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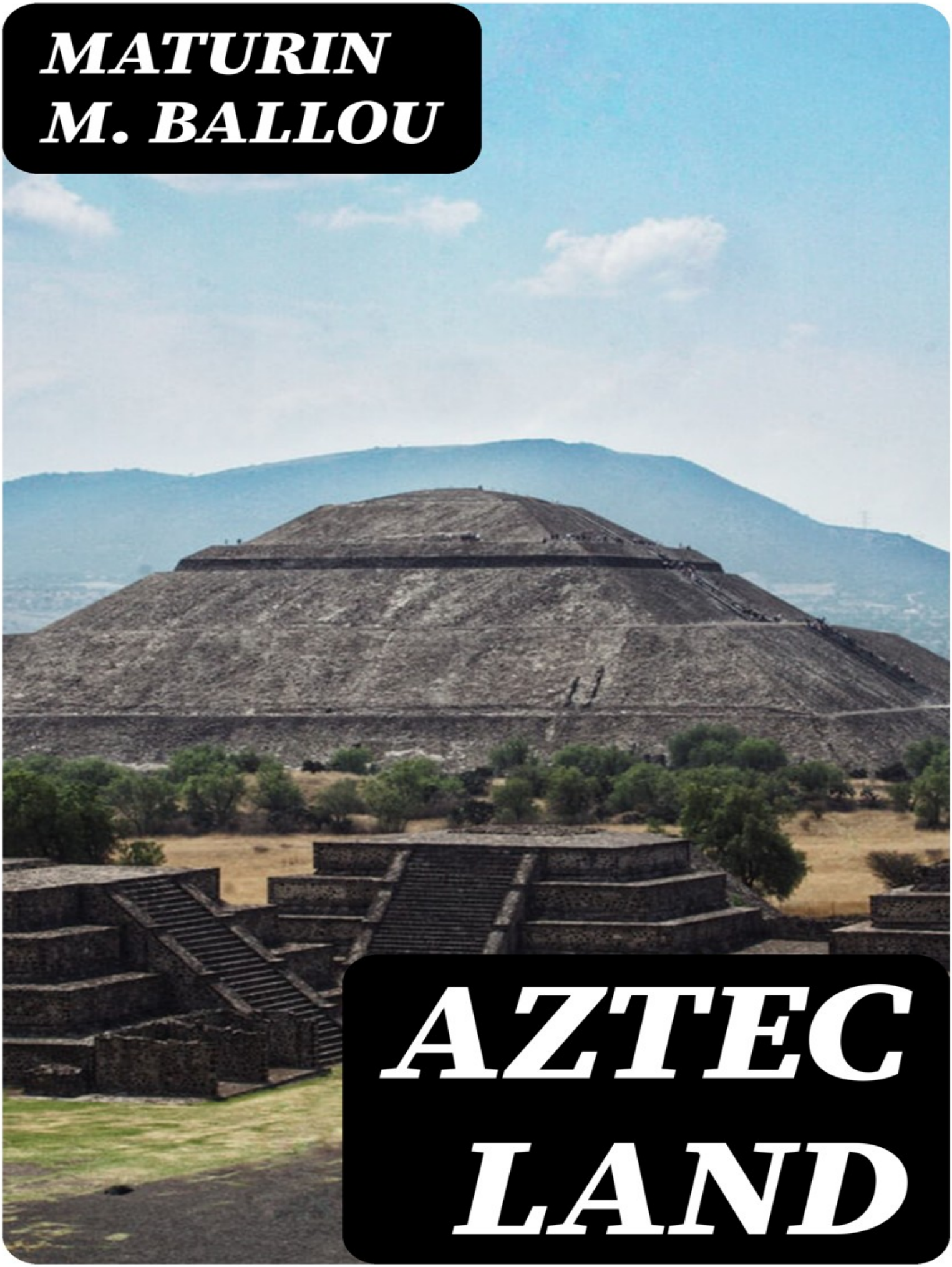

