

**A JOURNEY IN SOUTHEASTERN
MEXICO; NARRATIVE OF
EXPERIENCES AND OBSERVATIONS
ON AGRICULTURAL AND
INDUSTRIAL CONDITIONS**

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A Journey in Southeastern Mexico; Narrative of Experiences and Observations on Agricultural and Industrial Conditions by Henry H. Harper

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BY
HENRY H. HARPER

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE volume here presented to the reader does not profess to be a history or description of Mexico as a whole, nor does it claim to be typical of all sections of the country. It deals simply with an out-of-the-way and little-known region, accompanied by a history of personal experiences, with comment upon conditions almost or quite unknown to the ordinary traveler.

Many books upon Mexico have been written—a few by competent and others by incompetent hands—in which the writers sometimes charge each other with misstatements and inaccuracies, doubtless oftentimes with reason. However that may be, I have yet to discover among them a narrative, pure and simple, of travel, experiences and observations in the more obscure parts of that country, divested of long and tedious topographical descriptions. Narrations which might be of interest, once begun, are soon lost in discussion of religious, political, and economic problems, or in singing the praises of "the redoubtable Cortez," or the indefatigable somebody else who is remembered chiefly for the number of people

he caused to be killed ; or in describing the beauty of some great valley or hill which the reader perhaps never saw and never will see.

I have always felt that a book should never be printed unless it is designed to serve some worthy purpose, and that as soon as the author has written enough to convey his message clearly he should stop. There are many books in which the essential points could be encompassed within half the number of pages allotted to their contents. A good twenty-minute sermon is better than a fairly good two-hour sermon ; hence I believe in short sermons,—and short books.

With this conviction, before placing this manuscript in the hands of the printer I sought to ascertain what possible good might be accomplished by its issue in printed form. My first thought was to consult some authority, upon the frankness and trustworthiness of whose opinion I could rely with certainty. I therefore placed the manuscript in the hands of my friend Mr. Charles E. Hurd, whose excellent scholarship and sound literary judgment, coupled with a life-long experience as an editor and critical reviewer, qualify him as an authority second to none in this country. He has done me the honor voluntarily to prepare a few introductory lines which are printed herein.

In view of the probability that very few, if any, among the restricted circle who read this book will ever traverse the territory described, I am

forced to conclude that for the present it can serve no better purpose than that of affording such entertainment as may be derived from the mere reading of the narrative. If, however, it should by chance fall into the hands of any individual who contemplates traveling, or investing money, in this district, it might prove to be of a value equal to the entire cost of the issue. Moreover, it may serve a useful purpose in enlightening and entertaining those who are content to leave to others the pleasures of travel as well as the profits derived from investments in the rural agricultural districts of Mexico.

Possibly a hundred years hence the experiences, observations, and modes of travel herein noted will be so far outgrown as to make them seem curious to the traveler who may cover the same territory, but I predict that even a thousand years from now the conditions there will not undergo so radical a change that the traveler may not encounter the same identical customs and the same aggravating pests and discomforts that are so prevalent today. Doubtless others have traversed this territory with similar motives, and have made practically the same mental observations, but I do not find that anyone has taken the pains to record them either as a note of warning to others, or as a means of replenishing a depleted exchequer.

In issuing this book I feel somewhat as I imagine Horace did when he wrote his ode to