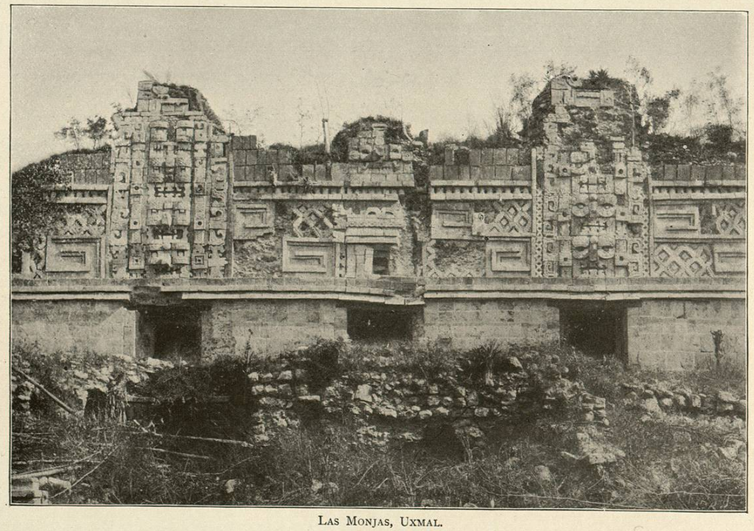
neighborhood. The village consists of a single street of cane-stalk cottages elevated a few feet above tide-water, both the town and the swamp behind it being completely hidden under groves of palm and cocoanut. Cut off from communication with the outer world and connected with the interior only by dangerous and toilsome roads, the little hamlet is about as independent as a separate republic. Time was when golden doubloons were more plentiful in Yalahau than pennies are now. There is a disused fortress here which the federal government built and garrisoned for the suppression of piracy, but the soldiers soon joined hands with the free-hearted brigands whom they had been sent to capture and shared their pleasures and plunder. The only stone house in the village is the residence of the present alcalde, and used to be the head-quarters of the buccaneers. Here unlucky captives were sometimes held as



LAS MONJAS, UXMAL.

hostages, and if ransom were slow in coming, a finger, a toe, or an ear was sent to hurry up the relatives, followed by larger portions of the victim if the first instalment did not bring speedy returns. The old house stands so close to the sea that restless waves have washed away part of the foundation.

The island of Cozumel is one of the most interesting spots in the vicinity. It was discovered by Juan de Grijalva in 1518, and Cortez set sail for it in the following year. Eight years afterward Montejo came with four hundred soldiers and took possession of the island, which is about thirty miles long, is now almost uninhabited, and is covered with a dense growth of trees and tangled creepers. Its name signifies in the Indian tongue "the place of swallows." The Spaniards declared that on this island they found a populous city "composed of stone houses, white and lofty." Many vestiges of ancient inhabitants are still visible. Not more than two

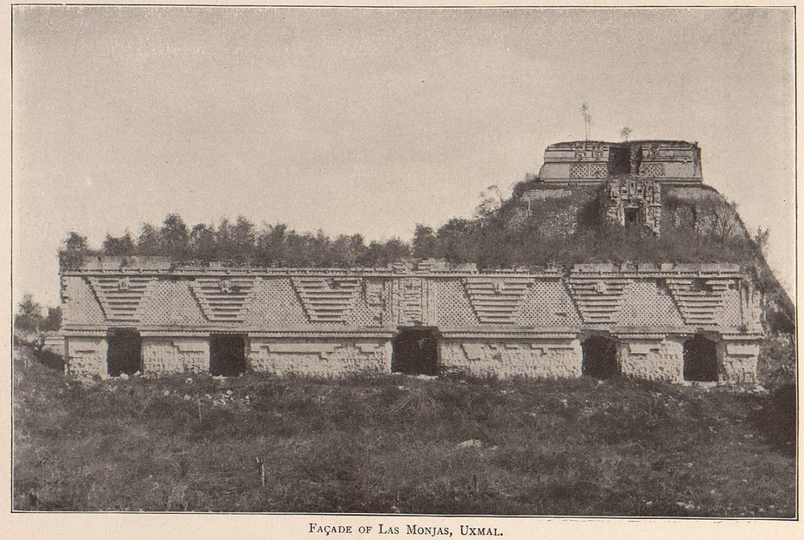
hundred feet from the sea, visible above the tree-tops from the decks of passing vessels, is a magnificent relic, a structure sixteen feet square standing on a terrace, with exterior of plain stone stuccoed. It has stone steps on each side leading up to four doorways that face the cardinal points and open into narrow corridors encompassing a small room. Near it is a similar structure, upon which the remains of paintings are visible under a queer triangular arch.