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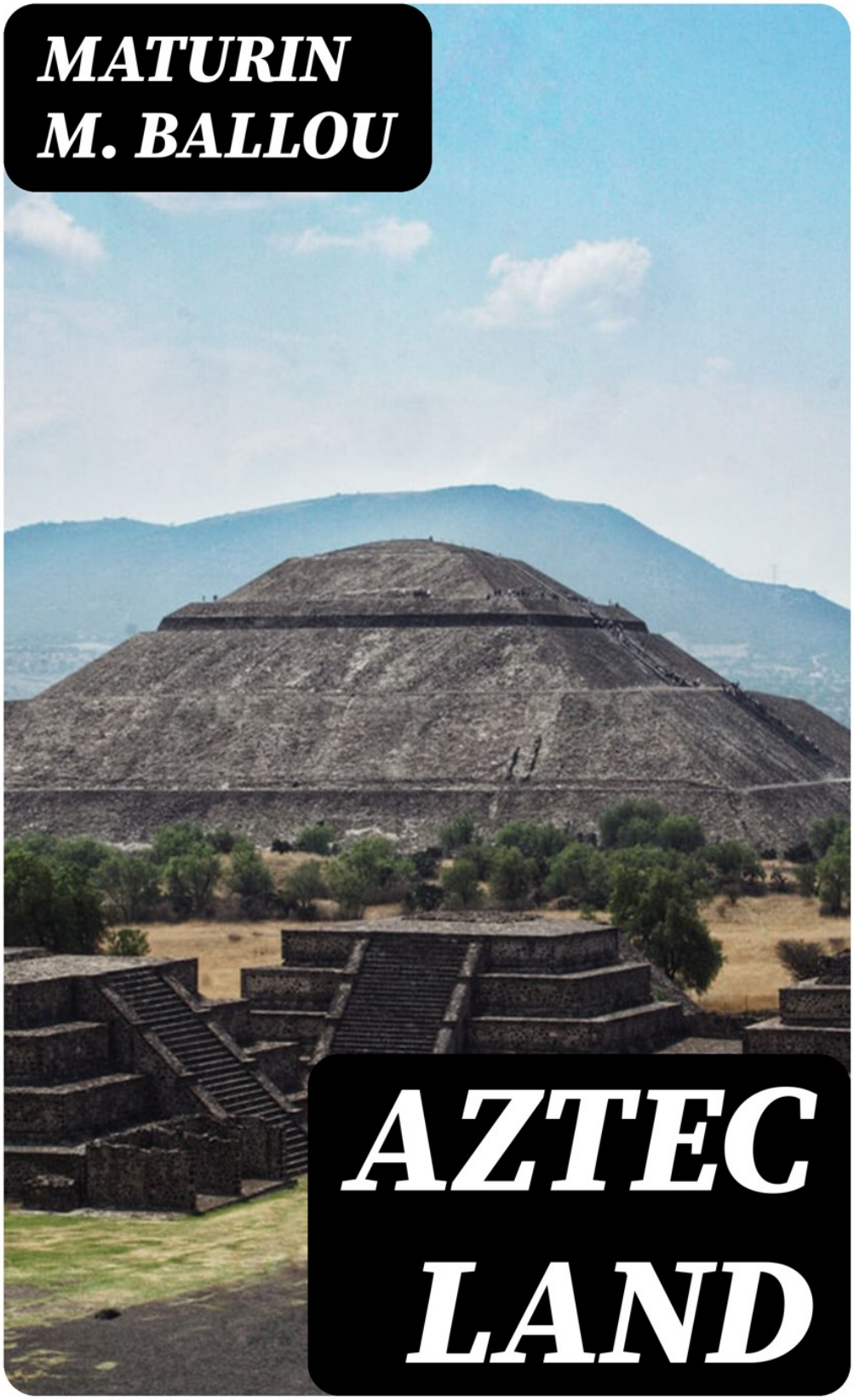
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Maturin M. Ballou

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Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info

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PREFACE.

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Having resolved to visit Mexico, the question first to be considered was how to do so in the most advantageous manner. Repairing to the office of Messrs. Raymond & Whitcomb, in Boston, after a brief consultation with those experienced organizers of travel, the author handed the firm a check for the cost of a round trip to Mexico and back. On the following day he took his seat in a Pullman parlor car in Boston, to occupy the same section until his return from an excursion of ten thousand miles. A select party of ladies and gentlemen came together at the same time in the Fitchburg railroad station, most of whom were strangers to each other, but who were united by the same purpose. The traveler lives, eats, and sleeps in the vestibule train, while *en route*, in which he first embarks, until his return to the starting-point, a dining-car, with reading and writing rooms, also forming a part of the train. All care regarding the routes to be followed, as to hotel accommodations while stopping in large cities, side excursions, and the providing of domestic necessities, are dismissed from his mind. He luxuriates in the pleasure of seeing a strange and beautiful land, without a thought as to the *modus operandi*, or the means by which detail is conquered. In short, he dons Fortunatus's cap, and permits events to develop themselves to his intense delight. Such was the author's experience on the occasion concerning which these wayside views of Mexico were written. It was a holiday journey, but it is hoped

that a description of it may impart to the general reader a portion of the pleasure and useful information which the author realized from an excursion into Aztec Land, full of novel and uninterrupted enjoyment.

M. M. B.

AZTEC LAND.

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CHAPTER I.

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Locality and Political Divisions of Aztec Land.—Spanish Historians.—Boundaries.—Climate.—Egyptian Resemblances.—Products of the Country.—Antiquities.—Origin of Races.—Early Civilization.—Pictorial Writings.—Aboriginal Money.—Aztec Religious Sacrifices.—A Voluptuous Court.—Mexican Independence.—European Civilization introduced by Cortez.—Civil Wars.—The Maximilian Fiasco.—Revival of Mexican Progress.—A Country facing on Two Oceans.—A Native Writer's Statement.—Divorce of Church and State.

