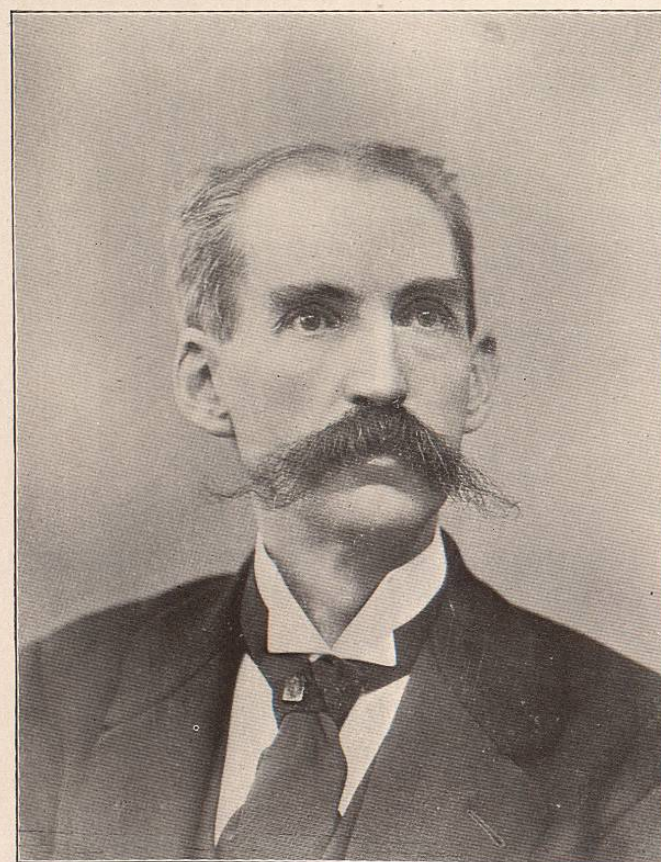


## CHAPTER XXX

## GUANAJUATO

JUST west of Querétaro is the larger state of Guanajuato, which is one of the most important states of Mexico on account of its mining interests, by far the richest in America. It has an area of eleven thousand one hundred and thirty square miles, with about a million population. This state is divided into five *partidos*,—Guanajuato, León, Celaya, Allende, and Sierra Gorda. Almost the whole of the surface lies within the plateau of Anahuac, at an average height of six thousand feet above sea-level, although it is extremely irregular, being traversed by two mountain-chains, and containing



SEÑOR JOAQUÍN OBREGÓN GONZÁLEZ,  
GOVERNOR OF GUANAJUATO.

three peaks upward of nine thousand feet,—Los Llamios, El Gigante, and El Cubilete.

There are many picturesque and fertile valleys in the southern half. Lake Juriria, near the capital, is twelve miles long and four and one-half miles wide, and abounds in fine fish. Most of the mountains are porphyritic, although the Cerro del Cubilete is chiefly basaltic. The soil is exceedingly fertile, even for Mexico, and large crops of all kinds of grain can be depended on. The climate is generally salubrious, and there are numerous hot springs frequented by invalids. Chile, from which *Capsicum annuum* is obtained, is one of the staple products; maguay is plentiful; the sugar-cane does well in the warmer valleys; the olive and most of the European fruits flourish; and fine timber is found in the mountains.

Mining is, however, the chief industry, although the native Indians devote much care to agriculture. Guanajuato is one of the oldest mining regions of the New World. Only one-fourth of the area of the state has been scientifically explored, and yet there are already over three hundred mines perfectly studied and capable of giving good profits. The first mine worked was at a place called Veta de la Cruz, in the year 1548. Later, in the year 1554, work was undertaken

in the Veta Madre. The great value of these mines can be guessed at from the magnificent buildings in that region that are still standing in a state of admirable preservation. The first mining settlement was called Santa Ana; afterward Guanajuato was built, the first church occupying the situation of the present Municipal Pantheon. In 1558 the mines Rayas and Mellado were opened within the emplacement of the Veta Madre. The principal mines are La Luz, Valenciana, Rayas, Mellado Peregrina, La Loca and Adjuntas (annexes). The total product of all, according to the data that have been gathered, amounts to eight hundred and fifty million dollars.

La Luz in about ten years yielded some eighty million dollars. Rayas and Mellado during forty-four years rendered nearly one hundred and eighty million dollars. Rayas has made



THEATRE JUÁREZ, GUANAJUATO.

fabulous yields of gold. It has been related that in some instances the quintal has been sold at one hundred and thirty-two dollars. On other occasions the product of one hundred and twenty-six arrobas (an arroba is about twenty-five pounds) has yielded twelve hundred marks.

