Actopan
Real
Polotitlán
Huachinango
Real del Monte
Pachuca
Tulancingo
Alfafayucan
Tlautla
Jilotepec
Huehuetoca
Zumpango
Tizayuca
Los Reyes
Tepotzotlán
Cuautitlán
San Bartolo
Tlalnepantla
Tenayuca
Altacomulco
Teotihuacán
Acolman
Texcoco
MEXICO
D.F.
San Angel
La Venta
Santa Barbara
Río Frío
Ixtapalapa
Churubusco
Huipulco
Coyoacan
Tlalpan
Xochimilco
Tecomitl
Milpa Alta
Chalco
Texmelucan
Tlaxcala
Huejotzingo
Puebla
Cholula
Amecameca
Ozumba
Tenango
Tlayacapan
Tenancingo
Tepoztlán
Oaxtepec
Atlatlahuacan
Atlixco
Cuernavaca
Yautepec
Cocoyoc
Cuautlixo
Cuautla
Ixtapan de la Sal
Alpuyeca
Jonacantepec
Tlaltizapán
Cacahuamilpa
Tlaquiltenango
Matamoros Izúc
Puente de Ixtla
Jojutla

Enlarged Section of
MEXICO CITY AREA
(FOR BOTH MAPS)
PAVED ROAD
ALL WEATHE ROAD
DRY WEATHE ROAD
fifty miles

SAMUEL H. BRYANT 19

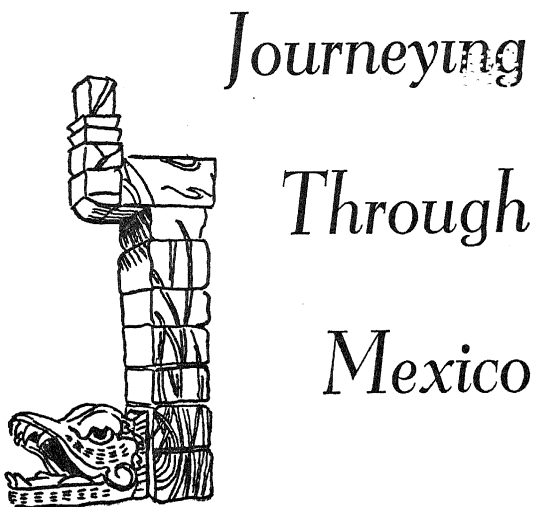
Books by MacKinley Helm

ANGEL MO' AND HER SON, ROLAND HAYES

MODERN MEXICAN PAINTERS

A MATTER OF LOVE

JOURNEYING THROUGH MEXICO



Journeying Through Mexico

by MacKINLEY HELM

DECORATIONS BY WILLIAM C. ESTLER

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Preface

I LIKE MEXICO. When I come down here, I always stay longer than I had meant to, sometimes a year or two longer. There is always so much to see and so much to do. It is also pleasant just to relax here and not see and do much of anything.

In fact, perhaps the keynote of a Mexican visit should be relaxation. Taking it easy, sitting around in the sun, postponing serious things till *mañana*. Too many people work too hard at their traveling, worry too much about their bowels and their baggage, fuss too much at waiters, bellboys, and chambermaids. We nervous Americans ought to let down a little in Mexico, taking things as they come, indulging in idleness, tasting strange food, and, like good neighbors, taking pleasure in Mexican company.

You could, if you liked, take a look at the country in about fifteen days of hitting the high spots. But you would not savor Mexico. If you only *have* fifteen days, spend some of them idly, have a good time, and come back again to drive through such of my chapters as you missed the first time. I do not work you up to a lather. I allow time for picnics and drinks and late suppers, besides poking about in all sorts of places that most tourists miss.

While my guidebook describes driving over Mexican

highways — on the ground that you can have the most fun with a car — you can follow my course by bus from the border to Mexico City and into the provinces. And if you come into the country by train or by airplane, you can visit most of the towns and the beaches by first- or second-class busses, in rented cars, or by plane.

I hope you will like it down here as much as I do. If, when you have made the trip, you have any amusing suggestions to make, please drop me a postal in care of the publishers.

MACKINLEY HELM
Cuernavaca, Morelos

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Journeying Through Mexico

CHAPTER I

Reading Up for the Trip

1. Ancient Mexico

ONE learns quickly, during one's visit to Mexico, that present and past there are all of one piece. The visitor everywhere sees the past spread before him along with the present — not only on antiquarian trips to the Pyramid of the Sun and to the ruins of Mitla and Monte Alban in the State of Oaxaca, but also in the timeless Indian towns through which he must creep in his car when he is out on the modern paved highways.

Crossing the Bering Strait some twenty-five thousand years before our own day, the first "Indians," migrant tribesmen from Asia, moved slowly southward through North America. Living on bison and fish, on powdered

nuts and wild berries, their descendants drifted down into Mexico and as far off as Peru. Wherever the tribes settled down to planting and harvesting, as in the highlands of Mexico, they built permanent towns where, along with the good American corn and beans in their fields, they cultivated the civilized arts of government, painting, sculpture, architecture, and ceremonial worship. The highest levels of North American culture were reached, within a few centuries after the founding of the first agricultural villages, between western Honduras and the Mexican midlands.

The Aztecs who lived in the Valley of Mexico at the time of the Spanish Conquest were descendants of various tribes which, converging there, had acquired one language, called Nahuatl, and congruous customs. They had settled on lake shore and island, where fish, duck, and wild turkeys abounded. They killed deer in the mountains which encircled the valley and planted cotton and corn in alluvial soil washed down every year from the hills. They lived, like their modern descendants, in houses of adobe or wattle, plastered with mud and snugly thatched every spring for the season of rain. The Aztec women, like pueblo women today, wove cotton fabrics on wooden looms and ground corn in stone basins. The men modeled and painted the pottery vessels which simple cooking required. And everywhere priests and kings raised temples and palaces on platforms of stone hewn with stone implements and carved with obsidian by captives and slaves.

The Aztec tribe of Tenochcas which occupied the site

of Mexico City had drifted eastward into the valley, perhaps from the region of Guadalajara, and in an epoch which corresponds roughly to the early Middle Ages in Europe, they lived at Chapultepec, where the people of Mexico City now enjoy outings on feast days and Sundays. Later, for convenience and safety, they moved out to an island in the salt lake of Texcoco. By the year 1350, they had founded a dynasty which produced kings who made history.

The first of the Tenochcan chiefs to encourage the acquisition of culture was Itzcoatl, who built the first Aztec stone temples, founded an order of priests, set up a governing class, and built causeways across to the mainland. He was succeeded, in 1440, by Moctezuma I,[1] surnamed the Wrathy, who extended the Tenochcan empire into the present states of Puebla, Veracruz, Morelos, and Guerrero. The twenty-ton Aztec calendar stone that the tourist is shown at the National Museum in Mexico City was carved in the time of Moctezuma's son, Axayacatl (d. 1479). His younger son, Tizoc, succeeding his brother, became chiefly distinguished for offering living men's hearts to the gods. This practice, which so shocked the Spaniards, reached its bloodiest peak during the reign of Tizoc's brother, Ahuitzotl, who himself cut out the hearts of some of the twenty thousand Oaxacans sacrificed in Tenochtitlán in the year 1490. It was the first Moctezuma's grandson, moody Moctezuma II, who reached the throne in

[1] There has been much confusion in the general literature because of difficulties arising from putting the Indian sounds into phonetic Spanish. In the interest of uniformity, we have adopted throughout the spelling used by official documents of the Mexican government.

1503 and ruled over the far-flung Tenochcan empire when the Spaniards arrived.[2]

2. *The Conquest of Mexico*

Pedro de Alvarado, a planter from Cuba, first explored the Mexican mainland in June, 1518, from the mouth of the river Papaloapan, near Veracruz. Then Hernán Cortés arrived at Ulúa, an island in Veracruz harbor, in April, 1519 — accompanied by five hundred soldiers, one hundred shipmasters, pilots, and seamen, and sixteen horses and mares. He picked up an Indian mistress, Malinche, the Doña Marina, and it is even money whether it was she or the horses and mares who really turned the trick with the Indians: for the natives mistook horses and riders for gods, while Malinche merely translated what the gods deigned to say.

After founding the first Spanish-Mexican city (Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz), with the help of the surrendering Totonacs, Cortés began his trek to the highlands by way of Jalapa, now a misty town in the mountains on the Veracruz highway. He made an alliance with the Tlaxcalan highlanders, who furnished the small Spanish army with thousands of experienced fighters. (The tourist goes to Tlaxcala today to buy native tweeds and visit the pink and white baroque church on the hilltop site of an Indian tem-

[2] On Aztec history, see George C. Vaillant's *Aztecs of Mexico*. For pictures of the ancient art and architecture, see Salvador Toscano's *Arte precolombino de Mexico y de la America Central* and the second volume of Pál Kelemen's *Medieval American Art*.

ple.) He was received, the next year, by Moctezuma II, on one of the causeways connecting Tenochtitlán with the mainland. Moctezuma, magnificent then under a canopy of green feathers and pearls, was soon jailed in his

Hernán Cortés, from a Sixteenth Century Illuminated Book

own handsome palace. The Tenochcas revolting, the Spaniards laid siege to the capital; and after some ups and downs — tourists all visit the tree under which Cortés wept over his losses on the *Noche Triste* — the Spaniards took over the city on August 13, 1521. After that the conquest of Mexico, south and north, came quite easily — except that the Yucatán Maya put up a good fight.[3]

[3] *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico*, by Bernal Díaz (translated by A. P. Maudslay in the Broadway Travellers series), is the firsthand account of the Conquest from which William H. Prescott drew largely for his eloquent *History of the Conquest of Mexico*. See also *Hernando Cortés, Five Letters* in the Broadway Travellers series.

3. *The Colonial Era*

Beginning with the arrival in 1535 of Antonio de Mendoza, the first viceroy, Mexico was ruled by regents from Spain for the nearly three hundred years of her colonial era. A rich ruling class grew up among the descendants of the five hundred Spaniards who were royally granted most of the arable land — although here and there small tracts of free soil remained in the hands of land-working villagers who escaped the peonage system which reduced most of their neighbors to bondage to foreigners. The Pan-American Highway from the border up to the capital passes through an old pueblo, El Limon, at kilometer 583, where common lands are still farmed in the manner in use among the settled Mexican tribes before the Spaniards arrived.

The friars who accompanied the first Spanish gentry, together with those who came after — Franciscan, Augustinian, and Dominican Fathers — were soon engaged in constructional projects which rivaled those of the Indians.[4] Replacing temples with churches, sometimes stone by stone, the monks built twelve thousand churches and convents during the colonial period. Today's motorist is almost never out of sight of a tower or dome, and if he stops by the wayside to visit a few of the churches, as he probably will, he will learn to distinguish the five major styles of colonial architecture.

[4] For a somewhat jaundiced view of the decay of the ecclesiastical mission, see *A New Survey of the West Indies, 1648,* by ex-Dominican Father Thomas Gage, Broadway Travellers series.

Later on in the book, in the chapter about Cuernavaca, a day is given to visiting sixteenth-century monasteries built in the plain, battlemented, pseudo-Gothic style, with walled forecourts, or atria. They were fortresses, really; and if they provided spiritual haven within, they were equally planned for defense from hostile forces outside.

The second style, called the Plateresque, appears frequently in the façades of sixteenth-century churches as well as in the whole treatment of subsequent buildings. Imported from Spain and taking its name from its likeness to the work of Renaissance silversmiths, Plateresque has come to mean something between the Italian Renaissance style and flamboyant Spanish baroque. Exterior columns are flat and not rounded, for instance, and likewise the sculptures are in flat bas-relief. The rounded, really sculptural use of carved stone followed later.

The third style, imported Spanish baroque, undertook to break up the hard and flat surfaces of Renaissance architecture, and to introduce contrasts of high light and shadow. Columns were twisted, straight lines gave way to scrolls, and figures were set to fly from their bases. This gay and often impudent style flourished from early in the seventeenth century to 1775. It was overtaken, especially for interior ornament, around the middle of the eighteenth century, by a fourth style which, though its name remains Spanish, is as Mexican, in its own way, as an Indian pyramid. Called Churrigueresque, after the Spanish architect Don José Churriguera, who was born in Salamanca in 1650, the style that goes by his name stood, even in Spain, for lots of gold and bright color, for flutings and flourishes

and what Sacheverell Sitwell calls "fluttering edges." In Mexico, this high baroque style went to town at the hands of exuberant craftsmen. The impact of its golden extravagance, of its gay cupids and angels, its droll fauna and luxuriant flora, is guaranteed to be staggering.[5]

The fifth style is a variant of the neoclassical style invented in sixteenth-century Italy by Andrea Palladio, who copied the surfaces of old Roman structures without any regard for their structural principles. It appeared during two epochs in Mexico: in the age of the first great cathedrals and again at the end of the colonial period. In addition to these five structural styles, there are many glimpses of surface ornament from Moorish and Gothic sources.

4. *La Independencia*

A new race of people sprang up in Mexico as a result of the Conquest — a race of mestizos, of men of mixed blood, whose social and economic position stood midway between that of the aristocrats and the land-working Indians; and it was in this new race that the desire grew up to throw off an uncomfortable political yoke. Mestizos fur-

[5] On Mexican architecture through all its phases, see Trent E. Sanford's *The Story of Architecture in Mexico.* For the *baroco* in particular, Sacheverell Sitwell's *Spanish Baroque Art;* Walter H. Kilham's *Mexican Architecture of the Vice-Regal Period;* Sylvester Baxter's *Spanish-Colonial Architecture in Mexico;* Manuel Toussaint's *Paseos Coloniales* — the newest Mexican work on the subject. Some good Mexican picture books are La Beaume-Papin, *The Picturesque Architecture of Mexico; Architectural Byways — New Spain,* by A. L. Murphy Vhay and David Vhay; Guido Rosa's *Mexico Speaks;* and Fritz Henle's *Mexico.*

nished the brawn, if not always the brains, to end the eleven-year struggle for independence from Spain which Father Miguel Hidalgo, a Spanish Creole himself, began in the year 1810.

Mexico is full of memorials to the two principal leaders of the *Independencia*, Father Hidalgo and Father Morelos. The visitor encounters their monuments from Monterrey, with its Plaza Hidalgo, to the most distant outposts of the Latin Republic. States are called by their names, while one of the loveliest colonial cities gave up its original name, Valladolid, to become "Morelia."