Bordering upon the United States on the extreme southwest, for a distance of more than two thousand miles, is a republic which represents a civilization possibly as old as that of Egypt; a land, notwithstanding its proximity to us, of which the average American knows less than he does of France or Italy, but which rivals them in natural picturesqueness, and nearly equals them in historic interest.

It is a country which is much misunderstood and almost wholly misrepresented. It may be called the land of tradition and romance, whose true story is most poetic and sanguinary. Such is Mexico, with her twenty-seven independent states, a federal district in which is situated the national capital, and the territory of Lower California,—a widespread country, containing in all a population of between ten and eleven millions. As in the instance of this Union, each state controls its internal affairs so far as it can

do so without conflicting with the laws of the national government, which are explicitly defined. The nature of the constitution, adopted in 1857 by the combined states, is that of a republic pure and simple, thoroughly democratic in its provisions. The national power resides in the people, from whom emanates all public authority. The glowing pen of Prescott has rendered us all familiar with the romantic side of Mexican history, but legitimate knowledge of her primitive story is, unfortunately, of the most fragmentary character. Our information concerning the early inhabitants comes almost solely through the writings of irresponsible monks and priests who could neither see nor represent anything relative to an idolatrous people save in accordance with the special interests of their own church; or from Spanish historians who had never set foot upon the territory of which they wrote, and who consequently repeated with heightened color the legends, traditions, and exaggerations of others. "The general opinion may be expressed," says Janvier, in his "Mexican Guide," "in regard to the writings concerning this period that, as a rule, a most gorgeous superstructure of fancy has been raised upon a very meagre foundation of fact. As romance, information of this highly imaginative sort is entertaining, but it is not edifying." One would be glad to get at the other side of the Aztec story, which, we suspect, would place the chivalric invaders in a very different light from that of their own boastful records, and also enable us to form a more just and truthful opinion of the aborigines themselves. That their numbers, religious sacrifices, and barbaric excesses are generally overdrawn is perfectly manifest. Every fair-minded student of history

frankly admits this. It was necessary for Cortez and his followers to paint the character of the Aztecs in darkest hues to palliate and excuse, in a measure, their own wholesale rapine and murder. It was the elder Dumas who said, "Truth is liable to be left-handed in history." As Cortez was a champion of the Roman Catholic Church, that institution did not hesitate to represent his achievements so as to redound to its own glory. "Posterity is too often deceived by the vague hyperboles of poets and rhetoricians," says Macaulay, "who mistake the splendor of a court for the happiness of a people." No one can forget the magnificence of Montezuma's household as represented by the chroniclers, and as magnified by time and distance.

Let us consider for a moment the geographical situation of this great southland, which is separated from us only by a comparatively insignificant stream of water.

The present republic of Mexico is bounded on the north by the United States, from which it is separated in part by the narrow Rio Grande; on the south by Guatemala, Balize, and the Pacific Ocean; on the east by the Gulf of Mexico; and on the west by the Pacific Ocean, extending as far north as the Bay of San Diego, California. Of its nearly six thousand miles of coast line, sixteen hundred are on the Gulf of Mexico and forty-two hundred miles are on the Pacific. The topographical aspect of the country has been not inappropriately likened to an inverted cornucopia. Its greatest length from northwest to southeast is almost exactly two thousand miles, and its greatest width, which is at the twenty-sixth degree of north latitude, is seven hundred and fifty miles. The minimum width is at the

Isthmus of Tehuantepec, where it contracts to a hundred and fifty miles. The area of the entire republic is probably a little less than eight hundred thousand square miles. Trustworthy statistics relating to Mexico are not attainable. Even official reports are scarcely better than estimates. Carlos Butterfield, accredited statistician, makes the area of the republic about thirty-three thousand square miles less than the figures we have given. He also calculates that the density of the population is some ten or eleven to the square mile. Other authorities, however, give the area much nearer to our own figures. A detailed survey which would enable us to get at a satisfactory aggregate has never been made, so that a careful estimate is all we have to depend upon.

The climate of the country is divided by common acceptation into three zones, each of which is well defined: it being hot in the *tierra caliente*, or hot lands, of the coast; temperate in the *tierra templada*, or region between three thousand and six thousand feet above the level of the sea; and cold in the *tierra fria*, or region at an elevation exceeding six thousand feet. In the first named the extreme heat is 100° Fahr.; in the last the extreme of cold is 20° above zero. In the national capital the mercury ranges between 65° and 75° Fahr. throughout the year. In fact, every climate known to the traveler may be met with between Vera Cruz and the capital of the republic. In the neighborhood of Orizaba one finds sugar-cane and Indian corn, tobacco and palm-trees, bananas and peaches, growing side by side.

