

Pulque and mescal are Aztec, of course, but the other Mexican drinks are direct inheritances from the Moslem.

On entering a Mexican church the stranger is immediately struck by the number of women who, closely wrapped in black rebozos or tápalos, kneel on the floor of earth during the service. This uniform method of covering the head and shoulders is Moorish: "No maiden went to a mosque where there was not a place set apart for the virgins, and every woman was carefully wrapped up and covered with her veil."

At the doors of Mexican churches are still to be found venders of wax tapers and small candles, which are purchased by the pious and burned in front of the altars, sometimes held by the devout suppliant, sometimes placed upon the altar itself. The men very frequently, when impelled by an excess of devotion, will pray stretched at full length, or bent low to the floor, or with arms extended in the form of a cross. A Mexican may give in a number of different ways. There is the usual *limosnita*, or alms to beggars; the *regalo*, or ordinary present; the *recuerdo*, or souvenir; the *dones* to the affianced wife; *estrena*, Christmas gift; *albricias*, present made to the bringer of glad tidings; *aguinaldo*, or New Year's gift; and *propina*, much like the American's philopœna. Mention should be made, too, of the *penitentes*, or contrite sinners, who many years ago publicly whipped and otherwise mortified themselves in the streets of every village throughout the republic. They were of the same class as the *flagelantes* of Spain, and are the outcome of the same morbid spirituality that once surrounded the Moorish santones with the halo of godliness. The power of the Church has been exercised remorselessly, and in most of the villages effectually, to stamp out this survival of savagery and barbarism. But from time to time they are still heard of and described.

Carmen Day has been a great religious feast-day for six hundred years in the Catholic calendar. Hundreds of houses are annually made happy with visits and gifts to the "Carmens," who are remembered by their friends, and there is even something in the opera of "Carmen" that goes direct to the Mexican heart. Since Señora Diaz has been the "first lady in the land," however, "Carmen Day" has been more popular than ever, as celebrating, in a way, her saint's day.

Scarcely a town in the republic is so poor that it has not its alameda or its public garden, with its winding paths, in which twice a week one can listen to fairly good music and witness the promenade of sedate men who march leisurely, arm in arm, two by two, in one direction, while señoras and señoritas, equally sedate, march with equal leisure in the opposite, a custom referred to elsewhere in this volume.

A very curious custom is that of *pelón*, by which, after a certain amount of purchase at a shop, the buyer receives a rebate or gratuity, either in money or in goods. The word *pelón* means a stone or weight of some kind used to balance the crude scales in the country parts of Spain. The custom of *pelón* as it exists in Mexico is analogous to that of *l'agniaappe* in Louisiana, and is copied under various names by many great Northern emporiums to-day. The Arabian fashion of selling bread from trays carried through the streets of Jerusalem and other cities is paralleled in many Mexican villages, and there is a striking resemblance between the street-cries and those of the land of the Moslem. "Algo de fruta! algo de dulce!" is the common cry of the itinerant candy- and fruit-peddlers of Monclova, Celaya, Morelia, Querétaro, Laredo, and elsewhere. There seems to be a great liking for sweet things, the *dulceros*, and in Morelia there are thirty kinds of candy on sale.

The pinon and pecan are indigenous to Mexico, and the candy made of them is called *dulce de cacahuete*. The frijole, the native bean, is a Mexican specialty,—*el plato na-*

cional,—and is cooked in a variety of ways and served at every meal. The mescal constituted the primary food of the nomadic tribes of Northern Mexico, the word *chichimec* meaning mescal-eaters. Chie is a peculiar seed which when boiled with water makes the water emulsive. It is used as a preventive against sudden chills and stomach troubles. Nothing can be more Mexican than chile, called *aji* and *quauhchilli* by the Aztecs. No Mexican dish of meat or vegetables is deemed complete without it, and its supremacy as a table adjunct is conceded by both garlic and tomato. If, however, chile is pungent, the *chilchipin* is vegetable fire. On a small bush grows the *cocotillo*, and a dangerous thing it is, too; for swallow the small seeds and paralysis of the lower limbs ensues.

The beautiful filigree silver-work of Mexico, or *filigrana*, is too well known to need description. Its derivation is undoubtedly Moorish, and the talent for it a direct inheritance from Spain. Not only the filigree jewelry, but the dainty, filmy *deshilada*, or drawn-work, may claim an Arabic origin.

Mexican courtesy is not put on as a garment to be worn at balls and on occasions of ceremony, but is ever present, and has become as it were a second nature. Mexicans in meeting embrace one another, as the Moors and Arabs do. The proudest gentleman in the land will take off his hat to return the salutation of the beggar who begs a light for his cigarrito, or will beg his pardon in the name of God when declining his supplication for charity.