The Mexican rebellion against Spain did not end in the kind of decisive victory that the North American colonists won from the British. Hidalgo and Morelos fought, it is said, for too much: for the expulsion of some eighty thousand Spaniards, for Indian and Creole equality, for the submission of the Church to the State, and for the return of the soil to the Indians. All that they got, before 1824, was the mestizo Agustín Iturbide's Plan of Iguala, which guaranteed only that Mexico should be governed by a king of its own; that equality should be given only to Creoles and Spaniards; and that the Church should retain its old privileges.

It was not until the dissolution of Iturbide's comical empire of 1822 that the Republic was formed. Mexico's first president, Guadalupe Victoria, took office (in 1824) after a lurid career as a guerrilla in the Veracruz mountains, where, in a kind of Gandhi-esque faith, he wore cotton drawers and lived on wild fruits and berries. Guadalupe Victoria was the first of that series of colorful Mexi-

can heroes which came to include Antonio López de Santa Anna, Emiliano Zapata, and Pancho Villa. Nor is he unique in Mexican history in being ruled by a mistress — the Condesa de Regla, whose hacienda, San Miguel de Regla, is now a delightful country hotel near Mexico City.

5. *Juárez, Maximilian, and Porfirio Díaz*

The kaleidoscopic history of Mexico [6] during the nineteenth century rushes on to the rise of the first of many dictators, Antonio López de Santa Anna, who confiscated Church money, sold mining concessions to strangers, buried one of his legs in the cathedral in Mexico City, and had six dressed-up colonels for footmen. After Santa Anna and the secession of Texas, came the War with the States. And although the word "gringo" was not invented until forty years later to describe the Americans, there have been upsurges of anti-American sentiment ever since that unfortunate war. Tourists may still find traces of feeling in Veracruz, that enchanting seaport where Winfield (Old Fuss and Feathers) Scott laid down a bombardment that tumbled part of the town, and also in Mexico City, where Scott's men, fighting from Chapultepec Castle — the summer home, in times past, of the viceroys — received the city's surrender on September 14, 1846.

A hero who ranks with Hidalgo in Mexican annals was

[6] For a witty account of high life in Mexico City, 1839–1842, see the letters called *Life in Mexico,* by the American Mme. Calderon de la Barca.

governor then of the State of Oaxaca, the pure-blooded Zapotec Indian, Benito Juárez, who, during Santa Anna's second dictatorship, and while that debonair gentleman was calling himself Most Serene Highness, was preparing himself to lead the War of Reform.

The fashionable Paseo de la Reforma in Mexico City memorializes Juárez's so-called Law of Reform. Properly called the *Ley Lerdo*, in honor of the economist Miguel Lerdo who drafted it, the new law (1859) ordered the confiscation of all Church property, except places of worship, and the suppression of convents and monasteries. It was the intention of Juárez to divide the Church properties among the peasants, but since most of the ecclesiastical lands were found to be, by some legal fiction, in the possession of laymen, the common man had yet to wait for his century.

The next event of which the tourist is bound to take notice was Archduke Maximilian's arrival to govern the country under French auspices. Of this unfortunate Austrian and his hysterical Empress there will be much to be said in the chapter on colonial towns. The throne "on a pile of gold" which Napoleon offered him supported him for only a few tragic years before Juárez commanded him to be shot on the Hill of the Bells in Querétaro.

Memorials to Benito Juárez, who assumed the presidency of the Republic in 1867, will be found all over Mexico: in towns, streets, and monuments. During his last five years in office, he inaugurated a system of public education with which only that of Lázaro Cárdenas, in more recent times, can compare. The National Preparatory

School, which tourists visit to look at the frescoes, was the country's first public school for the training of teachers, and every great landowner was ordered to build primary schools for the children on his private estates. Unhappily, there was no system then — and there is none today — requiring the children to go to the schools that were made for them.

The times of Benito Juárez, which promised peace and prosperity and intellectual progress, came to an end with his death on July 18, 1872. After the interim presidency of Miguel Lerdo, the lawmaker, the so-called Porfirian epoch began — the thirty-year dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz.

Díaz had been one of Juárez's generals, but even before the death of his chief he had become disaffected, through want of preferment, and had plotted against him. He began his reign by overthrowing the constitution of 1857 which Juárez had fought to defend. Cynical in his contempt of the use of democracy, he set up a dictatorship designed to increase the economic wealth of his country; and during the long period of expansion which goes by his name, riches were, it is true, extracted in quantities from his native soil — for the enrichment of foreigners and a few wealthy Mexicans. A story is commonly told about a State dinner, in the president's palace, at which every lady was presented with a string of real pearls bought with federal money.

Stately residential avenues in Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Mérida reflect the luxury of the Porfirian period. Landowners built country villas and fine city houses and then lived in Europe where they spoke French and Italian

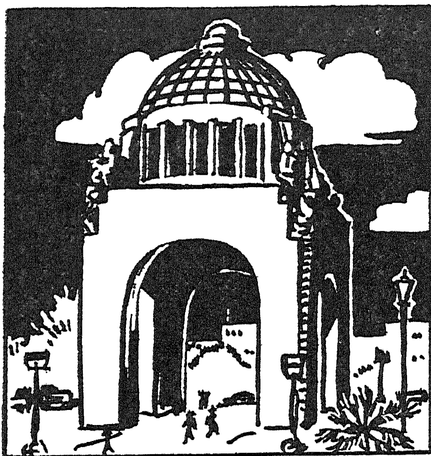
and married their daughters into noblemen's families. The Church enjoyed another time of prosperity; education was shared between Church and State; the press was censored, liberal thinkers were imprisoned or shot, and the Indians crept back into slavery. The outside world, deriving handsome dividends from the country, admired Díaz extravagantly. Díaz, as everyone said, could balance the budget.

6. The Revolution and the Reconstruction

One of Don Porfirio's more ample projects was the construction of a new plaza centering on a vast government palace, and it is one of the ironies of Mexico's shifting political history that the project, abandoned when Díaz went into exile in 1911, was completed, in quite different fashion, to signal his downfall. The unfinished shell of the palace was converted into a gigantic stone arch whose bright copper dome dominates the whole city — the Monument of the Revolution, called by the impious the Gasoline Station.

The revolution was inaugurated primarily by Francisco I. Madero, whose name is preserved in Mexico City's smartest shopping district. No other figure in Mexican history has so nearly approached deification upon entrance to office, and perhaps no other popular idol proved more disappointing. It took six years to produce passable laws and four more years passed before the revolution was over. Like Maximilian, Madero quoted the Bible, but like the Empress Carlota, he was also hysterical. He was no match

for Emiliano Zapata, the bandit who ran his own show in the State of Morelos, then Mexico's sugar bowl. (A mild likeness of that passionate man may be seen in the frescoes that Diego Rivera painted for Ambassador Morrow in the



Monument of the
Revolution

Cortés Palace in the state capital.) Nor was Madero equal to Pancho Villa, the wild man of the North; nor to Ambassador Henry Lane Wilson, both of whose thumbs were mixed up in the pie. Everybody who remembers those years is persuaded that Victoriano Huerta would not have dared to shoot Don Francisco Madero in January 1913 without a green light from the American embassy.

I do not remember ever seeing any reminder of the Huerta government, for that degenerate friend of Henry

Lane Wilson was never welcomed by the whole people. Pancho Villa, after swimming his horse through the Río Grande on his way home from exile, drove his roistering army upon Mexico City from the State of Chihuahua. The statesmanlike General Alvaro Obregón, who belonged to the intellectual tradition of General Morelos, commanded well-organized troops opposed to the government; and stupid Venustiano Carranza lined up the supporters of Porfirio Díaz for a revival of Porfirism. Obregón won the race to the capital while Villa and Carranza wore themselves out in fighting each other, and in November 1920 became president by general election. He restored peace to the country and practiced constitutional principles — instrumenting, with all his resources, Article 27, which empowered the nation to expropriate private property, and Article 123, which established the eight-hour day, the minimum wage, the right to organize unions, and the right to strike. There is an avenue in Mexico City called Articulo 123 after that popular measure.

Any inquisitive tourist can see that in many respects the revolution has not worked out so well as the founders had hoped. He will see dozens of fertile tracts, here and there on the highway, which produce only the smallest part of the crop that landlords with money and organization could produce in the past. The distribution of land among peons has in most cases undoubtedly provided freedom from serfdom — in exchange for high living costs. There never was enough arable land for the country to feast from, but now, with only 6 million acres under production, out of

22 million acres that might create wealth, the lot of the peasant looks bleaker and bleaker as time marches on. Only the hastening of deferred irrigation projects can save him.[7]

[7] For the whole of Mexican history, from the invasion of tribesmen to the last revolution, see H. B. Parkes, *A History of Mexico.* A check list of books on Mexican political and economic history would include such reliables as Ernest Gruening's *Mexico and Its Heritage;* Eyler N. Simpson's *The Ejido: Mexico's Way Out;* Stuart Chase's *Mexico: A Study of Two Americas;* Carleton Beals's *Mexican Maze;* Betty Kirk's *Covering the Mexican Front.* For Mexican customs, see Frances Toor, *A Treasury of Mexican Folkways.*

CHAPTER II

Getting Ready to Go

1. Learning the Language

A SMALL amount of work on the Spanish language pays large tourist dividends anywhere south of the border—cash dividends in the saving of money as well as returns in enjoyment. Except in the fixed-price shops in the cities, you will pay less the more you can bargain, and besides, bargaining is half the fun to be had out of trading in markets in a country where both buyer and seller are called *marchante*, or merchant.

One of the least painful ways to get up a speaking acquaintance with Spanish is to take lessons (at home) from

recordings or from Agnes Marie Brady's *Pan-American Spanish*. A good conventional handbook of grammar and words is that of Espinosa and Allen, called *Beginning Spanish;* and a small pocket book stuffed with everyday phrases is Frances Toor's *Spanish for Your Mexican Visit* — from which you can learn enough to delete the sentence, "*No hablo español,*" which, being interpreted, means "I do not speak Spanish."

You can begin your lessons by translating the road signs which you will see on the Pan-American Highway:

ALTO	Stop (Lit. *Halt*)
BAJADA	Steep Slope (Lit. *Descent*)
CAMINO ANGOSTO	Narrow Road
CAMINO LATERAL	Side Road
CAMINO EN REPARACIÓN	Road under Repair
CAMINO SINUOSO	Winding Road
CUIDADO CON EL GANADO	Look Out for Cattle
CRUCE DE CAMINOS	Crossroad
CURVA	Curve
CURVA INVERSA	S Curve
DESPACIO	Slow
DESVIACIÓN	Detour
ESCUELA	School
F. C. (FERROCARRIL)	Railroad Crossing
HOMBRES TRABAJANDO	Men Working
NO SE ESTACIONE	No Parking
PARADA	Stop
PELIGRO	Danger

POBLADO PROXIMO	Entering Town (Lit. *Town near*)
PRECAUCIÓN	Caution
PUENTE ANGOSTO	Narrow Bridge

Fortunately, the language is not hard to pronounce, when you get the hang of it, for there are very few letters that have more than one sound.[1]

2. *Clothes*

Except in the coastal towns and a few resort places below the peak of the highlands, there is not much hot weather in Mexico; and even in the so-called hot country, there are chilly days in the middle of winter. The Mexicans find plenty of use for wool clothing throughout the four seasons, except possibly May, the warmest month of the year. From March to November, there are hot days to drive through on the way to the mountains which hem in the Valley of Mexico, and then women will want the light gingham dresses and men the sport shirts and slacks that they will wear later in warm Acapulco. But in Mexico City, where the springlike climate of summer and fall turns somewhat sharper in winter, one wears, year-round, city clothes that might be called fall-weight, while women add furs and men topcoats in winter.

If you want to look well and be comfortable, you have to pack up a mixed kit of both wool and cotton for both

[1] See Appendix I for an easy table of sounds.

town and country. It distresses the city-bred Mexicans to see tourists dressed for sports in the country parading the streets of Mexico City and the larger regional capitals such as Guadalajara and Puebla. City women wear black all over Mexico, and bright-colored slacks and brief shorts look out of place except at resorts and beaches.

Women who have toured Mexico all four seasons recommend the indispensable tidbits that follow: a tweed suit with blouses and an extra skirt and a sweater to go with the jacket; a black wool or crepe dress; a lightweight topcoat and, from June to November, a raincoat. Then they suggest that you pour in some light, one-piece dresses to fill up the crannies, and add a hat for Mexico City and bandannas with which to wrap your head against dust on the road and for the sake of convention in churches. If a woman starts out with street shoes and rubber-soled walking shoes, she can buy good-looking play shoes down there.

Men will want dark suits for the cities, odd jackets, sweaters, and flannel slacks for the country, topcoats for winter and substantial raincoats for summer. At any resort, in warm weather, a man can wear white duck pants and an open white shirt tied, native fashion, over his middle; while on the highways colored sport shirts are useful. Out in the provinces, a man will find use for short washable sport jackets. They are one degree above shirt sleeves for looks and yet are sufficiently cool in warm weather.

For men, the dark business suit does for evening. And unless women propose to go often to the opera or symphony concert in season, they will feel well enough

dressed, after dark, in simple and smart street-length dresses. Take American bathing togs if you want them, but you will soon lay them aside in favor of gaudy tropical swimming suits which you will find in Cuernavaca, Taxco, and Acapulco.

If so many kinds of clothes sound like too much for a month or six weeks, the visitor can be consoled upon hearing that he does not need to bring a great number of washable things. If he spends as much as two nights in a place, he can always have his clothes laundered by his chambermaid's relatives.

If you have more baggage than your car can conveniently carry, you can ship it, addressed to yourself, to the express office in Laredo or McAllen. In either place, you can easily arrange to have it trucked over the border when you make your own entry, so that you can see it through Customs. Then you reship it on the Mexican side, where express rates are low.

3. *Papers, Permits, Insurance, and Dogs*

The only papers you ought to have in your pocket before you drive off for the border are your birth certificate and, if you travel with dogs, certificates of canine good health. The birth certificate may be wanted upon your return, to establish your American citizenship. The dogs' papers are made out by your veterinarian, who will know what is needed. We travel with dogs because we are often away from home a long time; but I must say that they

create lots of problems. American hotels and restaurants are not very hospitable. On the other hand, south of the border, our small dogs make many friends. Every bellboy and waiter asks for their names, breed, and cost — *¿cuánto valen?* — and talks Spanish baby talk mixed with clucking and whistling.