Let us state in brief, for general information, the main products of these three geographical divisions. In the hot region we find cotton, vanilla, hemp, pepper, cocoa, oranges, bananas, indigo, rice, and various other tropical fruits. In the temperate region, tobacco, coffee, sugar, maize, the brown bean, peas, and most of the favorite northern fruits. Here extreme heat and frost are alike unknown. In the cold region, all of the hardy vegetables, such as potatoes, beets, carrots, and the cereals, wheat growing at as high an elevation as eighty-five hundred feet, while two crops annually are grown in various sections of the *tierra templada*. Tobacco is indigenous in Mexico, and derives its name from Tabaco in Yucatan. Indian corn and brown beans, two of the principal sources of the food consumed by the natives, are grown in all the states of the republic.

Mexico is situated in the same degree of latitude in the Western Hemisphere that Egypt occupies in the Eastern, the Tropic of Cancer dividing both countries in the centre. There is a striking resemblance between them, also, in many other respects, such as architecture, vegetation, domestic utensils, mode of cultivating the land, ancient pyramids, and idols, while both afford abundant tokens of a history antedating all accredited record. Toltec and Aztec antiquities bear a remarkable resemblance to the old Egyptian remains to be found in the museums of Europe and America. Speaking of these evidences of a former and unknown race still to be found in southern Mexico, especially in Yucatan, Wilson the historian says: "In their solidity they strikingly remind us of the best productions of Egyptian art. Nor are

they less venerable in appearance than those which excite our admiration in the valley of the Nile. Their points of resemblance, too, are so numerous, they carry to the beholder a conviction that the architects on this side of the ocean were familiar with the models on the other." Doubtless the volcanic soil of Mexico conceals vast remains of the far past, even as Pompeii was covered and continued unsuspected for centuries, until accident led to its being gradually exhumed. Whole cities are known to have disappeared in various parts of Mexico, leaving no more evidence of their existence than may be found in a few broken columns or some half-disintegrated stones. Of this mutability we shall have ample evidence as we progress on our route through the several states. When in various parts of the country we see the native laborers irrigating the land in the style which prevailed thousands of years ago on the banks of the Nile, and behold the dark-hued women slightly clothed in a white cotton fabric with faces half-concealed, while they bear water jars upon their heads, we seem to breathe the very atmosphere of Asia. The rapid introduction of railroads and the modern facilities for travel are fast rendering us as familiar with the characteristics of this land of the Montezumas as we have long been with that of the Pharaohs; and though it has not the halo of Biblical story to recommend it to us, yet Mexico is not lacking in numberless legends, poetic associations, and the charm of a tragic history quite as picturesque and absorbing as that of any portion of the East. Many intelligent students of history believe that the first inhabitants of this continent probably came from Asia by way of Behring Strait or the Aleutian

Islands, which may at some period in past ages have extended across the north Pacific Ocean; the outermost island of this group (Attoo), it will be remembered, is at this time but four hundred miles from the Asiatic coast, whence it is believed to have been originally peopled.

Relative to the early peopling of our continent, Bancroft says: "It is shown pretty conclusively that the American people and the American civilization, if not indigenous to the New World, were introduced from the Old at *a period long preceding any to which we are carried, by the traditional or monumental annals of either continent*. We have found no evidence of any populating or civilizing migration across the ocean from east to west, north or south, within historic times. Nothing approaching identity has been discovered between any two nations separated by the Atlantic or Pacific. No positive record appears even of communication between America and the Old World,—intentionally by commercial, exploring, or warlike expeditions, or accidentally by shipwreck,—previous to the voyages of the Northmen in the tenth century; yet that such communication did take place, in many instances and at different periods, is extremely probable."

The emigrants of whom we have spoken are supposed to have been nomadic, to have first built cities in the north,—that is, the present United States; it is not improbable that they were the mound-builders of Ohio and the Mississippi valleys, and that they afterward migrated southward into Mexico. These pioneers were called Toltecs, and were settled south of the Rio Grande a thousand years ago, more or less, their capital being what is known to-day as the city

of Tula, forty miles northwest of the present capital of Mexico, where many antique and curious remains still interest the traveler. The names of the nine Toltec kings who ruled up to A. D. 1097 are well ascertained. It was the fourth king, if we may believe the chroniclers, who built the city of Teotihuacan, that is, "the habitation of the gods," the only visible remains of which are the two earth pyramids of the sun and the moon. Of these we shall have occasion to treat more at length in a future chapter. In speaking of the most ancient remains at Tula and elsewhere in Mexico, Wilson pronounces them to be clearly Egyptian. It is made plain by authentic writers upon the subject that this people enjoyed a large degree of civilization; the ruins of temples supposed to have been built by them in various parts of the country, especially in Yucatan, also prove this. Humboldt says that in 648 A. D. the Toltecs had a solar year more perfect than that of the Greeks and Romans. Other-writers tell us that they were a worthy people, averse to war, allied to virtue, to cleanliness, and good manners, detesting falsehood and treachery. They introduced the cultivation of maize and cotton, constructed extensive irrigating ditches, built roads, and were a progressive race. "But where is the country," asks Humboldt, "from which the Toltecs and Mexicans issued?" They were well housed, and even elegantly clothed, maintained public schools, and commemorated passing events by elaborate sculpture and by picture-writing. So complete was their system of hieroglyphics that they wrote upon religion, history, geography, and the arts. These records were nearly all destroyed by the malicious and bigoted iniquity of a Spanish priest named Zumarrage,