A little north of Cozumel, about five miles from the coast of Yucatán, is Isla de Mujeres (Women's Island), a tiny speck in the Caribbean Sea, only six miles long by half as wide. It is not a resort of the omnipresent "new woman" of to-day (who is not, by the way, objectionably present in Mexico), but I venture to assert that more astonishing things are crowded upon it—suggestions of strange doings in far-away centuries—than can be found in any other place of equal size. Cortez's soldiers named it Women's Island because in the four great temples which they found here all the idols represented colossal female figures. The island is singularly beautiful, encompassed by the green-blue sea. Mangrove- and cocoanut-trees crowd to the water's edge, except where broken by tiny clearings around the palm-leaf hut of some fisherman. Turtle-catching is quite a business here. Three kinds abound: the cahuamo, whose eggs serve for food, its carcass being useful only for oil; the tortuga, of which both the meat and the eggs are eaten, and whose shell is worth twenty-five cents a pound; and the jare, whose shell sells for eight dollars a pound.

MOUNT SEBATSCHE.

Another interesting spot, about thirty miles from Mérida, is the village of Tixkokob. It has a fine old church, and the quaintest cemetery ever seen. All around its outer walls rows of skulls are arranged; skulls grin along the arms of the crosses with which the interior space is thickly set, and several huge vases are piled high with the same ghastly relics. In the middle is a promiscuous heap of human bones several feet deep. Inside the walls, dangling from cords fastened to the top, are baskets and boxes and bundles, each containing a skeleton, appropriately labelled. Everywhere there are fragments of shrouds, shoes that have dropped from fleshless feet, arms, legs, trunks to which dried flesh still adheres, and scores of skulls with hair still clinging to them, in some cases the long beautiful tresses of women. Inside the church the floor is a series of trap-doors, each covering a vault filled to the brim with former citizens of Tixkokob. In the choir of this church and on all the window-ledges are more skulls, each labelled on the forehead, and some of them bearing startling inscriptions. On All Souls' Day (November 2) all these skulls are placed upon a black-draped dais surrounded by lighted candles, and mass is said and incense burned and holy water sprinkled amid the prayers of the people.

Valladolid is a very old town, and was once the most flourishing centre of trade on the peninsula. It lies on the line of the railway, about one hundred miles southeast from Mérida. Half a century ago the first cotton-mill of the country was erected here, and several manufactories flourished. Here the bishop made his residence, as well as some of the proudest Castilian families of New Spain, whose coats of arms may still be seen upon the fronts of tenantless casas. The last great uprising of the natives occurred almost fifty years ago, and inflicted injuries from which Valladolid will never recover, for, besides actual murder, rapine, and conflagration, the Indians left such terror behind, threatening to come again, that the remaining citizens



Façade of Las Monjas, Uxmal.

fled to safer quarters. The population is now less than ten thousand, after half a century of comparative peace, and lands close by, the best in Yucatán, may be bought for twenty cents an acre.