Most tourists take typhoid shots before they leave home, but the Mexican border officials do not inquire for papers concerning the visitor's health.

People who travel by train will need to secure their tourist cards, called *tarjetas*, before they leave home. They are issued by Mexican consulates. Motorists can more conveniently wait till they get to the border, where every gas station has them. The *tarjetas* are good for six months from the date of issue and cost two American dollars. They can likewise be secured, along with car insurance and permit, at the Mexican Automobile Association on Matamoros Street, or at the branch office of the American Automobile Association in the Plaza Hotel in Laredo. Both associations undertake to answer questions about travel in Mexico and also make hotel reservations.

To secure your car permit, you have only to show your certificate of registration. If the registered owner happens not to be present, the driver must show a notarized authorization from the actual owner.

Unless your American insurance policy covers foreign travel, it is wise to take out a Mexican tourist policy at the border. The basic rate for standard coverage is fifty cents a day, with scheduled discounts for extended periods. Without Mexican coverage, the foreigner will be sure to

get the worst deal in an accident. Hence we always use it, insuring ourselves with a company called Seguros Tepeyac, S.A. Even so, we always stay off the open highways at night. There is a good deal of nocturnal pedestrian traffic and Mexican cattle have a fancy for grazing the pavement.

Fishing licenses bought at the border are good for streams, lakes, and deep-sea waters in any part of the Republic of Mexico. They cost 4 pesos a month, 10 pesos for 3 months, or 20 pesos a year. Deep-sea fishing may be had the year round at Guaymas, Mazatlán, Manzanillo, and Acapulco on the west coast and at Veracruz and Tampico on the Gulf. Seasonal variations will be exactly described in the Pemex Travel Club bulletin which you will receive with your license, but it may be said in general that the interior waters can be fished for brook trout and rainbow trout from March to October and that the lakes can be fished for smallmouthed bass, catfish, whitefish, and lake fish at any time except during a few weeks of midsummer.

A hunting license must be obtained simultaneously with your tourist card, for the former is registered on the latter. Application for a hunting license must be accompanied by a letter of recommendation from a bank, the Chamber of Commerce, or your local police department, and by two passport photographs. The permit entitles a sportsman to take 4 guns, each of a different caliber, into Mexico. Of these 4 guns, 1 shotgun or rifle is admitted duty free. The others must be bonded at 20 pesos each. Ammunition up to 100 cartridges or 500 grams of powder for each gun

is allowed duty free. A full description of the seasons is provided with the license. A few examples follow: geese, November 1–January 31; quail and partridge, November 1–April 30 in the States of Morelos and Guerrero, elsewhere November 1–March 31; flamingo, July 1–February 28; wild turkey, October 1–February 15; duck, November 17–March 9 in the States of Mexico, Hidalgo, and the Federal District, elsewhere November 16–March 15; black-tailed deer, November 16–December 31, except in the States of Chihuahua, Coahuila, and Nuevo León, which are closed all year. A bulletin called *Hunting in Mexico*, issued by the federal government and distributed with the license, describes where and what to hunt in detail.

You will, finally, save yourself a good deal of bother if you pick up your returning traveler's declaration papers at the American Customs office before you cross the bridge into Mexico. Then you can list your purchases while they are fresh in your mind. American citizens may import goods duty free to the amount of $100. Make categories of the things that you buy — silver, textiles, and what not — and list them so on your declaration. To save yourself from embarrassment, lest you forget some small item, make a miscellaneous category at the end of your list. You may import a gallon of liquor, but the State of Texas will make you pay for the privilege of carting it across her dry plains.

4. *Cars and Equipment*

It is wise to start out with five good tires and at least eight good tubes. Rubber is expensive in Mexico; and besides, I am sorry to say, removable objects in cars are subject there, as elsewhere, to thieving — Mexican cars as well as those belonging to foreigners. The inner tube is a "natural" when thieves are around because the owner does not at once see what is missing. If you leave your car unattended while a flat is repaired, chances are that a badly patched tube will be exchanged for your good one. Having lost four tubes one winter before I caught on to the system, I now carry plenty of extras locked up in the back, along with extra windshield wipers and air-valve caps, commodities in which street urchins carry on a good business.

I also have a locked cap on my gasoline tank and, like any Mexican, never leave my car for an instant without locking it up. In every city and village the sidewalks disgorge boys and men who have enough English to say, "Watch your car, mister?" One of this number should be appointed to "watch" and should be tipped from 20 to 50 centavos. It's the custom and, on the whole, not a bad one. Even so, I try to remember, before starting out on a trip, to see whether my tool kit has been raided of its lug wrench, screw driver, pliers, or jack and jack handle.

Because of not infrequent gasoline shortages, many people make room for a flat service drum which holds either five or ten gallons. You can seal the screw top with

soap to get rid of the smell. There is generally plenty of gas in legitimate stations along the Pan-American High-

Mexican Traffic Officer

way. Elsewhere, a few extra centavos per liter will generally produce a full tank. It is a good thing to keep the tank full when gas is at hand and not take chances on some hypothetical station to come. You buy gasoline by the

liter, computing four to the gallon. Gas of low quality sells at about the same price as our high octane product.

As for maps, I find that I stuff the expensive road charts I buy into the dashboard compartment and cover the country with pocket maps issued by Pemex. Be sure to ask at the border, at any gasoline station, for *Mapas de Carreteras Pemex.* One folded sheet of six panels, kept up to date, shows all the traversable roads in the country. The booklet *Esta Semana* (*This Week*), besides containing the last word about hotels and prices, always shows the current state of the highways. It is free to tourists at any hotel in Mexico. You may be sure of two things: that side roads are not often marked for direction, and that nobody on any road knows where it goes, beyond the next town. Hence you will find in this book many explicit directions for driving.

You will find it useful to carry two thermos bottles to fill every morning with coffee and water, and a small picnic basket full of fresh rolls, fruit, and tinned foods. Since towns are not frequent along most of the highways, a flat tire or mechanical mishap may leave you stranded at lunch time. And besides, there is hardly a day when you will not be tempted to make an unplanned excursion short of the place where you might have stopped to take lunch.

An amusing piece of special equipment, apart from your flashlight, is the altimeter. Mexico is all up and down, and it is often diverting to know how high up you have been.

5. *Hotel Reservations*

In the old days, there were two tourist seasons in Mexico, summer and winter, but motorists now are crossing the border, all through the year, almost as fast as Customs can examine their luggage. People traveling by rail and air must make reservations, in the ordinary course of events, at least a month in advance, and even motorists must make some forehanded provision for accommodations in key places like Laredo, Monterrey, Mexico City, and Acapulco. In the provinces, it is still reasonably safe to take a chance on hotels except during Christmas and Easter vacation.

Hotels and restaurants in Mexico City are pretty expensive. Although I quote very few figures because of the fluctuation in prices, I can say, in general, that it costs as much to stay in the capital as it does in New York and Washington. You would have to be canny to get by on less than $10 a day per person for room, food, and taxis, with two to a room. Resort places, on the other hand — high priced as they are — are cheaper than the smart spots in Arizona and Florida. The tourist gets most for his money in the colonial cities, like Querétaro and Morelia, Guanajuato and Guadalajara, Oaxaca and Córdoba, where board and room rarely come to $5 a day.

I list, in this place, only hotels I have stayed at or eaten in, at one time or another, and my impressions of these have been quite lately verified. Your weekly *Esta Semana*

will make more recommendations — although they will be based on paid advertisements!

ACAPULCO: Reforma-Casablanca and De Las Americas, expensive and showy; Flamingos and Mirador, both upper bracket and serve decent food; Las Palmas Courts, inexpensive, very nice; Quinta María, simple and cheap, and Papagayo, more expensive, both on afternoon beach.

CHIHUAHUA: Palacio Hilton, American management.

CIUDAD MANTE: Hotel Mante, inexpensive and airy; Hotel Monterrey, new and modern.

CIUDAD VICTORIA: Hotel Sierra Gorda, modern and comfortable; Campo Victoria motor courts, AAA recommended.

CÓRDOBA: Hotel Zevallos, cheap, quaint, and comfortable; Virreinal, new and first rate. Other hotels are in process of building.

CUERNAVACA: Bella Vista, spacious and comfortable; Chula Vista, expensive, touristic; Hernán Cortés, new and fashionable; Marik, for years the most popular; Iberia, inexpensive and family; Papagayo, new, expensive, with cottages and heated pool.

FORTÍN DE LAS FLORES: Ruiz Galindo, colorful and expensive; Posada Loma, with cottages, less expensive.

GUADALAJARA: Fenix, good food and fair prices; Hotel Guadalajara, atmosphere and fair prices; Hotel del Parque, modernistic; Virreinal, my favorite hotel in Mexico. Hundreds of others.

GUANAJUATO: Santa Fe and Annexes, good pro-

vincial cooking (I like best the rooms in the old Luna annex); new Hotel de la Bufa under same management.

HUAJUAPAN, OAXACA: Hotel Garcia Peral, colonial atmosphere.

JALAPA: Hotel Mexico and Hotel Salmones: if you *must* stop in rainy Jalapa.

MANZANILLO: Hotel Colonial, in town, good food, inexpensive; Playa de Santiago, on the beach, plain, nice, very cheap.

MÉRIDA: Hotel Itzá, converted palace, not bad, but old-fashioned; Hotel Mérida, headquarters for Mayaland Lodge at Chichén Itzá, cool and pleasant; Hotel Montejo, swimming pool, soda fountain: brand-new.

MEXICO CITY: Cortés, a modernized colonial convent near the Alameda; Emporio, modern, on the Paseo de la Reforma; Geneve, popular with Americans; Luna, new, expensive, and chic; Majestic, a delightful hotel on the Zócalo; María Cristina, quiet and moderately priced, nice for women alone; Montejo, uptown and quiet; Ontario, downtown and Mexican; Prado, newest and biggest; Prince, new and modern; Reforma, smart and expensive; Ritz, the best all-round hotel in the city; Vendome, fantastic, expensive, amusing.

MONTERREY: Ancira, old-fashioned, commodious; California Courts, on northern approach to the city; Continental, inexpensive and charming; Hotel Monterrey, almost luxurious; the Regina Courts, also on northern approach to the city and across from Los Arcos, a fine restaurant.

MORELIA: Alameda, modern and comfortable; Quinta Catalina, hospitable in a charming Victorian way; Hotel Virrey, lots of atmosphere.

OAXACA: Francia, spacious rooms and repetitive kitchen; Marqués del Valle, on the plaza and new; Rancho San Felipe, expensive, delightful; Ruiz, small rooms and good cooking.

PÁTZCUARO: Hotel del Lago, inexpensive, provincial, good country cooking; Posada don Vasco, modern and cheerful.

PUEBLA: Arronte, amusing old palace; Colonial, popular with tourist agencies, somewhat gloomy; Lastra, a good view for more money.

QUERÉTARO: Gran Hotel, good plain cooking.

SAN JOSÉ DE PURÚA: Spa San José de Purúa, expensive, touristic.

SAN LUIS POTOSÍ: Hotel Plaza; Café La Lonja.

SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE: Posada de San Francisco, colonial in style and delightful, on the plaza; Colonial, inexpensive and quaint.

TAMAZUNCHALE: D.Z. Courts, where Ernie Pyle used to go; Hotel Cadillac, furnishes expert guides for hunting.

TAXCO: Casa Humboldt, inexpensive, delightful; De La Borda, Los Arcos, Rancho Telva, Victoria, all favored by agencies and somewhat expensive; Sierra Madre, Taxqueño, Melendez — Mexican and entirely comfortable.

TEHUACÁN: Hotel Mexico, favorite of South Amer-

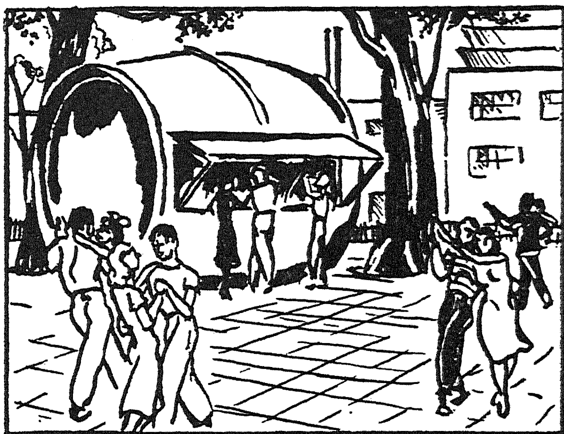
icans, lots of food; Garci-Crespo, expensive and showy.

URUAPAN: Villa de Flores, provincial and restful; Hotels Mirador and Progreso, commercial.

VALLES: Casa Grande, where "everybody" goes, for some reason; Hotel Valles, the most attractive hotel on the Pan-American Highway.

VERACRUZ: Colonial, modern and noisy; Diligencias, traditional, newly rebuilt; Edificio Victoria with roof garden, sea breezes; Hotel Mocambo, out of town, on the beach; Villa del Mar, on the beach nearer town.

ZIMAPÁN: Fundición, a nice introduction to the Valley of Mexico.



CHAPTER III

Off to Monterrey, "Thomas-and-Charlie," and Zimapán

1. Crossing the Border

IN TIME to come, there will be a paved western approach to the Valley of Mexico from Tucson, Arizona, by way of Mazatlán and Guadalajara. At present, however, motorists from the West must drive across Arizona and New Mexico into Texas and traverse the 640 miles which I measured from El Paso to Nuevo Laredo. (A good paved road runs straight south from El Paso to Chihuahua, passing through the fertile Laguna farm lands, and will some day, one hopes, be continued to Torreón in the State of Coahuila.) The eastern driver crosses the border

at Laredo-Nuevo Laredo, where the Pan-American Highway begins, or at McAllen-Reynosa, where a new road takes off across the State of Nuevo León to join the highway at Monterrey. The fastest trains enter Mexico at El Paso and Laredo.

If your motor route to the border lies through Houston, Texas, there is not much difference in mileage whether you go by way of San Antonio and thence to Laredo or by way of Alice and thence to McAllen; for the latter route is only 20 miles shorter. But there is a considerable saving of time at McAllen-Reynosa because there is much less traffic over the Río Grande there. If you clear the Reynosa Customs by midday, say from Alice, Texas, you can drive on to La Ceja for lunch. Then you have only 70 miles into Monterrey, which you can see in the late afternoon.