who made it his business to seek for and burn all tokens, great and small, which related to the history of this extremely interesting people. A few of these curious records, in the form of pictorial writing, yet remain in Mexico, principally in the National Museum at the capital, and some have found their way across the ocean to adorn the shelves of European libraries. One of these documents, still extant, represents the country as having first been settled by a race who came out of a great cave and traveled over the realm on the backs of turtles, founding cities and towns wherever they went. This will show that the traditions of the aborigines are so fabulous as scarcely to deserve mention. Touching the vandal act of the Catholic priest Zumarrage, Prescott says: "We contemplate with indignation the cruelties inflicted by the early conquerors. But indignation is qualified with contempt when we see them thus ruthlessly trampling out the sparks of knowledge, the common boon and property of all mankind. We may well doubt which has the strongest claim to civilization, the victor or the vanquished." We know that the early inhabitants reared palaces, temples, and pyramids, that they constructed a grand system of aqueducts for irrigating purposes, and for the liberal promotion of agriculture, being in many respects in advance of the Mexicans of to-day in the cultivation of the soil, as well as in some productions of art.

This people, after several centuries of occupation, seem to have been driven away, probably to South America, by the arrival of another race called Aztecs or Mexicans, about the year 1325,—some writers say much earlier,—who

finally, under the emperors known as the Montezumas, brought the country to a lofty height of barbaric and extravagant splendor, though they were largely, if not almost entirely, indebted to the discoveries and genius of their intelligent predecessors. The early faith of the Toltecs, it is claimed, was the adoration of the sun, moon, and stars. They offered to their representative gods flowers, fruits, and the life-blood of small animals. The sacrifice of human beings was later engrafted on their simple faith by other tribes.

History tells us that these aboriginal races did not possess stamped coin. They had certain signs of the value of different articles, which took the place of money. One of these, for example, is said to have been cacao beans counted into lots of eight thousand, or in sacks of twenty-four thousand each. To exchange for articles of daily necessity they used pieces of cotton cloth. Expensive objects were paid for in grains of gold dust, which were carried in quills. For the cheapest articles, copper pieces cut like the letter T were used. After the conquest, the earliest mint was established in Mexico, in 1538, by Don Antonio de Mendoza, who was the first viceroy.

When Cortez came from—in the light of history we should say, ran away from—Cuba to conquer and possess Mexico, in 1519, a hundred years before the Pilgrims lauded on the shore of Massachusetts Bay, he encountered a people who had reached, comparatively speaking, a high degree of civilization, though weighted by an idolatrous worship which was most terrible in its wild and reckless practice of human sacrifice, as represented by Spanish authorities. Their

imposing sculptures, curious arms, picture records, and rich, fanciful garments, filled the invaders with surprise and whetted their gross avariciousness. There was much that was strange and startling in their mythology, and even their idol worship and sacrificial rites bore evidence of sincerity. Altogether, this western empire presented a strange and fascinating spectacle to the eyes of the invaders, who flattered themselves that they would be doing God service by subjugating these idolaters, and substituting their own religion for that of the natives. At the time when the Spaniards arrived in the country, Montezuma II. was on the throne, one of the most extravagant of voluptuaries. According to the accounts of the early Spanish chroniclers, the ornaments worn by him must have been equal in elegance and value to the crown-jewels of any imperial family of Europe. Asiatic pomp and luxury could not go to greater extremes than these writers attribute to the Aztec court and its emperor. Cortez eagerly and unscrupulously possessed himself of these royal gems, and kept them concealed upon his person until his return to Spain. They are represented to have been worth "a nation's ransom," but were lost in the sea, where Cortez had thrown himself in a critical emergency. The broad amphitheatre, in the midst of which the capital of Anahuac—"by the waters"—was built, still remains; but the picturesque lake which beautified it, traversed by causeways and covered with floating gardens laden with trees and flowers, has disappeared. Though the conquered natives, roused at last to a spirit of madness by the unequaled cruelty and extortion of the victors, rose in a body and expelled them from their capital, still the ruthless

valor of Cortez and his followers, aided by artful alliance with disaffected native tribes, together with the superiority of the Spanish weapons, finally proved too much for the reigning power, and, after a brave and protracted struggle, the star of the Aztec dynasty set in blood.

Montezuma died a miserable death in the hands of Cortez; while Guatemozin, the last of the Aztec emperors, was ignominiously treated, tortured, and afterwards hanged by the Spanish conqueror.

Three hundred years of Spanish rule, extortion, rapacity, fraud, and bitter oppression followed,—a period of struggle for supremacy on the part of the Roman Catholic Church, during which it relentlessly crushed every vestige of opposition by means of that hideous monster, the Inquisition. During these three centuries, the same selfish policy actuated the home government towards Mexico as was exercised towards Cuba, namely, to extort from the country and its people the largest possible revenue for the Spanish treasury. Finally came the successful revolution which separated the country from continental Spain and achieved the independence of the nation.

