for investment.

Sabinas, seventy-two miles from Ciudad Porfirio Diaz, is situated on the Sabinas River in the Sabinas valley, noted for its fine grazing lands, especially the great Hacienda Soledad, its rich vegetation, and its abundant water-supply. A branch road extends from Sabinas to Hondo and Felipe, a distance of twelve or thirteen miles, where are the prolific Sabinas valley coal-mines, from which coal is shipped to all parts of the republic, and also exported, to some extent, to the United States. The production is now twenty thousand tons per month. At Hondo, the Coahuila Coal Company manufacture about one hundred tons of coke per day.

Monclova, one hundred and forty-eight miles from Ciudad Porfirio Diaz, formerly the capital of Coahuila and Texas when they formed one state, is an attractive city of about fifteen



PENITENTIARY, SALTILLO.



thousand inhabitants. It is the centre of an extensive and paying mining region. A railway line from this point to the rich mining region of the Sierra Mojada, one hundred and fifty-nine miles distant, will pass through Cuatro Ciénegas, forty-seven miles from Monclova, and the centre of a section splendidly adapted to the purpose of colonization,—land rich and cheap, water plentiful, and climate unsurpassed. It is, perhaps, the best wheat region in Mexico; and,

there being only a few wheat-producing districts in the republic, no industry guarantees a quicker, surer, and more profitable return for the amount invested. Grapes of many varieties and of the best quality are raised in great abundance with very little labor. Several colonization companies have this section in view, and it is only a question of time when it will become one of the most popular and desirable in the republic.

Trevino is the junction of the Mexican International and Monterey and Mexican Gulf Railroads. The former has located a line from or near this point to Monterey, which will be completed in the near future. This line, in connection with the branch from Monclova to Sierra Mojada, will bring that inexhaustible mining camp in direct connection with Monterey, the great smelting centre of Mexico.

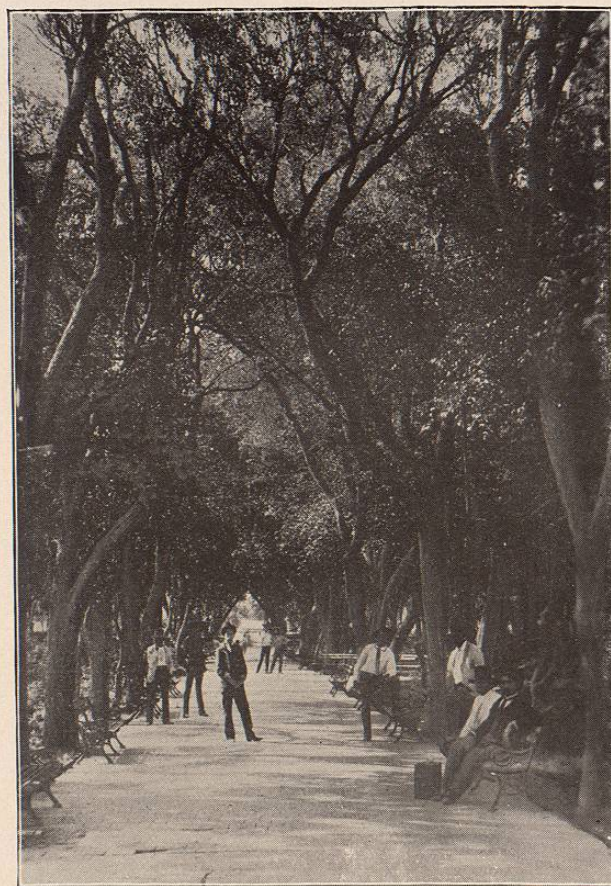
Jaral is noted for its spicy and exhilarating air. At this point connection is made by stage with Saltillo, the capital of Coahuila, forty-five miles distant.

From Paila there is a stage line which passes through the rich haciendas of San Carlos and Lorenzo. Parras, by virtue of its almost

perfect climate, its abundance of fruit of every variety, its pure water, picturesque mountain scenery, and magnificent foliage, is destined to become one of the most popular winter and summer resorts on the American continent. A branch line will no doubt be constructed from Paila to Parras at no distant day. Contiguous to this point are some of the largest and most productive haciendas and vineyards in Mexico. A feature of this place is the excellence and cheapness of its wines and brandy. The best quality of grape brandy, which is equal (being absolutely pure), if not superior, to French cognac, may be purchased at three cents per drink.

From Hornos a branch line extends to San Pedro, fourteen miles north. This latter point is in the great Laguna district, famous for its large production of cotton. The plant produces from five to ten years without renewal. Many thousand bales are annually shipped from this point. The famous Viesca salt-mines, which are well-nigh inexhaustible, and which supply salt to points all over the republic, are only a few miles south of Hornos.

Torreón, three hundred and eighty-five miles from Ciudad Porfirio Díaz, is the junction of the Mexican International and Mexican Central Railways. This point has experienced a phenomenal commercial growth in the last few years. Torreón is a city of about eleven thousand



PARK ZARAGOZA, SALTILLO.

inhabitants, with wide streets and sidewalks, and with a fine prospect for the future, being the youngest city of its size in the republic. The surrounding country is one of the great cotton belts of the south, and is thoroughly irrigated and cultivated. A large cotton-factory, oil-mills, soap-factory, flouring-mill, and ice-factory are in successful operation here, together with the other manufacturing and mercantile establishments usually found in cities of this size.

Not many miles from Torreón is Tlahualilo, which has been made famous as the place of an experiment to utilize negroes as farm-laborers. A fuller account of the growth of this successful colonization company, with its wonderful cotton-fields and factories, will be found in another part of this volume.

The state of Coahuila has attained commendable progress under the statesman-like guardianship of Governor Lic. Don Miguel Cardenas. His excellency is a member of the Mexican bar, has been a member of the legislature, and has had careful political training for his high office. He is a man of wealth and education, and always wins an enviable reputation among visiting foreigners. He found the public treasury nearly empty, but under his administration a handsome balance is now always on hand. Public instruction has made rapid strides under his fostering care; every town in the state has now one or more good primary schools, with several in Saltillo. The State Normal School in the latter place is also a great aid to the cause of education in Coahuila.

Mining interests have been developed extensively during the Cardenas administration. The projection of new railroads into mining regions and the lowering of state contributions are doing much to further the success of mining interests in Coahuila. Land business is rapidly increasing, and great stock lands in the northern portion are being developed by American and English capital.