If your route takes you more naturally by way of San Antonio and Laredo, then it is wise to plan to stop overnight in Laredo. Because of the nearly continuous border traffic, you will need a full day to do your last-minute errands and still reach Monterrey in time to drive through the city before it gets dark. There is an abundance of hotels, motels, and motor courts in Laredo. Of the two big hotels, the Hamilton and the Plaza, the latter is likely to be the less crowded, and it gives, furthermore, an agreeable preview of Mexico. Well-to-do Mexicans patronize that air-cooled establishment, and since the staff all speak both English and Spanish, American guests can practice Mexican greetings and restaurant phrases before crossing the border.

Your errands include the *tarjeta*, the visitor's passport, which you can get at a gasoline station or from Charles Mumm at 800 San Bernardo; your insurance policy; and a trip to the bank to ask for the current rate of exchange and to change dollars for Mexican pesos. (For a number of years the peso has sold for around twenty cents, but up to the time of writing, parity has not been determined.) You will do well to buy enough pesos to take you to Mexico City, for hotels on the highway charge a high premium for exchanging bills and cashing express checks.

Once past the Mexican Customs, where you are obliged to open your luggage — and where tips are not spurned! — you can say good-by to drinking tap water and purchase a ticket in the National Lottery. Your Mexican adventure begins.

2. *Monterrey: Roll Those R's!*

You will soon pick up your first kilometer reading, K. 1223, which means that you are so many kilometers from Mexico City — or around 765 miles. (A kilometer, the standard Latin measure of distance, is a fraction short of five eighths of a mile.) Monterrey is at K. 991, about three hours' drive from Nuevo Laredo — for you will be stopped once or twice by officials who will look at your car to see whether you crossed the border with respect for the law. You will first cover about 80 miles of nearly straight road through country that still looks like

Texas. You will see the same vegetation, the low-growing mesquite and acacia and the tree yuccas which bear bunches of white bloom in April; and, besides these, an ashy gray shrub called *cenizo*, and the *anacahuita*, a purple-flowered bush that desert goats eat. Then you begin to climb slowly to the Monterrey valley, which you enter through Mamulique Pass at an altitude of more than 2000 feet.

The highway enters the city on Calle Cuauhtemoc, past the de luxe Hotel Marmol and the pleasant Regina and California motor courts, where there is nearly always a vacancy. To reach the downtown hotels, you turn left at Avenida Francisco I. Madero, named for the man who started the revolution of 1910, and continue along that busy boulevard to Calle Zaragoza, named for Nacho Zaragoza, a boy general who beat the French army in Puebla (May 5, 1862 — the celebrated Cinco de Mayo) with guns that had belonged to Napoleon. There you turn right and go on to the plaza, also called Zaragoza, from which point of vantage you can see most of the principal hostelries.

You will find the hotels there all crowded, as I have warned you. But if you have forgotten to reserve rooms by wire, you will discover that almost any desk clerk can turn up a room with twin beds for a *propina*, or tip, of a dollar (5 pesos) per person. The *propina*, which does wonders all over the world, is given in Mexico rather more freely than we give it at home: for in addition to tipping for the usual restaurant and carrying services,

Mexicans tip the police, letter carriers, and minor officials who execute papers in government offices, and give frequent alms to street beggars.

Monterrey's best hotels are the Ancira, a large, old-fashioned edifice built about a rococo patio on the Plaza Hidalgo; the Colonial, opposite — that modern hotel with a good-looking bar in back of a shabby foyer; and the Monterrey, at Zaragoza and Avenida Morelos, the biggest of the newer hotels, large, airy, and cool. Two small provincial hotels on the Plaza Zaragoza itself provide clean and comfortable places to stay if the town is more crowded than usual: the Continental and the Bermuda, both with rooms entered from flowering patios and overlooking the lively green plaza. Double rooms at the big hotels run from 20 to 30 pesos a day ($4.00–$6.00) and at the smaller hotels from $2.50 to $3.00.

Monterrey is not really a beautiful city, but it is worth looking at as a sample of the new age in Mexico. Founded in 1596, at a latitude high enough to be chilly in winter, it has grown lately into a city of about a quarter-million inhabitants. Modern houses and buildings, except in two or three charming streets, have replaced the colonial structures which used to be there. Your guide, whom you can pick up at any hotel, will take you up to the Cerro del Obispado, with its eighteenth-century ruin overlooking the city. From that eminence, which was surrendered to American troops in 1847, you can see how the city lies in the shadow of Saddle Mountain and how its growing industries reach into the valley. The guide will point out

numerous manufactories of such diverse commodities as steel, cement, glass, crystal, and porcelain; tiles, textiles, furniture, paper, shoes, beer.

Back in the town, you can drink a glass of free beer at the Cuauhtemoc Breweries — people compare the light Mexican beer with Münchener — and peer into briskly new lumberyards with entrances that look like Hollywood versions of smart New York foyers. In the residential section called Mira Vista there are modern houses that would be at home in the rich Los Angeles suburbs, while the new parish church, La Purísima, with paintings by two of the younger Mexican painters, Federico Cantú and Jesús Guerrero Galván, is the last word in architectural novelty. To see old Monterrey, apart from the tiled patio of the Municipal Palace on Plaza Hidalgo and the cathedral on Plaza Zaragoza, you will want to engage a carriage, across from the Continental Hotel, and go, about dusk, wherever the coachman chooses to take you. He will be old enough to like the old city.

On Plaza Hidalgo, just across from the hotels Colonial and Ancira, a perpetual light burns in memory of Father Hidalgo, whose monumental figure was set up in bronze, some years ago, to commemorate the one-hundredth anniversary of the War of Independence from Spain. Make your bow there and then take a cocktail at Sanborn's, a block below the Ancira. If diversion is wanted at night, the Terpsícore, if it cares to be open, is a pleasant night spot; and music for dancing is played every night at El Patio. Adventurous Mexicans drive up to Chipinque — a place-name which means hideout — and visit

a mile-high cabaret which is open in seasonable weather.

I once took the side trip some 50 miles over the mountains to the town of Saltillo, lest failure to do so should be on my conscience; but apart from the views from the highway, I had strictly a moral reward. The place is twenty years older than Monterrey, but I could not see that much had happened, over the years, to give tone to its age. It was cold and sleety and my bed was soggy, and I smothered my conscience before going on to Parras, where Francisco Madero was born. I used to think that I ought to visit Laguna, where the revolution was said to have flowered in an ideal community. Now that the system of socialized cotton growing there has bogged down, I am glad that I spared myself the long trip across the State of Coahuila.

There is not much to buy in Monterrey that you will not see elsewhere in Mexico and often at much lower prices. Goatskin rugs, however, are native, and therefore reasonably priced; and Italian silk ties at Scappini's, beside the Hotel Monterrey, are cheaper than in the same dealer's shop in the capital.

3. On the Pan-American Highway

The trip from Monterrey to Mexico City must be planned according to available time. It can be done in two days of hard driving, with no time for sight-seeing, or in three leisurely days in which there is time for enjoyment. The two-day trip is made somewhat as follows:

you leave Monterrey early, lunch in a hurry at Ciudad Victoria, K. 706, and grind on to Ciudad Valles. You leave Ciudad Valles, K. 473, at dawn, or soon after, enter the mountains at Tamazunchale — "Thomas-and-Charlie" to tourists — and pray for good weather for the hundred miles in the mountains. Then you reach Mexico City exhausted at night. That is what most people do. And because they are tired, they get sick to the stomach the first night in the capital, and then put the blame on the lettuce they ate: for there is a legend in travelers' circles that Mexican salads are dangerous. (Perhaps extended residence makes for immunity, but it is a fact that most foreigners eat uncooked foods in better-class restaurants without fear of diarrhea or typhoid.)

In hot weather, it's true, the motorist is likely to speed through the citrus groves of Nuevo León to get out of the heat, which in summer is withering all the way from Laredo to Tamazunchale. But during the spring, fall, and winter, the low-lying country is pleasant, and then one might prefer to spend *three* days on the Monterrey–Mexico City trip. The extra day allows you more time for looking about and lands you at your destination less tired and cross and more fit to stand up to the altitude — but then, I am speaking as one who has come to suppose, in ten years, off and on, of living in Mexico, that time is sufficient for everything if you leave it alone and are not always crowding and clocking it.

The citrus groves beyond Monterrey were planted among fields of cane and patches of corn, for the citrus plantations are new while the growing of maize is cen-

turies old. For every tractor one sees in the fields, there are hundreds of plantings where corn is still cultivated as the tribesmen grew it before the Spanish Conquest. Shallow holes are still scratched in the earth with a stick. The women drop seeds which the men cover with a few handfuls of earth before they go to their rest and let the gods give the increase. Then the crop is hand harvested, ear by ear, stalk by stalk.

Perhaps you will see clouds of butterflies sweep through the groves and alight on banks of bright yellow zinnias. That would be fall and winter. At all times of year you can stop at Montemorelos, K. 914, to eat lots of ripe oranges and buy strings of tangerines which the natives there tie — fruit, stem, and leaf — to stiff branches cut from the tree. By the time you are ready to stop by the side of the highway for lunch (unless you have stopped for dull food at Linares) you will be in wild, dry country full of sagebrush and cactus. You may have driven, in spring, through bowers of plants and shrubs with white blossoms — white poppies, *anacahuita*, *cholla*, tree yucca. Even the cacti blooming in April there belong to that considerable number, among their 1300 kinsmen, which blossom in white. Later and earlier the desert may flower in shades of scarlet and crimson, of lilac and violet, or in tones of yellow from lemon and lime to deep orange.

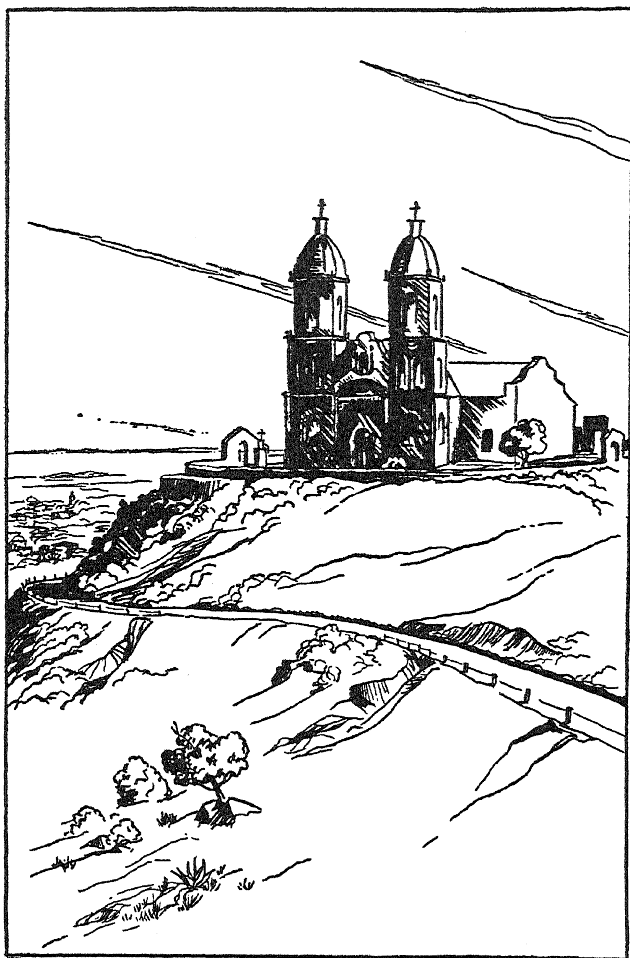
Of the Indian tribes which swept wave upon wave across the North American continent and down into Mexico, those who drifted away from the coastal routes lived upon the leaves of such cacti and the raw flesh of small desert animals — although sometimes, it is hinted, they

devoured each other. It was only six thousand years back that they first planted the seed, the *teosinte*, from which the corn came that you see outside of the desert. In the late afternoon you will catch your first glimpse, beyond that arid part of the State of Tamaulipas, of a town founded on the planting of maize.

You will pass first through Ciudad Victoria, with its own shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe on a hill at the southern edge of the town. Some day Victoria will come into its own, for it will be connected by pavement with Brownsville by way of rich stock-raising country and the town of Padilla where the Emperor Agustín Iturbide was court-martialed and killed. It has (anticlimactically) a modern hotel, the Sierra Gorda.

Perhaps you will step out of your car for a moment, between K. 688 and K. 687, to be photographed stepping over the Tropic of Cancer into the Torrid Zone. After that you will climb the Mesa de Llera and drop into the canyon beyond it, Cañon de Galeana. You pass many signs, in that-rolling country, pointing to invisible ranches and villages, and see plantings of bananas and mangoes as well as cane and corn. And then, in tropical country, at K. 583, you come upon El Limon and take your first ample view of unchanging native life in a farming community.

El Limon is an ancient *ejido*, a town such as the Spaniards found everywhere in agricultural districts when they first reached New Spain. The Mexican farmers, like their ancestors, live not on their land but in villages from which they go out, according to season, to plant and



Guadalupe Church, Ciudad Victoria

harvest. Arable land is divided according to individual need, while undivided acres are farmed by the villagers for the use of the public. El Limon, enjoying the advantage of its site on the highway, is more advanced, now, than many outlying *ejidos.* The wooden frames of the houses, under roofs of palmetto, are sometimes stuccoed and painted. But if you take time to observe the life of the village, you will find that its manner of trading and governing goes back without change for hundreds of years.

4. *Overnight in Ciudad Mante*

On the three-day expedition, you will perhaps want to put up the first night at Ciudad Mante, once named Villa Juárez for the reformer, Benito. This sugar-refining town, which has lately grown up with the highway, is not much frequented by returning motorists unless they happen to be making the side trip to Tampico, about 100 miles southeast on the Gulf. And if you have plenty of time, by the way, the trip to Tampico is pleasant. There are 7 miles of clean beach and good golf and fishing—especially fishing for tarpon from November to May. The Hotel Inglaterra down there is well known for good food, and not one of the three or four attractive hotels is expensive.