We must not, however, blind ourselves to facts. Hateful as the Spanish rule in Mexico appears to us, we must admit that Cortez introduced European civilization, such as it was, into the country, and it has virtually continued until the present day. We see that under his rule great cities sprang into life, magnificent buildings were erected, national roads, viaducts, bridges, and aqueducts were built, on so grand a scale as to still challenge our admiration. Silver and gold were extracted from the mines, and together with

ornamental woods, precious stones, dyes and drugs were shipped in unlimited quantities to Spain, whereby her already richly endowed treasury became full to repletion. True, it was a period of false gods, of high living, and of vice; might made right; morality had not the same signification then as it has in our time. The conventionalities of one century become the vices of the next. Virtue and vice must, in a certain degree, be construed in relation to latitude and longitude. That which is sacred in Samoa to-day may be considered impious in Boston.

Cortez's expedition, which landed at Vera Cruz, April 21, 1519, was not the first to discover the continent in this neighborhood; he had been preceded nearly two years by a rich merchant of Cuba, who fitted out a couple of small vessels on his own account, mainly for the purpose of trading, and being also in search of that great lure, gold, which it was supposed existed in large quantities among the native tribes of the mainland. This adventurer, Francisco Hernandez de Cordova, landed near the present Cape Catoche, April 8, 1517, having brought with him only about one hundred men. As to the final result of that enterprise we are not informed, except that his landing was opposed by the natives, and a battle was fought in which fifteen or twenty Indians were killed and a number of Spaniards were wounded.

The fighting instinct of the people of Mexico was never exercised to better purpose than during the period between 1810 and 1821, in the gallant and successful war with the home government to establish their freedom. On the 15th day of September, 1810, a solemn declaration of

independence was made, and for eleven years, under various patriotic leaders, such as Hidalgo—their Washington—and the truly great Morelos, the trying fortunes of a relentless war were experienced, until August 24, 1821, when Spain was forced to give up the contest and retire humiliated from the field. Not, however, until so late as 1838 did she formally recognize the Mexican republic.

It is natural to pause for a moment in this connection, and contrast the past with the present status of Spain, a country which conquered, possessed, and misruled Mexico for so long a period. In the sixteenth century she threatened to become the mistress of the world. In art she held the foremost position. Murillo, Velasquez, and Ribiera were her honored sons; in literature she was represented by Cervantes, Lope de Vega, and Calderon; while of discoverers and conquerors she sent forth Columbus, Cortez, and Pizarro. The banners of Castile and Aragon floated alike on the Pacific and the Indian Oceans. Her warriors were adventurous and brave; her soldiers inherited the gallantry of the followers of Charles V. She was the court of Europe, the acknowledged leader of chivalry. How rapid has been her decadence! As in the plenitude of her power she was ambitious, cruel, and perfidious, so has the measure which she meted to others been in turn accorded to herself. To-day there are none so humble as to do her honor.

As years progressed, interstate struggles impoverished the land and decimated the number of its ruling spirits. To recall a list of the names of patriot leaders who laid down their lives during this half century and more of civil wars makes one shudder for man's inhumanity to man. Little

progress was made. The Romish Church held its parasitic clutch upon state and people, impoverishing and degrading both, until the burden became too great to bear; and, in 1857, the Laws of Reform were enacted and the constitution amended, causing the church to disgorge its millions of ill-gotten wealth, and also depriving it of its power for further national injury.

A brief but decisive war with the United States ended in the humble submission of Mexico, causing her to lose a large portion of her territory, amounting to more than one half its number of square miles. Probably very few of the readers of these pages could answer correctly, if they were asked what was the real cause of this war between the United States and Mexico. Let us briefly state the facts, since we shall incidentally refer more than once to the matter. In 1835, Texas, then a part of Mexico, rebelled against that government, and succeeded not only in achieving her independence, but also in being recognized as a distinct power by several of the nations of Europe, including England and France, as well as this country. After a lapse of nine or ten years, at the earnest solicitation of the inhabitants, Texas was admitted to the American Union. The Mexican government expressed great dissatisfaction at this, and sent troops to camp all along the Rio Grande, which compelled the President to order a division of our array there to protect the national interests. The Mexican troops crossed over their border and attacked our soldiers on Texan soil, killing sixteen Americans and capturing many prisoners. This was on April 24, 1846, and precipitated hostilities at once. After the battles of Palo Alto, May 8th,

and Resaca de la Palma, May 9th, both fought on Texan soil, and both defeats for the Mexicans, General Taylor crossed with his forces into Mexico and occupied Matamoras. The subsequent battles on Taylor's and Scott's lines resulted in a series of hard-won victories for our troops in every instance; until, finally, the flag of the United States floated triumphantly over the city of Mexico. It was not this country, but Mexico, which was the aggressor, and it was her foolhardiness and outrageous insult which brought about the war. There is not a power in Europe which would not have done precisely as this country did when thus attacked. The author knows very well that it is the fashion to berate our government for the punishment it inflicted upon the aggressive Mexicans, but we are not among those who believe that when nations or individuals are smitten upon one cheek they should turn the other for a like treatment. Mexico got what she deserved, that is, a thorough drubbing, and lost one half of her territorial possessions in return for a long series of aggressions.

