

COFFEE AND INDIA- RUBBER CULTURE IN MEXICO

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Coffee and india-rubber culture in Mexico by Matias Romero

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MATIAS ROMERO

**COFFEE AND INDIA-
RUBBER CULTURE
IN MEXICO**

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Mexico. A Study of its Geography, Statistics, History, and its Relations with the United States. By **MATIAS ROMERO**, late Minister in Washington from Mexico. 8° . \$4.50

Geographical and Statistical Notes on Mexico. (Comprising the first division of the larger work.) 8° \$2.00

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ABRIDGED

BY
MATIAS ROMERO

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INTRODUCTION.

When, after serving five years, from 1868 to 1871, as Secretary of the Treasury in Mexico under President Juarez's administration, I was obliged to resign, my health being so greatly broken down as to make it impossible for me to continue discharging the duties of that responsible, and at the time, very difficult office, feeling that if I remained in the City of Mexico, I could not regain my health as I would be subject to continual mental excitement, I made up my mind to live in the country and occupy my time in agricultural pursuits. Before deciding what branch of agriculture I should follow, I made a tour of inspection to the most favored regions of Mexico and found that india-rubber and coffee raising seemed to be the most promising and profitable undertakings. The place which I thought best adapted to both of these products was the district of Soconusco, one of the counties of the State of Chiapas, in southeastern Mexico, bordering on Guatemala, and I concluded to settle there and apply myself to coffee and india-rubber culture.

My public duties for the last eighteen years have not allowed me much time to make new studies on coffee culture, but the interest I take in coffee raising has made me read all that came in my way on the subject; and I also made in 1896 special visits to the new coffee districts in the State of Oaxaca, Mexico, to study their conditions. I am very sorry that I have not the time indispensable to revise this edition, and have to publish it as it came out in Spanish, several years ago.

My sudden departure from Soconusco made me abandon and lose everything I had there. I, therefore, did not see grown the trees I had planted, but they grew well and yielded a large amount of fruit, of which a relative of mine availed himself, who made out of that plantation a large fortune, and finally bought from me the land occupied by the plantation at about the price of land there when the purchase was made.

In the several trips of inspection which I made in Mexico, I was careful to study coffee culture in every district I visited, and I published in the newspapers the result of my studies in the shape of

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articles relating to each district. They were finally reprinted in a book on the State of Oaxaca, which I published in Barcelona in 1886. It would take a great deal of space to publish them here, and they do not contain, so far as rules for coffee culture are concerned, any more information than appears in my manual on the subject.

GEOGRAPHY

LOCATION, BOUNDARIES, AND AREA.

Location.—Mexico is situated between $14^{\circ} 30' 42''$ and $32^{\circ} 42'$ north latitude, and between $86^{\circ} 46' 8''$ and $117^{\circ} 7' 31'' 89$ longitude west of the meridian of Greenwich, embracing therefore $18^{\circ} 11' 18''$ of latitude and $30^{\circ} 21' 23'' 89$ of longitude. It has an area of 767,326 square miles. It is bounded on the north by the United States of America, on the southeast by Guatemala and Belize, on the south and west by the Pacific Ocean, and on the north and east by the Gulf of Mexico and the Carribean Sea.

Boundary with the United States.—The boundary with the United States is fixed by the treaties of February 2, 1848, and December 30, 1853, and begins at the mouth of the Rio Grande River on the Gulf of Mexico, follows the river for 1136 miles, to the point where it strikes parallel $31^{\circ} 47'$ north latitude, beyond El Paso, Texas, and from there runs along said parallel for a distance of one hundred miles, and thence south to parallel $31^{\circ} 20'$ north latitude; from there west along this parallel as far as the 111th meridian of longitude west of Greenwich; thence in a straight line to a point on the Colorado River, twenty English miles below the junction of the Gila; thence up the middle of the said River Colorado to the intersection with the old line between Upper and Lower California, and thence to a point on the Pacific Ocean, distant one marine league due south of the southernmost point of the Bay of San Diego on the Pacific; the total distance from El Paso to the Pacific being 674 miles. The whole extent of the boundry line between the two countries is 1833 miles.

The boundary line with the United States runs from southeast to northwest, the mouth of the Rio Grande being in $25^{\circ} 57' 14'' 74''$ north latitude; while the line reaches on the Pacific latitude $32^{\circ} 32' 1'' 34''$; the point where the boundary line strikes the Colorado River is farther north, reaching $32^{\circ} 42'$ of north latitude. Mexico has, therefore, on the western, or Pacific side, $6^{\circ} 34' 46'' 20''$ of latitude more than on the eastern or the Gulf of Mexico side.

General Characteristics.—Mexico is bounded on the east by the long curve of the Gulf of Mexico and by the Caribbean Sea, and its eastern coast is 1727 miles long; on the west it is washed by the Pacific Ocean, its coast describing the arc of a still larger circle, for a length of 4574 miles; but after passing the latitude of the City of Mexico, about the meridian 19° of north latitude, going south, the continent makes a decided turn towards the east, the Gulf of Mexico forming the northern border, and the Pacific Ocean the southern border.

Mexico has the shape of a cornucopia, with its narrowest end tapering toward the southwest, its convex and concave sides facing the Pacific and the Atlantic, respectively, and its widest end toward the north, or the United States. I look forward to the time, which I do not think far distant, considering our continuity of territory to the United States and our immense elements of wealth, when we shall be able to provide the United States with most of the tropical products, such as sugar, coffee, tobacco, india-rubber, etc.,¹ which they now import from several other countries.

The widest portion of Mexico is, therefore, its northern extremity, or its boundary with the United States. The narrowest point is the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, about one hundred miles from one ocean to the other; and after passing it the country expands again to the southeast towards Yucatan and Chiapas until it reaches the boundary with Guatemala and Belize.

The Mexican Southern Railway, from Puebla to Oaxaca, descends in a few hours, by a series of fertile terraces, from an elevation of seven thousand feet to one of about seventeen hundred and fifty feet, when the wonderful Cañon de los Cues is reached, a region of cocoa-nuts and bananas. But all the valleys and terraces in March are green or yellow with wheat and corn and sugar-cane. It confuses one's ideas to pass a field of wheat, the green blades just springing from the ground, and then a field ripe for harvest, and then a threshing-floor where the grain is being trodden out by mules. This means that you can plant and reap every day in the year, if you can obtain water in the dry season, and do not wait for the regular and copious summer rains.

The magnificent arboreal vegetation embraces one hundred and fourteen different species of building timber and cabinet woods, includ-

¹ In his *Notes on Mexico*, Lempriere, a distinguished traveller and historian, says: "The merciful hand of Providence has bestowed on the Mexicans a magnificent land, abounding in resources of all kinds—a land where none ought to be poor, and where misery ought to be unknown—a land whose products and riches of every kind are abundant and as varied as they are rich. It is a country endowed to profusion with every gift that man can desire or envy; all the metals from gold to lead; every sort of climate, from perpetual snow to tropical heat, and of inconceivable fertility."