There is a new inn in Ciudad Mante, oddly called Hotel Monterrey. It was not yet finished when I was last

there, and so I went back to the Mante, named for the town and the river. The upper rooms of the Mante are cool, airy, and clean, if by no means luxurious. You can have your first experience there of the rural shower suspended over the toilet. I suggest that you ask the Hotel Mante bartender to open a thick tin of *pâté de foie gras* with truffles, before you take supper, and order a plate of hot toasted crackers and unsalted butter. You will think yourself as well served, I believe, as you were in the old days in Chartres and Strasbourg. The Portuguese wines have been the best lately available throughout Mexico — the Spanish being thought by gringos to be much too resinous — so you might open a bottle to drink with the juicy country beefsteak you dine on.

Ten miles out of Mante, the highway winds through a beautiful pass called Cuesta de Abra, where there is a good view of the low country and of El Sombrero, Hat Mountain. At K. 543, near the town of Antiguo Morelos, named for Father Morelos, the colleague of Father Hidalgo, the new highway to San Luis Potosí branches off to the right.

The distance from Antiguo Morelos to San Luis Potosí is some 200 miles and from San Luis Potosí to Guadalajara is something over 220. Many motorists drive the new road either on the way in or on the way out of the country; for Guadalajara, which most tourists visit, is connected with Mexico City by means of two days of travel over well-paved roads through picturesque country.[1]

[1] See Chapter XII, Section 11.

5. *To Tamazunchale*

Ciudad Valles, at K. 474, the most attractive town on the highway, provides the most comfortable lodging and the best food for travelers who make the trip from Monterrey to Mexico City in *two* days. At K. 477, entering Valles, there is an inviting cluster of modern, tiled cottages, the Colonial Courts. Between K. 476 and 475, just off the highway, stands the Hotel Valles, an ample stone structure of which the dining room is a screened pavilion in a grove of tropical plantings. The Casa Grande, a building of stucco and stone in the town, is always well spoken of.

The three-day traveler, after a midmorning drink in the thatched cantina of the Hotel Valles, pushes on to "Thomas-and-Charlie" over a stretch of road that runs through hot country, much of it less than a hundred feet above sea level. It is lovely green country, however, with fertile valleys, banana plantations, wild figs and mahogany, and orchids galore.

At Matlapa, K. 385, you can pick up a pair of handmade deerskin slippers such as you will not find in the city markets. Then you enter the foothills, which you descend for a moment into Tamazunchale, where Río Amajoc meets Río Moctezuma head on to create the illusion of a river running uphill. You can take lunch at the Tamazunchale Inn on the highway, where they serve a good *sopa del día*, a steaming vegetable soup such as one used to find in French inns: for Mexican cooks, like

French peasants, are born with the right instinct for soups. A visit to the D.Z. Courts at Tamazunchale, run by Mr. and Mrs. Dimitri Zelinsky, might well put you off your schedule, as Ernie Pyle's timetable was once put out of gear by the place. Stopping by for a moment, Ernie stayed two weeks and filled his column with praises. It is a grand place for resting and drinking good home-grown Huasteca coffee; and Don Dimitri always knows the last word about mountain weather. When you make the trip back to the border, you can easily stop for the night. Then you can also shop in the town for the handmade belts of iguana, deerskin, and snakeskin.

6. In the Mountains

During the 160 kilometers after Tamazunchale, you will climb — is your tank full of gas? — from 350 feet to about 8500 feet before drifting down into Zimapán. You should begin the ascent as soon after midday as possible, on the chance that the sun has burned off the deep morning fog and that evening mists have not gathered. If you are lucky enough to wind through the Sierra Madre Oriental on a clear, open day, you will be able to exclaim over panoramas about as exciting as anything the continental highways afford. In fact — perhaps because the sierras here jut up from the lowland and not, like the Rockies, from the western plateau — one may receive intimations of towering magnitude such as one rarely experiences in our own northern mountains.

Because of their nearness to the Gulf of Mexico, the eastern slopes of the Sierra Madre are not arid like those that give on the high plateau to the south. Here are the densest forests in Mexico: sweet gum at Chapulhuacan; pine and fern-bound oak on the way to Jacala. And upon the hillsides you will see clearings of corn that are green in summer and so almost lost among pine and juniper,

The Carriers

and yellow and easily visible only in winter. You wonder at the patience of men who must take their bread from such inaccessible soil.

All through the mountains you will see the little brown people trotting along by the side of the road, up and down, backwards and forwards, carrying wood, straw, or charcoal — for burros come high in this country and, besides, want feeding from the hardly won crops. Now and again one glimpses the huts of these people. On a clear day, for instance, you can see, at K. 344, a thatched shel-

ter which leans from a precipitous ledge of rock to the right. At K. 329 a mountain village comes to rest in a hollow, while at K. 322 a settlement sways on a cold, steep promontory. You wonder why, in such a vast country, people should choose to live in these hills: until you learn the sad truth that, for all the splendor of nature, the land as a whole is neither kindly nor rich. There is not very much water, the agricultural regions are meager, and the inhabitants must live where they can.

The first glimpse of the town of Jacala, caught from above as you descend to its valley, provides a brief moment of cheer. Its white houses sparkle in streets which stretch down the valley and nature looks kind once again. I know people who stop the night there, for the view from the Pemex Hotel at the northern entrance to town; but if you only stop to check oil and buy gas, you can go on to Zimapán, distant some 40-odd miles of sinuous road. Twenty miles out of Jacala and more than 8000 feet up, the highway reaches a region so dry that only nut pine is left to compete with aloes and cacti and yucca. The highest point there is Puerta San Vicente which issues into the celebrated and breathtaking Barranca Marmoles, halfway between Jacala and Zimapán.

7. *Night in Zimapán*

Zimapán has a charming hotel, the Fundición, on the highway at the southern end of the town. Since it is probably the most favored hotel on the road, with city people

riding out for the drive, you must plan to get there well before dark — or else wire for rooms.

The name of this Otomi town, which resisted the Spaniards for nearly two centuries, means "Between the roots of cimatl." That plant made the Indians so delightfully drunk and improvident that they never got around to exploiting the mineral wealth of the subsoil. They left it instead for the Spaniards' enrichment. The Fundición was built on the site of silver and lead foundries that went by the name of El Carmen in colonial days. Traces of the open-arched furnaces remain in the dining room, while a baroque chapel stands open to guests.

A short walk to the plaza, if there is time before dusk, will reward you with a glimpse of a native form of the Plateresque architecture — a retable carved in red stone mortared to a pale gray façade. If the next day is Sunday, you might return to the plaza to shop among Otomi handicraft.

On the last day of the journey into Mexico City, when you have waked up in Zimapán, eaten a stout pancake breakfast, and ordered provision of coffee and sandwiches, you have only 128 miles of highway to cover. Still, there is much to do, on that day, off the highway.

CHAPTER IV

On to Mexico City

1. San Nicolás de Actopan

As YOU wind over the road out of Zimapán, you may wonder when you will reach the plateau. You are already on it. The plateau is not tableland. Only for a few miles around Mexico City, in the lower part of the Valley of Mexico, is there any flat area remotely resembling a table; and the whole Valley, with the capital sprawling over its southwestern corner, is all together no bigger than the State of Rhode Island.

At K. 167, where a road forks off to the right to Querétaro, you begin to approach the last barrier to the tall Valley of Mexico. Ixmiquilpan, at K. 160, is a town with a thousand years of known history. Its plaza, complete with church and colonial convent, is set in a grove

of swamp cypress, called *ahuehuete*, which is almost as old as the town. The frescoed sixteenth-century convent, set in an old garden, will give you a foretaste of your forthcoming visit to the Augustinian houses farther on up the line. A climb to its roof will give you a fantastic view of perpetual green in the Tula valley.

The Convent of San Nicolás de Actopan, at K. 119, which an enlightened government bureau has restored with distinction, is really a "must." The Augustinian Fathers, who came to New Spain in 1533, founded the parish of San Nicolás in the Indian town of Actopan in 1546: "in the twenty-fourth year, the first month, and the twenty-eighth day of the Conquest of Mexico," as a cartouche in one of the chapels declares. Like other early monastic churches, San Nicolás was a fortress — for the work of converting the tribesmen to the Biblical virtues had its dangers. And if the legend is true that tells how the Indians were driven to the hewing and transporting of stone for this convent, it can be imagined that a fortress might have served the Fathers quite handily.

If you will climb to the roof with the caretaker, he will point out a hill, Cerro Grande, perhaps 8 miles away, where you can imagine, with a little prompting, that you see a heart-shaped depression halfway up the slope. From this granite heart, according to legend, came the great squares of rock which form the walls of convent and church. How were they transported? They must have been rolled and carried by tens of thousands of Indians, and thousands are said to have died, for the glory of God, under the pitiless sun. Suppose they had turned,

by the thousand, upon their few black-robed masters? As a matter of fact, I once put that question to my Indian guide. He said, "Señor, my ancestors were born under slavery's yoke and conformed to new masters. It is only now we feel free."

After a look at the Moorish tower, the Plateresque front, and both Gothic and Romanesque arches, so quaintly combined with the Norman severity characteristic of the great architect, Fray Andrés de Mata, you will perhaps enjoy viewing some lately uncovered frescoes on the walls of the cloisters. They look like monumental engravings, and indeed the historians say that many of the Augustinian murals were actually copied from old printed books. That is why there is so much black and white on the walls; although at Actopan the Indian painters used earth reds as well, and occasional yellows, and mixed lime with black to make grays. The themes at Actopan have to do mostly with the history of Christian asceticism: the life of the hermits and the monastic communities, three of which, the Franciscan, Augustinian, and Dominican, took on the work of converting the vanquished New-World inhabitants in the earliest days of the Conquest.

2. San Agustín de Acolman

If you have thought to bring lunch from Zimapán, you can drive on from the State of Hidalgo, where Actopan lies, into the State of Mexico, and spread your pic-

nic in the cloister of San Agustín de Acolman, 4 or 5 miles off the highway, to the left, from K. 27. You will skip, to be sure, the mining town of Pachuca, but without very serious loss: and you may see it later.[1]

Before the Spaniards reached the town of Acolman, the inhabitants of the place paid substantial tribute to the Texcocans, members of the Triple Alliance to which Moctezuma and the Tenochcas belonged. It was therefore not very difficult, as the guide at Actopan had intimated, to exact similar tribute for Don Pedro de Solís, Cortés's companion, to whom the town and its lands were presented. The adult population, then numbering something over two thousand, was ordered to supply the new overlord somewhat as follows: every 80 days, the sum of 154 pesos in gold and silver and 2 woolen blankets; and every day, the day's need of charcoal and wood, of salt and chile, of fodder and corn; and in addition, such table amenities as chickens, red and green tomatoes for sauces, and a hundred tortillas. The people took turns serving his lordship's person and household in teams of twenty. (This was the kind of thing that went on everywhere in New Spain.)

During the seigniory of Francisco de Solís, the son of Don Pedro, the Augustinian friars took over the parish from the Franciscans and began, in 1539, the first Convent of San Agustín de Acolman. The smaller of the two cloisters which you will visit is part of the original Augustinian structure. The church and big cloister, as they now stand, represent several periods of reconstruction.

[1] Chapter VIII, Section 10.

People are curious about the unusual terraces which *descend* from the atrium, or outdoor preaching enclosure, to the door of the church. They were dug out of a deposit of mud which covered 2 meters of church wall and cloister when the district was flooded in 1748. The federal Division of Monuments has been working off and on for some years to dig the convent out of the mud and restore it.

The façade of the church is a complete introduction to the Plateresque style, for it happens to be one of the finest examples in Mexico; quite as fine, indeed, as its sort in Spain. Compounded of classical, Romanesque, Gothic, and quasi-Moorish forms, as used in silver as well as in stone, Plateresque was developed in Europe just in time to be exported to Mexico, along with religion and language.

Predecessor of the exuberant style known as Churrigueresque, the Plateresque style is distinguished by its basic sobriety and chaste ornamentation. The sturdy façade of Acolman, under the rude, original belfry of the fortresslike church, contains ornamental details such as these: two pairs of columns decorated with acanthus and Romanesque angels; an entrance arch whose fine archivolt is composed of two sculptured bands covered with luscious stone fruit; and monumental stone carvings of St. Paul, on the right, and St. Peter, with Romanesque pedestals and Gothic canopies. And above all this elegance, there is a continuous frieze of bold Tritons, of angels and lions, overtopped by fleshly, unchristian nudes balancing baskets of fruit on their heads. The Augustinian

arms can be seen just above the entrance, a heart pierced with three arrows, while to the right of the window over the door, there is a hieroglyph of the name of the town — an arm and a shoulder which, put together, spell the Nahuatl word which we know as Acolman. Gothic arches and Spanish Gothic vaulting will be seen in the nave of the church.

The principal cloister — reached through the sacristy upon payment of a small fee — is a charming example of a strange, foreign style decorated in stone by indigenous sculptors. Abstract forms of Mexican plants have been cut into the capitals over the plain Renaissance columns in the upper corridor. If the caretaker is not occupied, he can save you time in making a quick tour of the cells, which the monks took good care to expose to the sun. Let him point out the outdoor chapel where, according to apostolic tradition, neophytes were allowed to hear sermons before First Communion. And look at the primitive, original cloister, with its arcade of rough stone and rubble — strong, plain, and dignified.

At Acolman, as at Actopan, there are restored examples of sixteenth-century murals which employed a technical process known to Mexican artists for nearly one thousand years. The Indians knew how to paint on wet plaster with transparent colors before the advent of the Spaniards, and there is no doubt that Indians already trained in the fresco tradition worked on the walls at Acolman — although some of them may have been sent out from Mexico City, where a teaching studio was set up by the Spaniards a few years after the Conquest.

3. *The Toltec Pyramids*

A few miles beyond the town of Acolman lies the place where, according to legend, the sun and the moon emerged from the womb of darkness. The gods who sired those miraculous lights were Nanaoatzin, the god of cancer, who created the sun by jumping into a fire clad in a loincloth made of maguey paper, and Tecuzistecatl, the god of the periwinkle, who created the moon when he burned himself up in a white linen jacket and a hat decked with feathers. The sun appeared first and the moon followed, and so their course has run up to this day. They were worshiped by the classical Toltecs at Teotihuacán, the "Place where the dead become gods."