The celebrated mines of Valenciana, discovered in 1770, and abandoned during the war of independence, in 1810, had up to that time produced two hundred and seventy-one million dollars. Since the workings have been taken up by several more or less powerful companies, the results have always been proportional to the amount of capital engaged. It has been figured that the Valenciana has been worked only one-eighth of its extent, and that it is susceptible of producing five million dollars per year for the next three centuries. The Valenciana mine is situated on the great Guanajuato vein, one of the most considerable that exists,—the Mother Vein (*Veta Madre*), which is in some places sixty metres wide. The ores of this vein are



silver sulphuret, black prismatic silver, native silver, seleniuret of silver and gold, gray copper and silver-bearing blends. The working of the mines of Guanajuato is carried out with a great deal of intelligence. In several of them are shafts and tunnels of colossal dimensions, that of Cayetano especially being more than two thousand metres long. The wealth of the Valenciana is proverbial throughout the world; Baron de Humboldt, on his visit to Guanajuato, found a shaft eighteen hundred feet deep. He made a special study of that mine, an account of which is to be found in his printed works. Suffice it to say that the working company has spent the enormous amount of one million two hundred thousand dollars in the



A PRETTY LITTLE HOME ON THE ROAD TO THE PRESA DE LA OLLA.

construction of shafts for the extraction of the metal, the deepest of all, called Guadalupe, being three hundred and forty-five metres in a vertical direction. These mines produce at present more than two thousand loads of mineral weekly, with which the mills of the company are fed. Santa Rosa is one of the oldest and most promising mines for its wealth of gold and silver, and also for the economy with which it is worked. The yield of gold is marvellous, and no other mine of the Veta Madre region has ever rendered equal products. The Purísima de los Hernandez, for instance, has yielded ore valued at thirty-one thousand two hundred and forty-six dollars and eighty-one cents for a load of fourteen arrobas, or three hundred and fifty Mexican pounds. Public attention is now concentrated on Santa Rosa, as some of its mines are in full bonanza. Some of them, for instance, San Guillermo and Trinidad, yield weekly from five thousand up to twenty thousand dollars each. Labor is extremely cheap, the highest price being twelve dollars the metre of depth. Richly endowed by nature, the country contains throughout its immense extent rich metalliferous deposits exceeding "the wealth of Ormuz or of Ind." The innumerable enterprises for developing the country have produced, with more or less profit, colossal sums. If the work had been directed from the beginning with intelligent economy, the importance and profits of the exploitations would have been much greater. As for the riches already extracted from the hills in the principal mining regions, they are insignificant compared with those still shut up in the bowels of the earth.

The name Guanajuato is derived from an Indian word meaning "the hill of the singing frog." The earliest settlers were the Tarrascan Indians, who, upon arriving here, found a large stone in the shape of a frog, of which they made an idol, and they named the site of the future city Guanajuato, or the Hill of the Frogs. It was founded in 1554, and made a city in 1741. The site of the city was a gift from Mendoza to Don Roderigo Vasques, one of the conquistadores, as a reward for his military services. Guanajuato is one of the three greatest mining

centres of the republic. It is the capital of the state. The peculiar situation of the city, with its crooked and irregular streets and its fortress-like houses, makes it look very ancient and feudal, and, oddly, amid all this antiquity stretch the wires of the telegraph and telephone, linking the old civilization with the new in a way that is strangely paradoxical. The heart of the city is the Plaza de Mejia Mora, where there is a tablet which states that here Benito León Acosta, Mexico's distinguished engineer and man of science, was born.

The climate of Guanajuato is temperate: no extremes of heat or cold mar its comfort. It is a land of blue skies and fresh breezes; the atmosphere is clear and invigorating. Mellow sunlight pours its flood of gold on fruitful fields. The forests are rich in timber of great value: oak, laurel, magnolia, mahogany, gum, rosewood, ebony, cedar, and many other woods abound.



MUMMIES AT THE PANTHEON, GUANAJUATO.

All the oil-bearing and medicinal trees and plants are found within her borders. Fruits and vegetables grow luxuriantly and in endless variety. Every possible taste can be satisfied with honeyed or acid fruits, rich, delicious nuts, and nourishing, palatable vegetables. The streams swarm with fish fit for the table of an epicure. Although as yet the farm appliances are somewhat primitive, improvements are being introduced rapidly, and the land is surprisingly productive of all the known grains and other valuable agricultural growths. It is a land where the sky is as deeply blue as sapphire, where the sun is rarely hidden, where tropical flowers of unspeakable magnificence deck every hedge and swing from every limb, and where the birds are like bits of flying flame or winged jewels.

Guanajuato is one of the quaintest and most delightful places in the world,—a walled city among the mountains, set upon the sides of heights so steep that the houses seem to cling to