Though thus geographically curtailed, she is still of mammoth proportions, exceeding in size Austria and Germany with Sweden, Norway, and the Netherlands combined; or, to make a more familiar comparison, Mexico is sixteen times larger than the State of New York, stretching through seventeen degrees of latitude and thirty degrees of longitude. Finally, there came the ridiculous and abortive attempt of Napoleon the Little to make a foreigner—Archduke Maximilian of Austria—Emperor of Mexico, in which Quixotic purpose he was at first abetted by England and Spain. After a bloody and fruitless struggle, backed by

all the subtle influence of the Roman Catholic Church, the French withdrew from the country in utter disgrace, while the royal interloper, deceived, deserted, and cheated by the weak, scheming mountebank on the French throne, was condemned to death by a Mexican court martial, and with two of his most notable and trusted generals was shot at Queretaro. Ill-advised as was the attempt to establish an empire on American soil, and although it resulted in such a bitter failure, involving the death of its principal actors, and terrible waste of human life, it must be admitted by every candid observer that Mexico made great material advance during the brief period of Maximilian's bastard government. The national capital was especially beautified, and it exhibits to-day the advantages of many grand improvements instituted and completed by Maximilian and "poor" Carlotta, his devoted wife, and daughter of Leopold I., king of the Belgians. The Mexicans will long remember that they owe their magnificent boulevard, the Paseo de la Reforma, to Maximilian, and their charmingly arranged Plaza Mayor to the refined and womanly taste of Carlotta.

At last it would seem as though the energies of this much distracted country, so long the victim of the priesthood, professional brigandage, and civil and foreign wars, have become diverted into channels of productive industry, developing resources of wealth and stability which have heretofore been unrecognized. A country facing upon two oceans, and having seven or eight railroad lines intersecting it in various directions, cannot remain *in statu quo*; it must take its place more or less promptly in the grand line of nations, all of whom are moving forward under the influence

of the progressive ideas of the nineteenth century. It is only since 1876 that Mexico has enjoyed anything like a stable government; and as her constitution is modeled upon our own, let us sincerely hope for the best results. General Porfirio Diaz, President of the republic, is a man whose official and private life commands the respect of the entire people. That his administration has given the country a grand impetus, has largely restored its credit, and insured a continuance of peace, seems to be an undisputed fact. His principal purpose is plainly to modernize Mexico. The twelve years from 1876, when he became president, until 1889, when his third term commenced, has proved to be the progressive age of the republic. He is of native birth, and rose from the ranks of the masses. The only opposition to his government is that of the church party, led by the Archbishop of Mexico, and supported by that great army of non-producers, the useless priests, who fatten upon the poor and superstitious populace. At present this party has no political power or influence, but is working at all times, in secret, silently awaiting an opportunity to sacrifice anything or everything to the sole interests of the Roman Catholic Church. "The political struggle in Mexico," says United States Commissioner William Eleroy Curtis, "since the independence of the republic, has been and will continue to be between antiquated, bigoted, and despotic Romanism, allied with the ancient aristocracy, under whose encouragement Maximilian came, on the one hand, and the spirit of intellectual, industrial, commercial, and social progress on the other."

Here, as in European countries, where this form of faith prevails, it is the women mostly—we might almost say solely, in Mexico—who give their attendance upon the ceremonies of the church. The male population are seldom seen within its walls, though yielding a sort of tacit acquiescence to the faith. We are speaking of large communities in the cities and among the more intelligent classes. The peons of the rural districts, the ignorant masses who do not think for themselves, but who are yet full of superstitious fears, are easily impressed by church paraphernalia, gorgeous trappings, and gilded images. This class, men and women, are completely under the guidance of the priesthood. "Although the clergy still exercise a powerful influence among the common people," says Commissioner Curtis, "whose superstitious ignorance has not yet been reached by the free schools and compulsory education law, in politics they are powerless." It was in 1857 that Mexico formally divorced the church and state by an amendment to her constitution, thereby granting unrestricted freedom of conscience and religious worship to all persons, sects, and churches. Several denominations in the United States avail themselves of this privilege, and in some of the cities Protestant churches have been established where regular weekly services are held. "With the overthrow of Montezuma's empire in 1520," says that distinguished native Mexican writer, Riveray Rio, "began the rule of the Spaniard, which lasted just three hundred years. During this time, Rome and Spain, priest and king, held this land and people as a joint possession. The greedy hand was ever reached out to seize alike the product of the mine and

soil. The people were enslaved for the aggrandizement and power of a foreign church and state. It was then that the Church of Rome fostered such a vast army of friars, priests, and nuns, acquired those vast landed estates, and erected such an incredible number of stone churches, great convents, inquisitorial buildings, Jesuit colleges, and gathered such vast stores of gold and silver. All this time the poor people were being reduced to the utmost poverty, and every right and opportunity for personal and civil advancement was taken from them. They were left to grope on in intellectual darkness. They could have no commerce with foreign nations. If they made any advance in national wealth, it was drained away for royal and ecclesiastical tribute. Superstition reigned under the false teachings of a corrupt priesthood, while the frightful Inquisition, by its cruel machinery, coerced the people to an abjectness that has scarcely had a parallel in human history. Under such a dispensation of evil rule, Mexico became of less and less importance among the family of nations."