The first inhabitants of that ancient district settled there at some unknown time before 400 A.D. Their ancestors had lived in a region now covered with rock, the Pedregal beyond San Angel, a suburb of Mexico City, and remains of the more primitive culture can be seen in quarries of lava which flowed into the Valley of Mexico from the volcano Xitli during one of the first Christian centuries.

Five separate epochs of Teotihuacán history have been distinguished by scholars, and the last of the five, the epoch of the classical Toltecs, came to an end before 1000 A.D. The Toltecs were great builders and planters. They produced a wide range of fabrics and dressed with some elegance. The men wore flowing robes over their loin-

cloths, sleeveless jackets, and rope sandals made of fiber of maguey, the thorny and broad-stalked green plant that you see everywhere on the arid plateau. Women dressed in sleeveless blouses called *huipiles* and wrap-around skirts, a costume still seen in the villages. The chiefs wore stockings, earrings, and necklaces. They all bathed in steam baths such as are still used today in San Martín de los Pirámides, a village which lies in sight of the pyramids. They lived in impermanent houses of mud and reserved their cut stone for the gods and the priests and the kings: hence the city you see, the archaeological city, is only the ceremonial area, the cathedral plaza, of a once large and prosperous capital.

Already abandoned long before the Conquest, Teotihuacán, until lately, was a collection of overgrown mounds which turned out to be, on discovery, a group of masonry pyramids. The city was laid out, south to north, along both sides of a broad avenue a mile long, or more, running from the Temple of Quetzalcoatl, the feathered serpent, to the Pyramid of the Moon. The Temple of Quetzalcoatl, called La Ciudadela, at the south end of the avenue, stands upon a double platform about 1300 feet long. It is the central pyramid in a group of seven pyramidal structures. The exposed area of an earlier building beneath the ultimate pyramid contains the best decorative detail in the area — four rows of sculptured feathered serpents, the god's symbol.

Traveling north along the Avenue of the Dead, one approaches, just over the river, the Temple of Tlaloc, the rain god, and across from that multipyramidal temple

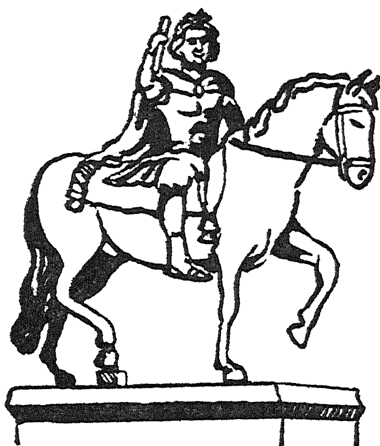
stands a group of partly recovered buildings raised up, age after age, one above another, into an almost indistinguishable pattern. At the lowest level, there are wall paintings of the epoch of the feathered serpents in the Temple of Quetzalcoatl. Farther north, on the east side of the avenue, the Pyramid of the Sun dominates the whole city. Only the great pyramid of Cholula, among Mexican monuments, is more vast. Its volume is computed at more than 4,000,000 cubic feet. If you can get around in the thin air at an altitude of more than 7000 feet, a climb up the staircase will be rewarded by a magnificent view. You can try to imagine what the Toltec temples looked like when they glittered with bright, fresh paint in the white light of Nanaoatzin, the Sun.

At the far end of the avenue stands the Pyramid of the Moon, modestly only 42 meters high against the Sun's 60. The Temple of Agriculture, near the Pyramid of the Moon, is worth a quick look for its frescoes of flowers, snails, and shells. Other fine frescoes will be found by the persistent tourist in the small village of San Francisco Mazapan, some 600 yards east of the Pyramid of the Sun on the road to Otumba. These paintings represent the home of the rain god, where his devotees went when they died. It is a delightful heaven of singing and dancing.

The Teotihuacán regional museum, open from 9:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. and from 2:00 P.M. to 4:30 P.M., contains one of the most systematic collections of pre-Hispanic antiquities in the country. A relief map shows what the ancient temple city was like, and masonry pillars and glass cases display a great many objects taken from the

excavations. The tiger sculptures and masks are especially handsome, while visitors who have a historical interest can see in the display of potteries evidences of at least four of the five cultural epochs which produced Teotihuacán. One object of interest in Case 7, from the last epoch, is a clay statue of the god Xipe-Totec, whose likeness in gold may be seen in Oaxaca. This is one of many examples of contact between the Mexican tribes. Art and religion were traded around, as well as food and materials.

If you failed to take a picnic lunch to eat at Acolman, you can buy food at Teotihuacán in a cave!



CHAPTER V

Mexico City

1. Where to Stay

ON YOUR way into Mexico City from San Juan Teotihuacán, you will be stopped at a police-department *caseta* to show your *tarjetas*. You can hire a guide there to take you through the maze of traffic into the city and the hour that you are likely to save getting into the center of town is well worth, at that time of day, the 5-peso tip that the guide will expect.

If you feel independent, intermittent arrows pointing the direction to Shirley Courts will land you safely uptown, where you can inquire your way. The highway enters town on Encino Avenue, which comes to an end at the railroad station. From there you take Boulevard

Ramón Guzmán to the Monument of the Revolution, a gigantic arch which you cannot miss. From there, if you are going to a downtown hotel, you turn left and go down Ejido to Avenue Juárez, and thence through Avenue Madero to the principal plaza. If you are going uptown, continue on Ramón Guzmán to the grand boulevard, Paseo de la Reforma, where the new hotels cluster.

I have already said that it is hard to get rooms in the capital without reservations. The hotels which I know and like best are as follows:

Altamira Apartments, on the corner of Balderas and Independencia, new and expensive.

Carlton, Ignacio Mariscal 32, average prices.

Cortés, modernized colonial convent on the Alameda.

Emporio, a modern uptown hotel, Paseo de la Reforma 124.

Geneve, Londres 130, a big tourist center.

Luna, Orizaba 16, new and exclusive.

Majestic, a delightful hotel on the Zócalo.

María Cristina, Lerma 31, a moderately priced uptown hotel much frequented by women traveling alone.

Montejo, Reforma 240, uptown and quiet.

Ontario, Uruguay 87, downtown and Mexican.

Prado, Avenida Juárez, with smart decorations by Diego Rivera.

Prince, Luis Moya 12, new and central.

Reforma, on the Paseo, smart and expensive.

Ritz, Francisco I. Madero 30, the best all-round hotel in the city.

Vendome, modernistic, expensive.

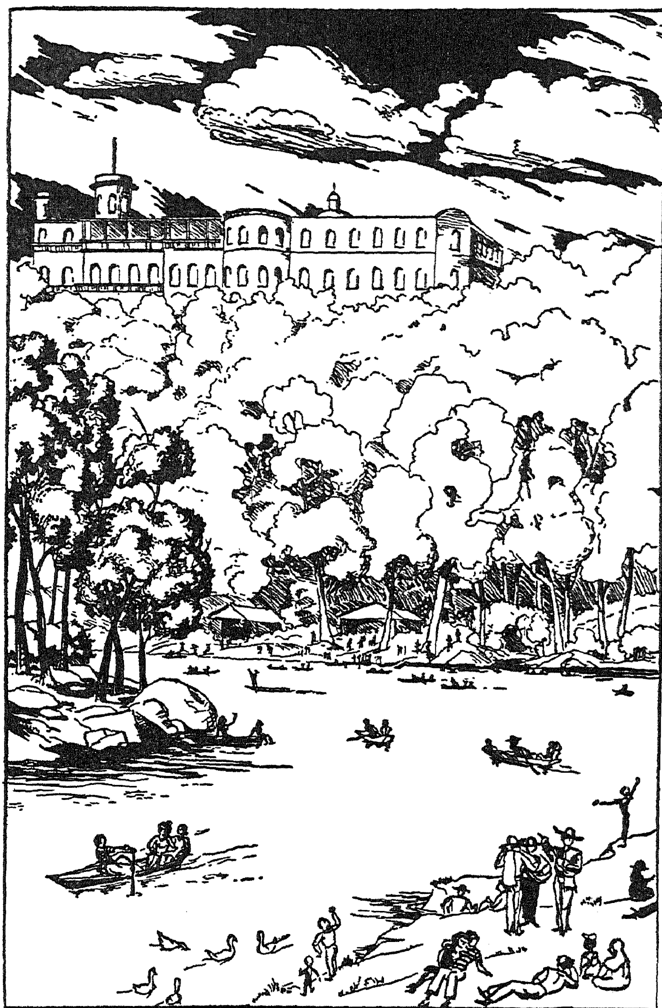
It is always impossible to guarantee prices, but in general, an "expensive" hotel charges $8 or $10 for a room with two beds. And although official room prices range as low as $4 in many hotels, you will find, when you ask for a vacancy, that most available rooms in the capital are in the high-priced class. In the provinces, there are attractive hotels where you can get board and room for $5, sometimes even less. Once on the ground, if you want to linger in Mexico City and not pay through the nose, you can look at rooms advertised in *Esta Semana*, the tourist weekly, and save lots of money.

When you reach your hotel, you would do well to eat a light supper and go to bed early. For most people, the first night in the capital is critical. If the altitude of 7415 feet means to get you, it will coax you into eating and drinking and leave you bloated and dizzy by morning. You can fool it only by playing the Spartan that evening. In fact, doctors say that if the newcomer would spend the first day in bed, quietly occupied in getting used to the altitude, he would have a much happier time when he starts out sight-seeing. Since most travelers are not actually willing to wait twenty-four hours to get out on the streets of the City of Palaces, one can recommend only, to the average impatience, a leisurely start on the morning which follows arrival and an uncrowded day in which a general view may be taken.

2. *The First Morning: Chapultepec Castle*

It is pleasant to start the first day with a very small breakfast and drive out about eleven o'clock to Chapultepec Park, which lies at the end of the chain of avenues which traverse the city from the Zócalo, the great plaza, westward. From downtown to the park, the route runs as follows: the shopping streets Avenida Madero and Avenida Juárez, and the Paseo de la Reforma. At first glance, the Paseo, Maximilian's French boulevard, looks somewhat shabby, but after a time it takes on a genteel air of its own. Bounded by gardens and groves, by luxurious nineteenth-century houses and the last word in modern apartments, it is strewn with bronze monuments. It begins, in fact, with an equestrian statue of slow-witted King Charles IV, affectionately known in the town as the Caballito. According to legend, if the monarch sits on his horse when you pass, it will be a good day; he would take shelter, they say, if the weather weren't perfect. The principal monument up on the Paseo is the Angelito, a gilded angel on a tall granite shaft halfway up the boulevard: the Angel of the Independence, so-called, in honor of the eleven-year war which resulted in Mexico's emancipation from Spain.

The point of driving out to Chapultepec Park on your first morning is that you can take the road up the hill to Chapultepec Castle and get a fine view of the rambling white city that spreads out at your feet. You can see



Chapultepec Park and Castle

what the capital looks like: how it lies on the land, how its streets cross its avenues, and what color it takes. Seen from a low-flying plane, Mexico City is all dun-colored roof. But from Chapultepec Castle, on a sunny day, it gleams as white as an African city.

You can walk around three sides of the castle and then scan the outline of Mexican history that has crowded its chambers. You can perhaps read a parable into the coach-room, where Maximilian's glittering and glamorous coach is contrasted with the mousy black hack that carried Benito Juárez around on his puritanical business.

Maximilian moved to the castle from the Zócalo and the National Palace because he found the official quarters too gloomy. Yet the poor man was not happy out in the park. It was not in his nature, at least not in his stars, to be happy. Backstairs gossip had it that he had well-bred mistresses who crept into his chamber between eight at night and four in the morning; but it is historical fact that Carlota never allowed him to sleep in her damask-draped bedroom of State. He took no pleasure in parties, although he liked to drink Rhenish wine with his officers. He preferred country to city and worked very hard to acquaint himself with his hostile empire. He wanted, more than anything, to do good in Mexico; but the Mexicans wanted none of the good that he felt he could do — not as long as his army strutted its vainglorious way through the country.

If, after your drive to the castle, you took lunch on the roof of the Hotel Majestic, at the corner of Avenida Madero and the Zócalo, you would see yet more of the

city, from aloft, before wandering afoot in its streets. Your lunch would be thoroughly Mexican, although better than "typical" Mexican, and if you arrived before half-past one, you could perhaps get a table with a view of the plaza and take time to examine the lay of the land in the old part of the city.

Built on the site of the principal Tenochcan temple and dominating the plaza, there stands the largest church on the continent, the Cathedral of the Assumption of Mary Most Holy. Growing in stature along with the ages, from 1573, the cathedral reached its final dimensions (387 feet long, 177 feet wide) in 1813, when it emerged as a complex of Romanesque, baroque, and neoclassical styles. The two yellow-hued towers, which rise to the height of 203 feet, are crowned with Romanesque belfries. The façade, already decorated with classical (Doric) orders and baroque cappings, was completed in 1804 by the neoclassical architect, Manuel Tolsa, who also designed the lantern on top of the dome. When you visit the church, as perhaps you will do after lunch, you will see that the Doric motif is continued inside, along with rich Renaissance and Churrigueresque detail. Excavations behind the church have lately turned up a corner of the main staircase of the Aztec temple over whose ruins the cathedral now stands.

The façade of the Sagrario Metropolitano, attached to the cathedral at the right, is a handsome example of the Churrigueresque style of which I have spoken, so you will have a good chance to determine what stand you will take when you really come to grips with it later.

If your taste is pure Georgian, the Georgian of Sir Christopher Wren and his New England disciples, you may be offended. Yet Churrigueresque is not so much a matter of taste as of exuberant feeling. There is lots of fun in it, whether gilded or plain, and it suggests that religion should at least make men happy. The baroque spirit was carried to the drollest excesses in Mexico, largely by Indian craftsmen, and if there is a drop of flamboyance in your American make-up, you will learn to take pleasure in its fantastic profusion of polychromed ornament.

Along the east side of the plaza, opposite the Hotel Majestic, the National Palace stands on the site of Moctezuma's old residence. It is deep red in color, for the heavy stone structure was faced with *tezontle*, an easily quarried volcanic stone. The general style is baroque, of the simplest seventeenth-century variety. After lunch, you can drop into the palace, at the central entrance, and climb the main staircase to see Diego Rivera's frescoed plan of the city in the days when it was called Tenochtitlán and occupied by the Aztecs. It lay on an island in the midst of a lake, Lake Texcoco, which made a moat all around it. Stones from the original city are said to have been built into the walls of both cathedral and palace after the old pagan gods were dismissed.