Founded soon after the Spanish conquest, Valladolid was built in a style commensurate with the wild dreams of the conquistadores, and bears marks of ancient grandeur. But desolation now broods over it. The central plaza, where hidalgos and ladies of high degree were wont to promenade to the accompaniment of moonlight and music, is now ankle-deep in sand, its benches of crumbling stone overrun with scorpions, centipedes, and lizards, and its ancient palms and elms too ragged to cast a shade. At one side of it is an enormous parochial church, with convent and cloisters, fast falling into decay. There are other large churches,—Sisal, San Serircio, San Juan de Dios, Santa Lucia, Santa Anna, and Candelaria,—all dilapidated. Most of the private houses show the same signs. In the principal street—the Calle de Sisal—are extensive crevices in walls with the coats of arms of forgotten families emblazoned on them.

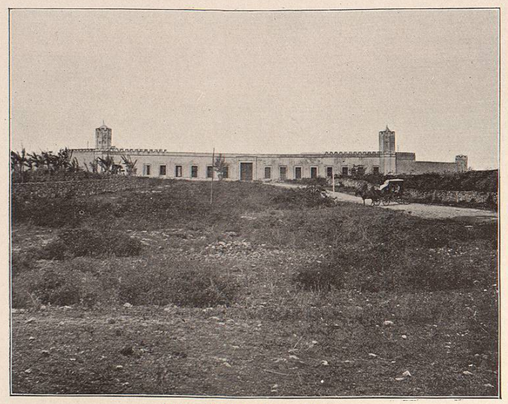
According to tradition, Valladolid has been the theatre of remarkable events. It is asserted that the place was long haunted by a demon of the worst character, which even now is spoken of with bated breath as El Demonio Parlero (The Talking Devil), because he held nightly discourse with any who chose to question him, answering in the voice of a parrot. In fact, he carried his pleasantries to such an extent, and made himself so troublesome, that the bishop was obliged to invoke divine assistance, and with the combined powers of earth and heaven succeeded in ousting the devil and driving him to the woods. The records go on to state that this demon, after having been thus banished from Gulciba and several other villages, returned to Valladolid

Municipal Palace, Mérida.

with new schemes, but was finally barred out altogether by the device of surrounding the town with consecrated crosses set close together on the hill-tops. These the devil could not pass, and to this day there are hundreds of wooden crosses standing guard around Valladolid.

Before the days of Valladolid's decline most of the largest land proprietors and "substantial citizens" generally were opposed to separation from Mexico, while the bulk of the population —those who owned no property and had nothing to lose—raised a cry for "libertad," which to them meant license. After independence was achieved another agitation arose, as to whether Yucatán should again become part of Mexico or form a separate republic, and local feeling ran high. Both factions invoked aid from the natives, placed arms in their hands, and filled their ears with promises. When quiet was restored, these offers of reward were forgotten, and the Indians were dismissed empty-handed. But they retained their arms and the knowledge they had gained of warfare, all of which they turned to account against the whites at the first opportunity. In 1847, when an imbroglio arose between Mérida and Campeche, the

revengeful Indians saw their chance. With fire and sword they swept the eastern part of the peninsula, obliterating every town and village in their course, and nearly destroying Valladolid, which had then a population of twenty thousand or more. Remembering the centuries of wrong endured by their fathers, they entered upon a war of extermination. They possessed themselves of more and more territory in the northern, eastern, and southern portions of the peninsula, ravaging the country, pillaging, burning, murdering. The terrified Creoles, huddled together at Mérida, appealed to the United States, to Spain, and at last to the republic of which they had declined to become a part, Mexico. Just having concluded her war with the United States, the latter sent troops to Yucatán, and gradually the Indians were driven into the interior. By calling on Mexico for aid, Yucatán lost her place as an independent republic, and soon after she became one of the states of the Mexican federation.



JUAREZ PENITENTIARY, MÉRIDA.

According to the popular legend, Quetzalcoatl (the serpent, or twin, with peacock or trogon feathers), a mythical personage, went out from Yucatán to the region about Panuco and appeared to the Huastecas in a long white robe and holding a staff. He introduced the honors belonging to the cross, taught the people many arts, and instituted a form of worship, finally returning to Yucatán. In the mythology of Yucatán, however, he was called Cuculcan, and they make him return to Mexico. At any rate, although the accounts of him vary, he was ultimately honored as a god, and his religious ideas extended throughout the old Mexican empire. Probably he was the Aztec prototype of the Messiah.

