

MEXICO OF TO-DAY

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ILLUSTRATED

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PREFACE.

THE writer of the following pages, whose contents appeared in a series of letters to *The Springfield Republican*, lays no claim to having prepared a guide-book, a history, or an exhaustive treatise. He has aimed to deal fairly, and in a representative way, with Mexico as she is; to exhibit the country, the climate, the people, their politics, their life, and the national outlook, exactly as they all united to impress an unprejudiced observer from the United States. The deep human interests, the problems of society and government, the conditions that surround business, the possibilities for the railroads, the charms of scenery and phases of a romantic and ancient civilization—these are all treated from the standpoint of American citizenship. If the result shall happily be to give the reader a more intelligent conception of our southern sister republic, and to invoke patience and charity in judging of the questions that must long vex the statesmanship of Mexico, the purpose of this little volume will have been abundantly accomplished.

The author wishes to acknowledge his special obligation to Frederic R. Guernsey, of the city of Mexico.

SPRINGFIELD, MASS.

MEXICO OF TO-DAY.

CHAPTER I.

FROM NEW YORK TO MEXICO.

I.

FROM Chicago to the city of Mexico Continental Railroad Building. lies an iron roadway about three thousand miles long. Its existence illustrates something of what has been accomplished in developing the resources of the United States since Samuel Bowles made his trip "Across the Continent" with Schnyler Colfax in 1865. Then the Union Pacific road was just beginning to feel its pioneer way towards the setting sun and into the comparatively unknown West. It was a vast national enterprise, the great work of peace to follow the war, whose progress was a marvel; and the undertaking chained the attention of the continent. But the longing with which the advance of quick transit was then looked for can never be paralleled in the United States, and the contrast with to-day is most impressive.

Now railways net the country like the web of an industrious spider. The Northern Pacific, the Union and Central Pacific, the Southern Pacific, and the Atlantic and Pacific roads are in operation—each with connecting lines

that slash the country in all directions—and Canada, also, has her transcontinental railway. To all these must be added this link between the neighboring North American republics, an achievement which contributes much to the glory of Boston as a financial centre.

The citizen of some less favored spot may on occasion indulge in good-humored raillery over that provincialism which is so characteristic of the Hub of the Universe; but he will not forget at the same time that the conservatism of State Street has made it a reservoir of capital upon which the growing and often presumptuously intolerant West has made the most liberal drafts. And the new West has not yet worn out its welcome, or visibly lowered the supply of the wherewithal needed to build railroads and to found and develop cities and counties and states. The influence of Boston is something to be proud of on the material side, no less than are those literary and social features that will go without any new rehearsal here. Her capitalists pushed forward the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy, the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fé, and the Mexican Central railroads, which form the route over which the land tourist reaches Mexico. Our general observation is further illustrated by the fact that Boston men are also leading spirits in the management of the Northern Pacific, the Union Pacific, and the Oregon Navigation Company. In fact, capital from the chief city of Massachusetts goes far afield now, as it used to cross the seas in the East Indian and China and South American trade, and it adventures still under trained and able pilots and captains.

II.

Chicago and its At-
mosphere. For the Easterner the West includes Chicago, just as it used to do, but such a view only marks the "freshness" of him who holds it. Illinois is the old West now, the seat of a comparatively ancient civilization, distant only a day and a night from New York; and membership in the old settlers' association entitles one to the same veneration that young people paid to the survivors of the Revolution before the civil war gave us a new and greater generation of heroes.

But this largest city of the West impresses one still with more of promise than fulfilment, astonishing as her growth has been. It is the fashion among newspapers to cavil at Chicago, but the young giant of the prairies is only in the first flush of youth—the very dawn of mighty manhood. There will be method and solidity in the development of the city from this point, in proof of which one can look at the grouping of the magnificent public buildings that will, after a time, be nowhere surpassed in the Union. In her residences Chicago has come to lead all the American cities, with possibly the exception of Washington. Her rich men have built many palaces, some of them most offensively pretentious, but the prevailing architecture is not unattractive, and much of it is distinctly meritorious. The best houses are constructed for a future, though the descendants of the builders may not occupy them; and granite, marble, brown, gray, and green stone, and brick are piled up in many splendid forms. The variety of architecture employed marks a satisfactory advance over New York conventionalism, and the prim brown-stone front that stands stiffly up to its neighbor

is going out of fashion. The new houses are set in the midst of grass plots, and each has been given a pleasing individuality and independence.

We begin to find in Chicago a change of air—that the young men are at the front. The leaders of fifty and sixty years old are accustomed to step aside and let younger hands bear the burden of the load. It is a division of labor that youth applauds, and by such withdrawals something is conceded to the need for the conservation of human life which is so universally ignored in American society. The thrill, the push, the resistless vigor of an intense first outpouring of energy mark every enterprise, and make up the very atmosphere of business. No need here to repeat that weary Eastern plaint—Give the young man a chance! His is the power by right of public demand in the West.

III.

Random Notes of the West. In going to Mexico we cut across Illinois, Missouri, and Kansas, cross the southeastern corner of Colorado, pass down through the centre of New Mexico, and touch the extreme western tip of Texas at El Paso. Then we run down over the table-lands of Mexico. With good connections the city of Mexico is distant a week from New York.

From Chicago to Kansas City consumes from 12.30 P.M. until 9 A.M. of the following day. Journeying over the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad one is not overwhelmed with admiration for what is exhibited by the way. Even in Illinois the newness is cheap and even painful—the churches and school-houses are all after the same ugly models—yet the villages and cities are entitled to full respect as pioneer work, and they are impressive as the sure evidences of an established prosperity that is rearing

its own enduring monuments. The best is crude enough at present—Dickens told of it all not very untruly in his "American Notes"—but, withal, the outlook is grand beyond words when we look forward to the time when this heart of the continent shall beat with full life, and teem with the vitality of perfect maturity.

Down from Kansas City the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fé road rolls out one thousand and fifty miles to the Texan border. An hour between trains admits of a trip in the cable cars up and down the abrupt bluffs that gully that most western city of Missouri, where one hundred thousand people have been packed into a spot adapted for ten thousand. The cable system appears to work perfectly, and the people are accommodated for the present; but in time economy and convenience will harness electricity to this local problem. Already the Daft system is doing a work much like this in Baltimore, for the infancy of electrical development is about over.

The ride from Kansas City to El Paso, Texas, occupies from Wednesday at 10.40 A.M. to 3 P.M. on Friday. Through Kansas there is displayed a beautiful panorama of cultivated farms, and a community life that is unmistakably from New England. It is worth while to notice the universal reign of the local newspaper through this region that is attracting rather more than its share of settlers. The *Lawrence Journal*, *Topeka Capital*, *Emporia News*, and *Dodge City Globe*—these are a few of the dailies that appear along the way, and each hamlet is proud of its weekly trumpet of fame. These sheets are full of the local color, for home-doings furnish their chief feature. The editor understands his mission so well that none need tell him in what the primary office of the home journal consists—he sees and fills it with intelligence and industry.