The severe granite structure across from the southern end of the palace is the new Supreme Court of the federal government. There are wall paintings there, to be seen on your afternoon tour — murals by José Clemente Orozco and George Biddle, the American muralist. The new government offices along the narrow south end of

the Zócalo were built to conform, more or less, to the colonial style.

3. *Frescoes by Diego Rivera*

After lunch, if you go first to the frescoes, you will get a good light. To the left of the central portico of the National Palace a grand staircase leads up to some arcaded corridors. The walls of the staircase itself are filled with frescoes made by Diego Rivera in 1931, and if you want to hear a graphic account of them, you can speak to one of the guides at the top of the staircase. You will get, first of all, a good fifteen-minute account of the revolution which began with Francisco Madero. And if you squint properly, you can also get a dim view of the over-all mural pattern. It is composed of too many elements to be clear at first sight.

To catch a glimpse of Rivera at work, you will have to go back in the morning. The maestro has lately been at work on a long-cherished plan to fill up the patio with a pictorial account of Mexican history. The colored panels are set off by new examples of Rivera's lifetime preoccupation with an ancient technique called grisaille — monochrome painting, usually in gray or sepia, which suggests bas-relief. The painter has there pointed up some details of the Aztec economy, such as harvesting, marketing, weaving, sculpture, clay modeling, goldsmithing, and tattooing.

To see some of the work of Rivera's great, though

more difficult, rival, José Clemente Orozco, go on to the main entrance of the Supreme Court building on Calle Venustiano Carranza, a continuation of the street fronting the National Palace. A series of staircases leads straight up to the foyer which Orozco has filled with wall paintings — to the dismay of the justices — on the subject of the failure of federal justice.

I have often been asked about the meaning of this or that figure in Orozco's paintings, and I can only reply that Orozco's "meanings" are not always as clear as a well-written book, for the man is a painter and not a philosopher. Rivera is classical, literary, and easy to see. Orozco is emotional, modern, and often obscure. His comments on human affairs are more often violent than strictly intelligible. He turns whatever he hears, in the way of world gossip, into patterns for pictures with sharp, often torrid, emotion. And it is the feeling rather than intellectual "meaning" that carries the spectator along from picture to picture.

At the far end of the foyer, one sees first of all the most incomprehensible of the four main designs, and an effort to turn what one sees into parable will result in a headache. But at right hand and left, there are "story" versions of the destruction of wisdom in the burning of books, of Justice familiarly blind if unfamiliarly ugly, and groups of bound victims of hate. The square panel over the staircase is the most complete part of the scheme. What design lacks there in clearness is paid for in brilliance of color, in the sparkle of transparent paint. The nude figure is first-rate Orozco, distorted and writhing,

its muscles stripped of all flesh, its limbs and torso expressing felt agonies with such desperation that facial expression would have been superfluity.

On the way down the staircase, you can turn to the right at the landing and see George Biddle's murals on a wall surrounding the door to the library. Working in 1945 as a guest of the Mexican government, Biddle painted frescoes intended to illustrate Sherman's memorable comment on war. The theme is worked out in the contrast between war's starved victims and the plenteous contentment of people at peace. Biddle has reached the highest point, up to now, of his considerable talent in the ingenious animal fantasies that give his design a kind of baroque quality which suits the Mexican setting. No Mexican muralist has achieved a greater variety in the use of the transparent pigments which distinguish the fresco technique. The supporting bronzes by Hélène Sardeau — you can barely see them around the frame of the door — were contrived with feeling and give off emotion. Although done in relief, they suggest rounded figures. They are amazingly fluent and free in posture and attitude. It is a pity that they are so badly lighted.

After a visit to the cathedral, whose traditional Spanish choir somewhat obscures the grandeur inherent in space, you might have a look at Monte de Piedad, the national pawnshop, the large colonial building at the beginning of Avenida 5 de Mayo, a street which commemorates Ignacio Zaragoza's victory over the French at Puebla. Founded in 1775 by the Conde de Regla, whose wealth came from mines, the pawnshop long performed a de-

lightful mixture of philanthropic, religious, and economic services. Loans were prayerfully made in the counting-house and paid for in acts of thanksgiving in a chapel next door to the counter. Business, however, is at present conducted along more conventional lines, although a government bureau of the Federal District makes it

Fruit Vendor

possible still for people without funds to borrow and people who have cash today to buy what they can sell back tomorrow. After shopping for bargains in jewels, you will be ready for a drink at the Ritz, up a few blocks on Madero, where the town takes a look at itself from about six to eight.

Until visitors have been sick a few times, they will never take the advice of the Mexicans about eating lightly at night. No one feels well in Mexico City if he eats and

drinks as much in the evening as he does in the States. Not for nothing has the custom grown up among the plain people of Mexico to sup on a glass of hot milk and coffee and a freshly baked roll or a piece of sweet bread; and even in upper-class houses, where dinner is served à la mode at around ten o'clock, it will be observed that the Mexican guests take small part in the eating. You yourself will be happier if you follow the custom of eating well in the daytime — that is, around two o'clock — and frugally sampling the menus at night. You can enjoy an ample amount of good food and yet have a fair chance of avoiding the itching and burning that goes on in most tourists' flesh.

For example, you can, after this first day of sight-seeing, eat a fillet of sole at the restaurant Papillon, up the street from the Ritz, at Madero 18, a chop at Ambassadeurs, Reforma 12, or a safe snack at Sanborn's and go to bed early. The night clubs can wait until you get your high-altitude legs.

4. *The Museum of Pre-Hispanic Antiquities*

There is plenty to do in the capital, for a day or two more, before starting out on a tour of the suburbs. You are not yet finished with the old part of the city, down near the Zócalo. For example, the National Museum, open mornings only, will fill in your view of the ancient life that you glimpsed at Teotihuacán on your way into Mexico. In the patio at the museum entrance, which is at Moneda 13 around the corner from the National Palace,

you can see many monuments of pre-Hispanic antiquity. Since the cataloguing of these ancient treasures is meager, it would be wise to hire a guide at the entrance and let him point out the principal objects. You will want to make the acquaintance of Coatlicue, goddess of the ancient Mexican earth, serpent-headed, snake-membered; Tlaloc, the god who brought rain in summer; Ehecatl, the god of the wind; coy Xochipilli, and Centeocihuatl, the goddess of corn. After these, you must have a glimpse of the sacrificial jaguar, the famous Aztec calendar, the hunchback, the warrior, the tortoise, the tiger, the plumed serpent.

Do not fail to make a quick trip to the upper floors. On the second floor, in the Codex Room, there are documents from which the historians have derived much of their knowledge of old Mexico. Painted in color on maguey paper and deerskin, the old pages describe such historical matters as the early wanderings of the so-called Aztec tribes and the partnership between the Tlaxcalans and Hernán Cortés which hastened the Conquest. The third-floor galleries contain some of the finest stone sculptures dug up in old ruins.

5. *More Diego Rivera*

And now, while your museum impressions are fresh, you might like to see more of the art of this century. A couple of blocks behind the cathedral, at Avenida de la Republic de Argentina and Calle Justo Sierra, stands the neoclassical, multipatioed, three-storied Ministry of Edu-

cation, whose long corridors are filled with the earlier frescoes of Diego Rivera. The paintings begin, chronologically, in the front patio, the Court of Labor. Fresh from visits to Yucatán and Tehuantepec, Rivera began, in the twenties, with some conventional frescoes representing the quaintly costumed dignity of the women from the Mexican southlands. When his political sponsors asked what those picturesque ladies had to do with the revolution which he was expected to paint, Rivera went to work at Mexican history and social conditions and produced the pictures of people at work: weaving and harvesting, mining and forging.

Most of those early panels were painted in dull earth browns and grays. It was only as the design developed that the richer colors began to appear — along with Diego's invention of the "typical" Mexican who became the world's symbol of the Mexican Indian: a little fellow with a spherical head attached to a neckless, egg-shaped torso poured into an unwrinkled white cambric shirt. Groups of these figures are supplied with such flaming captions as, "They defame and despise us because we are common." Thus, in the twenties, Mexico's revolution in painting began, a revolution in subject if not yet in style.

The ground floor of the next patio, the Court of Festivals, shows on one hand the colorful Dance of the Ribbons; on the other, the Holy Saturday fireworks, with the paper figures of priests, bankers, and generals about to be burned in the street. A self-portrait of the painter may be seen in a panel representing the Day of the Dead. He stands under a dangling, cadaverous mandolin player.

The walls of a staircase which ascends the gloomy interior from the front patio are painted with a continuous allegory of the geographical ascent from the Gulf up to Mexico City, while the frescoes upstairs in the big patio continue the political story. There are hundreds of little egg-shaped people there, apparently awaiting the freedom which the government promised them — *paisanos* in straw sombreros and seamless balbriggan trousers. The visitor will probably see country Mexicans, bony and lithe, staring in wonder at Rivera's version of the Mexican "type."

If the public offices are not closed for lunch, you might drop into the Department of Publications, where they sell children's books illustrated by many good artists. There are stories by Kipling and Hawthorne, along with works from the Russian, the Chinese, and the Spanish, illustrated by José Chavez Morado, Gabriel Fernández Ledesma, the Spaniard Prieto, and by Angelina Beloff, Rivera's French wife. So far as I know, these enchanting cheap books are not on sale in the uptown bookshops.

6. A Side Trip for Students of Painting

If you want to pursue the subject of modern painting in Mexico, make a note to go by yourself, when convenient, to the Preparatoria on Calle San Idelfonso, between Avenidas Argentina and Carmen, and just a few steps from the Ministry. There you can see the first true fresco of the new epoch, by Ramón Alva de la Canal; Jean Char-

lot's account of the sack of Tenochtitlán by the Spaniards; some remnants of unfinished frescoes by David Siqueiros; Fernando Leal's melted-wax mural about the Black Christ of Chalma, the patron of sweethearts; a version of the legend of the Virgin of Guadalupe, Mexico's dusky madonna, by Fermín Revueltas; and finally, the first fresco paintings of Clemente Orozco. The finest of these, called "The Trench," contains the first glimpse of Orozco's true style: the diagonal lines, the oblique angles, the color patterns of black and white, green, brown, and gray. On the walls of the staircase are the first of Orozco's Franciscan monks — symbols of the ideas of goodness and love, as machines, in his later work, became the symbols of evil and hate.

7. *Food for Flesh and Spirit: Guadalupe*

After so improving a morning, you are entitled to as good eating as the city provides. You might therefore try the restaurant-bar at the Club de Sans Souci, where you can sit in a window with the warm sun on your back. Dinner, with floor show, is something else there, you can take it or leave it, but lunch is a "must." Nowhere else in the town will you get such good food, so well served, for the money. You can try, tomorrow or next day, Restaurant 123 at Calle Liverpool 123, the fine French restaurant Gallia on Calle Gante, or even the inexpensive table d'hôte at the Ritz.

If you have spent the morning on foot, which is proper

in the old part of the city, you will perhaps want to drive out after lunch. There are three or four drives which ought to give pleasure: for instance, to Villa Madero, the Desierto de los Leones, and Tepotzotlán. Most people like to drive out to San Angel, as well, if only to peer through the fence at Diego Rivera.

The Sanctuary of the Virgin of Guadalupe is in Villa Gustavo Madero, named for Francisco Madero's one faithful brother. You go out past the Monument of the Revolution and turn right on Boulevard Ramón Guzmán, named for a hero of the *Independencia.* Go on past the railway station — reversing the route that you took into town — and at the northern portal of Mexico City, turn right off the Pan-American Highway at Boulevard Guadalupe. (If you are staying downtown, go out Argentine, turn left on La Ronda and right on Calzada de la Villa, which takes you where you are going.)

The Virgin's shrine is more impressive and costly than architecturally interesting, but the life that goes on there all day, every day, is thrilling to watch. As the shrine of the patroness of the whole Republic — the protectress of the whole of New Spain by papal decree and by popular feeling — it is always the center of pious (and commercial) activity.

The story goes that on the hill of Tepeyac, the seat of the Aztec mother goddess Tonantzin, there appeared, on December 9, 1531, the apparition of a brown-skinned madonna, the Virgin of Guadalupe in Spain. Having somehow got lost there, she addressed herself to an Indian, one Juan Diego, and told him to tell the archbishop that

she wanted a church for herself in the place where Tonantzin was worshiped. The archbishop, a sensible man of the world, was only persuaded that the apparition was holy when Juan Diego returned with his cloak full of roses, plucked from a hillside where no roses grew. The Virgin's image appeared on the cloak, a celestial rebuke in blue, crimson, and gold. The archbishop then hastened to build a shrine for the portrait.

If you happen to be there around the twelfth of December, you can see the Saint's devotees at the height of festivity. But on whatever day you visit the sanctuary, you will be touched by glimpses of piety: the faithful swarm up the main aisle on their knees, the halt and the lame tour the side chapels in search of miraculous cures. You will see on the walls of the chapels some picturesque forms of the popular arts — childlike paintings on tin in praise of the Saint for her miracles, as well as simulacra of bodily members wrought in filigree silver to remind her of favors expected.

The adjacent Chapel of the Well (Capilla del Pocito) is a rare example of the Moorish style transplanted to Mexico, with domes and lantern roofed with colored tiles from Puebla. Pilgrims drink from the well for the treatment of divers disorders, and gringos are invited to drink as a gesture of friendship. The Chapel of the Little Hill, at the top of a staircase which ascends Tepeyac from the well, marks the site where the first shrine was built. General Santa Anna lies buried there, Antonio López de Santa Anna who lost Texas to Houston.

8. A Picnic Lunch at the Desierto

The trip to the Desierto de los Leones can be made comfortably between lunch and sunset, but you can fill an agreeable day, after an hour of shopping some morning, by driving out there with a basket of lunch and returning by way of Coyoacan and San Angel. The Desierto is reached from the Toluca highway. You simply follow the Paseo de la Reforma out past Chapultepec Park, through the Lomas de Chapultepec, a new upland suburb, until the Paseo becomes Avenida Madereros and the road to Toluca. When you reach the pine forests, about 20 miles out, you turn left at La Venta.

The Desierto, built in the forested hills in 1606 as a place of retreat for the Carmelite missionaries, is now a picturesque ruin surrounded by the tumbled huts where barefooted friars once found solitude. Guides will point to the whispering chapel where, if you can think of something to say, any two of you can conduct an audible conversation in whispers from opposite corners.