The Mexican comadre appears to the best advantage when a new baby is to be admitted into the church. The party having returned from the christening at the sanctuary, the house is thrown open. There are music, conversation, and dancing, with refreshments to which all are made welcome, even the beggars on the streets.

The fondest term of endearment that can be given to a Mexican is *tocayo*,—namesake. And name-days, not birthdays, are celebrated in Mexico. Invitations are extended for celebrations on the day of the saint whose name is borne by the host, and consequently there is much feasting on the minor saint-days.

The older funeral customs of Mexico are very interesting. These mortuary ceremonies of the Mexicans, with slight allowance for time and distance, are found among the Moors to-day. When little children died among the Mexicans, the body was dressed in white, with a helmet of gilt paper or a garland of artificial flowers. It was then laid upon a temporary bier and borne to the church, and thence to the grave, by surviving comrades, preceded by musicians playing soft, sad music. Grown people were buried in much the same way. The male mourners, wearing above their elbows bows of black crêpe, marched two and two, each bearing



INTEROCEANIC RAILROAD LEAVING THE CITY OF MEXICO.

a candle, which was lit as the procession entered the church. Ladies did not attend funerals; the evening after the funeral they would meet in some convenient house, light candles, and talk about the dead and his virtues until the candles burned away.

Customs connected with courtship and marriage are changing, as in other countries, but even now the relations between the sexes are under strict surveillance among the Mexicans, and young men and young women have not the same opportunities for becoming acquainted as in many other countries. A j6ven who feels the first impulses of the tender passion has few opportunities for meeting the object of his affections alone, or for conversing with her save in the presence of parent or grim dueña. He may dance with her at parties, speak to her at christenings, or kneel near her at mass or vespers; but his chief pleasure is to be found in *jugando el oso*, or *oseando*, as the term goes. He takes his station close to the lattice of the young señorita, and there remains until she approaches and looks down and (of course) by accident drops a flower or a handkerchief; then, animated by hope, he may venture to send some female relative to sound the girl's parents and find out what are his prospects. Among the rural Mexicans, who adhere most strictly to old usages, a betrothal is still an affair of considerable formality. The aspirant accompanies his declaration by the tender of the dones, generally jewelry, the acceptance of which gives him the right to walk with the young lady and her family to church and places of entertainment. As the wedding-day approaches, he buys the trousseau for the bride. This custom is now dying out in all but the remote Mexican districts.



CHAPTER XLV

NATURAL ADVANTAGES

NOWHERE in the world do we see a country which has come forward more rapidly than has Mexico in the last half-century. Few Americans realize that Mexico was "discovered" and settled by Cortez a hundred years before any settlement was made in the United States. And in natural advantages no other portion of this marvellous western hemisphere can claim a place above her.

Mexico is the geographical centre of the earth, an imperial place in the great highways of the world. The country extends between 14° 30' and 32° 42' north latitude, and between 88° 54' and 119° 25' of longitude west of Greenwich.

It is bounded on the north by the United States, on the east by the Gulf of Mexico, on the southeast by Guatemala, and on the south and west by the Pacific Ocean.

The frontier line which separates Mexico from the United States starts near the mouth of the Rio Grande from a point in the sea three leagues from the coast, follows the line of the river to its intersection with the parallel of latitude 31° 37' 47" N. (at Ciudad Juarez), runs in a straight line westward one hundred miles, then bends to the south to 31° 20', then follows the parallel westward to 111° of longitude west from Greenwich, and continues in a straight line to a point on the Rio Colorado twenty miles from its confluence with the river Gila, then it turns toward the north of this confluence and bends toward the west, following the line between Lower and Upper California. From Ciudad Juarez westward the boundary lines are marked with two hundred and fifty-eight massive iron and stone monuments. It has a northern frontier of fourteen hundred and a southern of three hundred and forty-five miles. It has a seaboard of sixteen hundred and seventy-seven miles on the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea, two thousand and forty on the Gulf of California, and four thousand four hundred and eight on the Pacific Ocean, making six thousand and eighty-six in all.

The area of this immense republic is nearly two million square kilometres, say seven hundred and fifty-two thousand square miles, that of the United States being about three million six hundred thousand square miles, so that Mexico has an area of about one-fifth that of our great territory, a fact which few realize. The greatest length of the country is two thousand eight hundred kilometres (seventeen hundred and fifty miles), and the greatest width twelve hundred kilometres (seven hundred and fifty miles), while the least is two hundred and eighty-five metres (one hundred and seventy-five miles) at the Isthmus of Tehuantepec.

So few outsiders have anything more than a general idea of Mexico that I may be pardoned for going into still further details.

Mexico comprises an elevated table-land one thousand kilometres (six hundred and twenty-five miles) in width in the north, and from one hundred and eighty to two hundred kilometres (one hundred and twelve to one hundred and twenty-five miles) at the south, in the