Still unconquered, these Indians hold all Southeastern Yucatán, and for upward of forty years they have been in armed rebellion against the government. Numerically they are probably less than a thousand, but what they lack in number they make up in ferocity. They are not of the same race as the timid Indians about Mérida,—patient hewers of wood and drawers of water, whose ancestors perhaps built the magnificent temples which are scattered all over the country. The yet unconquered tribe is probably descended from the Caribs,—cannibal savages who once possessed the Mosquito coast, the Spanish main, and the southern islands of the West Indies. The wildest stories are told of their atrocious cruelties. The chief tribe, Chan Santa Cruz, has a city or stronghold of the same name somewhere in Southeastern Yucatán, supposed to lie between thirty and forty miles west of Ascension Bay and fifty miles below Lake Bacalar. No white person has seen the city of Chan Santa Cruz, or, if he has, he has never returned to tell the tale. It is supposed that its citizens practise the aboriginal arts and retain the aboriginal customs, with some borrowed from their civilized neighbors. They have strict laws, and any shortcoming is severely punished, the murderer of a Chan Santa

Cruzan being executed in exactly the same manner as he inflicted death upon his victim. As a rule they are monogamists, and their besetting sin is drunkenness. They have always much corn in store, and in times of drought, when Yucatán has been threatened with famine, they have sold some to the whites at exorbitant prices.

For many years Yucatán has been the Siberia of Mexico, to which are sent offenders whom the government does not know what else to do with, since the amended constitution practically does away with capital punishment. Consequently Chan Santa Cruz includes among its heterogeneous population many people not of Indian blood,—negro slaves, escaped convicts, Chinese, and castaways and outlaws of various colors and nationalities.

It seems almost incredible that next door to the United States, within less than a week's journey from New York or Chicago, is a section of country almost unknown to Europeans, whose unconquered people still live as their progenitors did before the Christian era; and even more incredible is it that the powerful Mexican nation, which claims that bit of territory, knows as little about it. The greater portion of the peninsula is a *terra incognita*, of which white men know absolutely nothing beyond what may be seen along the coast and gathered from Indian tradition. The Rio Hondo forms the boundary between it and Belize, a few nameless streams flow into the Caribbean Sea, and beyond the dense forests that girdle the coast is a great central desert, crossed by a ridge of unknown hills. Between the forest belt and the coast are undulating tracts where corn, tobacco, rice, and sugar-cane are grown and cattle are raised in such numbers as to furnish exports of hides and salted meats next in value to the export of the fibre industry.

To the uninitiated, perhaps, there seems little in Yucatán to attract the average tourist, yet many world-famous savants have spent years there in enthusiastic and well-rewarded research. Scattered all over the country are remains of stupendous and richly carved edifices and wonderful monuments of vanished people, and the very air seems filled with the mystery of the melancholy of *los antiguos*. And yet how many people realize that some of the most wonderful relics of antiquity on the face of the earth lie within a week's journey of New York? Why do archæologists pursue their quest everywhere else on the globe, when here are remains more curious than those of Pompeii and Herculaneum, older than those of the Aztecs in Mexico and the Incas in Peru?

Yucatán is a part of Mexico that is positively distinct and rare, cut off as it is at the eastern point of the crescent gulf. We could not help noticing a similarity in features between the Japanese and the Mexicans as found in Yucatán, although E. H. Thompson, formerly United States consul of Mérida, an archæologist of reputation, inclines to the opinion that there is no such relationship and that the first settlers came from the other side of the Atlantic.

The governor of Yucatán is Señor Lic. Carlos Peón, under whose administration the state is making rapid strides toward modern advancement. Señor Peón, being a very wealthy man himself, does not have to limit enterprises of importance by the condition of the treasury in the state he governs so wisely and so well.