This brief summary brings us to the peaceful and comparatively prosperous condition of the republic to-day, and prepares the canvas upon which to sketch the proposed pen pictures of this interesting country, with which we are so intimately connected, both politically and geographically.

CHAPTER II.

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Remarkably Fertile Soil.—Valuable Native Woods.—Mexican Flora.—Coffee and Tobacco.—Mineral Products.—Silver Mines.—Sugar Lands.—Manufactories.—Cortez's Presents to Charles V.—Water Power.—Coal Measures.—Railroads.—Historic Locality.—Social Characteristics.—People divided into Castes.—Peonage.—Radical Progress.—Education and the Priesthood.—A Threshing Machine.—Social Etiquette.—Political Organization of the Government.—Mexico the Synonym of Barbarism.—Production and Business Handicapped by an Excessive Tariff.

Mexico is remarkable for the fertility and peculiar productiveness of her soil, both of a vegetable and mineral character, though the former is very largely dependent upon irrigation, and almost everywhere suffers for want of intelligent treatment. As a striking proof of the fertility of the soil, an able writer upon the subject tells us, among other statistical facts, that while wheat cultivated in France and some other countries averages but six grains for one planted, Mexican soil gives an average product of twenty-two times the amount of seed which is sown. Humboldt was surprised at this when it was reported to him, and took pains to verify the fact, finding the statement to be absolutely correct. Being situated partly in the tropics and partly in the temperate zone, its vegetable products partake of both regions, and are varied in the extreme. In the hot lands are dense forests of rosewood, mahogany, and ebony, together with dyewoods of great commercial value, while in the temperate and cooler districts the oak and pine are

reasonably abundant. It must be admitted, however, that those districts situated near populous neighborhoods have been nearly denuded of their growth during centuries of waste and destruction by the conquering Spaniards. From this scarcity of commercial wood arises the absence of framed houses, and the universal use of stone and clay, or adobe, for building purposes. There is valuable wood enough in certain districts, which is still being wasted. The sleepers of the Monterey and Mexican Gulf railway are nearly all of ebony. Attention having been called to the fact, orders have been issued to save this wood for shipment to our Northern furniture manufacturers. Iron ties and sleepers are being substituted on the trunk lines of the railways as fast as the wooden ones decay, being found so much more durable. Those used on the Vera Cruz line are imported from England; on the Mexican Central, from the United States. There is a low, scrubby growth of wood on the table-lands and mountain sides, which is converted by the peons into charcoal and transported on the backs of the burros (jackasses) long distances for economical use in the cities and villages. All the delicious fruits of the West Indies are abundantly produced in the southern section, and all the substantial favorites of our Northern and Western States thrive luxuriantly in her middle and northern divisions. Some of the cultivated berries are remarkably developed; the strawberry, for instance, thrives beyond all precedent in central Mexico, and while larger, it is no less delicately flavored than our own choice varieties. The flora throughout Mexico is exceedingly rich and varied, botanists having recognized over ten thousand families of plants indigenous

to the soil. It appeared to the writer, however, that while the color of the flowers was intensified above that of our Northern States, their fragrance was not so well defined. Even the soft green mosses threw out a star-like blossom of tiny proportions, which seemed almost as full of expression as human eyes, while they emitted a subdued fragrance. The best-grown coffee of the country is in our estimation equal to the best grades of Mocha or Java, while the tobacco produced in several of the states compares favorably with the much-lauded brands of Cuba. The most fertile regions of Mexico lie on the east and west, where the districts decline abruptly from the great plateau, or table-land, towards the coast.

The Monterey and Mexican Gulf railway has lately opened access to most excellent land, suitable for sugar plantations, equal to the best in Louisiana devoted to this purpose, and which can be bought for a mere song, as the saying is. These lands are better adapted to sugar raising than those of the State just named, because frost is here unknown. In the opening of these tropical districts by railroad, connected with our Southern system, we have offered us the opportunity to secure all the products which we now get from Cuba. These staples are equal in quality, and can be landed at our principal commercial centres at a much less cost than is paid for shipments from that island. Such is the arbitrary rule of Spain in Cuba, and the miserable political condition of her people, that all business transacted in her ports is handicapped by regulations calculated to drive commerce away from her shores. The fact should also be recalled that while Mexico produces