The paved road from the highway will carry you on from the Desierto directly to Villa Obregón (San Angel) on your way back to the city. Villa Obregón, named for the president under whom the Republic began to recover from prolonged revolution, will be recognized, when you turn briefly right at Avenida Insurgentes, by the monument built on the spot where Obregón was killed by a zealot.

The rarest relic of the Villa's colonial period is the early seventeenth-century Carmelite convent on Plaza del Carmen. A guide will conduct you through the elaborate Churrigueresque church and the cloisters and finally down to the crypt, where an array of mummies of colonial dignitaries is on lugubrious view. Forty-five American soldiers who served in the Mexican War lie in greater dignity there. The plaza in front of the convent is at its best, with music and regional dancing, the week after Easter. Diego Rivera's blue house and studio stand behind rows of cactus across the street from San Angel Inn.

A few minutes beyond the Plaza del Carmen lies the curious region called the Pedregal, which was formed by streams of lava from the Xitli volcano in the Ajusco mountain range which seals up, to the south, the Valley of Mexico. Under a deep layer of rock, about four miles square, there lie the remains of the oldest American towns yet discovered.

The Museum of Archaic Man at Copilco, in the heart of the Pedregal, displays figurines, pieces of pottery, and bits of cut stone more than two thousand years old — how much older no one at present can say. At Cuicuilco, also in the Pedregal, an ancient temple platform can be seen emerging from volcanic wasteland. Older by hundreds of years than the pyramids of Teotihuacán, the adobe mound of Cuicuilco bears the oldest extant altar lifted up to American gods.

During the colonial period, Coyoacan was of greater importance than the town of San Angel, from which it

is reached over Calle Juárez. It was the seat of the first Spanish government in the Valley of Mexico, the Council of 1522. Cortés lived there, on the plaza, and one of the town's principal palaces, at Juárez 133 (now owned by Americans), was built by the adventurous Pedro de Alvarado. Its stucco façade, with large upright lozenges, is a fine example of domestic colonial architecture. Two local examples of church architecture are the sixteenth-century Dominican monastery, likewise on the plaza, and the Church of St. John the Baptist, next door to it, a battlemented Franciscan structure dating from 1538.

Perhaps the most famous of all the convents in the Valley of Mexico, Santa María de los Ángeles at Churubusco, can be seen on the way back from Coyoacan to the downtown part of the capital — just off the Calzada de Tlalpam. This convent, begun in 1678, is now a public museum; hence it is possible to see an intact early colonial structure with its original gardens kept up. A charming tiled chapel clings like a bright bird to the base of the rose-colored tower from which the Mexican generals Rincón and Anaya resisted American fire in the battle of Churubusco, August 20, 1847. The near-by Churubusco country club permits out-of-town people to play golf for the greens fee. The return to Mexico City is made over the Calzada de Tlalpam and its northbound continuation, called Pino Suárez, straight into the Zócalo.

9. Churrigueresque Goes to Town: Tepotzotlán

If, after another morning of sight-seeing or shopping, you still feel like a picnic, try the road out to Tepotzotlán. It is possible to go after lunch to that pueblo and return before dark; but if you wish also to go to Los Remedios, not far away, you will want to be on the road before one o'clock. Go west on Avenida San Cosme, the continuation of that Avenida Hidalgo which borders the Alameda across from Avenida Juárez. San Cosme, bearing right, leads into Calzada Mar Mediterraneo, which in turn crosses the old road to Querétaro. Tepotzotlán, less than 30 miles distant from Mexico City, lies off the Querétaro road to the left, beyond Tlalnepantla and Cuautitlán.

Tepotzotlán was a thriving Indian city in pre-Conquest times, and for that reason was chosen as the site of a Jesuit college. Although a few elements of the sixteenth-century enclosure remain, the present establishment is a product of the great eighteenth century — all-out Plateresque and baroque in the Mexican style. Park your car in front of the church and take a look at the tower whose ornate bell stories dominate the whole valley from the Hill of the Hunchback where the tower rises.

The façade of the church reaches three stories of increasing richness of detail, with pilaster piled upon pilaster in a continuous leap until, at the top, you expect

the carved stone to topple in a shower of exploding particles. The tower and portal contain 320 stone figures, saints, angels, and cherubs in baroque profusion. Inside the church, the chapel floors are laid in colored tiles from which spring gold Plateresque altars. And the *camarín*, St. Mary's dressing room in back of the principal altar, is the most elaborate chamber of its Churrigueresque sort in the world. Note the incredible arrangement of polychromed figures in ceiling and dome.

In the old days, priests lifted the Virgin through the back door of her shrine on the altar, at the change of the seasons, and in the grandeur of her golden boudoir they arrayed her in the jeweled costumes that were stored in gold cupboards. Because of the intimate nature of those reverent rites, the permanent occupants of the place were carefully chosen. The Holy Child and St. Joseph, with the twelve apostles and angels, were alone thought to be suitable subjects for the carvings which spring from the walls and the circular dome, where soft light descends through ground alabaster.

There will be time, after lunch in the garden, to visit Tlalnepantla and Tenayuca, and also the shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe's closest rival. You go back over the same road to Tlalnepantla, where a frescoed sixteenth-century convent houses the venerable image of Our Lord of Mercy. At Tlalnepantla, turn left on a paved road to the Aztec Pyramid of Tenayuca, which is thought to be a miniature version (about 50 feet high) of the temple which stood, under Moctezuma II, where the Cathedral of Mexico City now stands. You will see, encircling

three of the walls of the pyramid, the Aztec snake motif in about as lively a form as exists among the known ruins.

10. Los Remedios

Back on the road which you took from Tepotzotlán, you turn south, pass Mar Mediterraneo (on your left), turn right in Tacuba onto the road to Rancho el Blanco, and continue to San Bartolo Naucalpan. The shrine of the Virgin de los Remedios stands on a hill just beyond the village. If by some stroke of good luck you are there in the first week of September, for the Virgin's fiesta, you will collect about as much native atmosphere as can be absorbed in a day. The peasants gather from miles around to serenade her at dawn and creep up the hill on their knees to hear Mass. After Mass, the day's festivities start with dancing and cockfights and carrousels.

The little madonna at San Bartolo came out to New Spain with the conquerors. She assisted, so the documents say, in the conquest of Mexico, and then disappeared. Ten years after the dark Mexican Virgin appeared on the hill of Tepeyac, Our Lady of Help showed herself, with some want of initiative, to an Indian chieftain on the rise of land where her chapel now stands. She directed the chief to her image, which was forthwith housed in a church with a boudoir for dresses and jewels. Her image was painted on the flags of the Spaniards during the years of the *Independencia*, while the Mexican Army fought

under the banner of Guadalupe, snatched from a shrine near the parish of Father Hidalgo.

On your return to the city, over Calzada Mexico-Tacuba, which runs parallel to Mar Mediterraneo, there will be time — if the sun has not yet, as the Mexicans say, occulted itself — for a glimpse, at Popotla, of old *Noche Triste*, the feathery *auhehuete* tree which sheltered Hernán Cortés on the night of his gravest defeat. Under attack by the Aztecs, the Spaniards determined to escape in the darkness by means of a portable bridge from island to mainland. With the assistance of allied Tlaxcalan soldiers, they tied up their loot, nearly a million pesos in gold, and set out in the night for the bridge. Attacked by waiting flotillas of Aztec warriors in scooped-out canoes, scores of Spanish horsemen were lost. It was under the big cedar tree in Popotla that Cortés is said to have waited in vain for the troops who were killed.

11. Time to Eat

Up to this point, I have not said very much about food. On the contrary, I have tried not to whet appetites. But by now, you will either be used to the altitude or you will have to get out of it. If you feel under par, go to Cuernavaca or San José de Purúa and rest for a while. If you don't feel the altitude, it's time to get something to eat. After the Tepotzotlán trip, for example, you ought to be ready for a good steak at Prendes, Avenida 16 de Septiembre 4. It is too bad that Prendes does not look more

attractive. Its *décor* is Childs'-restaurant, 1910; but they serve there the best food in town.

The oyster soup and baked oysters au gratin are divine, although few people care for raw oysters in Mexico City unless they're from Guaymas. And when maguey worms appear on the menu, you ought not to miss them. Fried in deep fat and served with *guacamole*, a paste whipped up from ripe avocados, this typical dish is more luscious than snails. But if the worms make you nervous, you can try *langostina con mayonesa*, a kind of sweet, fragile prawn. Steak Prendes, shrouded in French-fried circles of onion, is the best food this side of Alsace-Lorraine.

If you don't mind what you spend on a fancier setting, you can try the Ambassadeurs, Paseo de la Reforma 12; La Vie Parisienne, París 25; Casanova, Génova 16; or Ciro's at the Hotel Reforma. Restaurant Gallia, Gante 8, serves fine French cooking at more reasonable prices. If you like sea food, try a *huachinangüito* at the Tampico on the Paseo. Don't go before ten, when the place fills up with Mexican gourmets, and be sure to get *huachinanguito*, not plain *huachinango*. The *huachinanguito* is a small red snapper, entire. It is more fun to look at and tastes very much better than a fillet cut from the side of one of its parents.

Famous for Mexican cooking are the Café de Tacuba, Tacuba 28; the Oriental, downtown at Brasil 44; mid-town Fonda Santa Anita at Avenida Juárez 90; and the uptown Club 123 at Liverpool 123. Most Mexican food, as you've heard, is *picante*, the hotter the better to the Mexican taste. The hottest of all is a sauce called *mole*,

which is eaten with chicken or turkey, and especially turkey: for that fowl was an epicurean dish before the time of the Spaniards. The turkey will appear on the menus as *mole de guajalote*, the Indian name for it. The sauce contains all kinds of peppers and spices ground up with almonds, and its peculiar flavor comes from sesame seed.

Enchiladas are tortillas wrapped around lamb, chicken, or cheese and stewed in hot sauces. (The tortilla is the native thin, unflavored corn cake manufactured by hand with the slapping noise that is everywhere the obbligato to Mexican life.) *Quesadillas* are tortillas folded over a filling and fried crisp in lard. A delicious hors d'oeuvre, when eaten with pale Mexican beer, is the *quesadilla de huitlacoche*, whose filling is made from a parasite that grows on the corn stalk and is sweeter than truffles; or *quesadilla de flor de la calabaza*, filled with pumpkin blossoms.

If you want to try out new fruits, you will find these varieties, according to season: papaya, to be sprinkled with lemon juice; *platanito*, the little banana which you can eat uncooked; *zapote*, usually served with lemon juice or in a whipped pudding; granada (pomegranate); aromatic *guayaba* (guava); and mangoes — sweet green ones and the fleshier *mangos de Manila*.

12. Sunday in Town

A winter visit to Mexico City should take in horse racing on Saturday, at the sunny Hipódromo de las

Americas, and the bullfight on Sunday. Sunday in Latin America is no Puritan Sabbath. It is a gala, a weekly fiesta. Everybody who can creep, skip, or hobble is out in the morning in Chapultepec Park or his neighborhood plaza, and every bicycle, bus, and automobile is loaded

The Toy Railroad in Chapultepec Park

with holidaymakers en route to take lunch in the country. Contrary to the general impression of foreign writers, a large part of the populace still finds time for church services, at whatever hour up to two o'clock Mass. The tourist, accustomed to gray Sundays at home, can do no better than to move with the throng. But the day should conclude with the prime national pleasure of attending the bullfight.

Here, in an outline, is a typical Sunday: first, an early trip to a market — early because the Mexican shoppers go early; a stroll through Chapultepec Park with the crowds to watch the trick riding of local *charros* (cowboys) in costume, and perhaps to visit the Museum of Flora and Fauna (open daily except Monday from 10:00 A.M. to 2:30 P.M.); a twelve-o'clock drive out to Xochimilco; and the bullfight at four. Then, if you want more, perhaps a Mexican movie.

13. The Markets

Of all the big markets, the Lagunilla is the most entertaining on Sunday. You can go by taxi to the Avenida Paraguay section, where you may come upon odd bits of rare glass and china or silver laid out on the sidewalks. The larger Merced market, on Venustiano Carranza, below the plaza, was built up in the days when farmers were able to float their flowers and vegetables into the city along an ancient canal.

In the heart of Merced market, at Calle Uruguay 170, stands all that remains of the most bizarre convent ever set up in the town—La Merced (1593–1703), whose slim, lacy columns, in the surviving patio, are incredibly wrought into patterns that only gifted artists could see in rough stone. The upper-story columns, spaced two for one of the ground-floor columns, resemble Italian Renaissance terra cotta work in fruit and leaf motives.

If you now want to see more fresh flowers than can be possibly thought to bloom in one place, you can drop in at San Juan market, which runs through Calle Ayuntamiento, just above San Juan de Letrán.

14. Xochimilco

There is a unanimity of tourist opinion that the floating gardens of Xochimilco constitute another "must" on the calendar, and Sunday is the day to see them at their

picturesque best. Xochimilco lies among a group of Indian villages that might be a hundred miles away from the Valley, they are so crude and primitive. A pleasant if somewhat roundabout way to see how they lie is to

Lunch at Xochimilco

start out on the highway to Puebla at the end of Avenida Moneda. Then turn right at the town of Santa Barbara and continue to Chalco. From Chalco, take the narrow back road — it is surfaced — and tour the Indian pueblos until you reach Xochimilco. Between Chalco and Xochimilco you will pass through the towns of Mixquic, Tetelco, Tecomitl, and Tulyahualco, and come upon the canals before you really reach Xochimilco. Choose a boat with a canvas cover, unless you like the hot sun, and pretend for a couple of hours that you are Aztec noblemen taking your ease. Xochimilco was a favorite resort of the ancient princes.

Fussy people take box lunches from Sanborn's, but it is more fun to buy food from the boats that pass by on the water. If you take something simple, it will be perfectly safe. The breast of roast chicken and a few steaming tortillas taste good with cold beer.

On the way back to the city, if you find yourself pressed for time, go on through Xochimilco as far as Huipulco, where you pick up the road which takes you to town through Churubusco. If you have a little more time, go back as you came to Tulyahualco, where you turn left to Ixtapalapa, an Aztec village which lies at the foot of the Cerro de la Estrella. The villagers there do their business together in their own dialect — although they are no farther away from Mexico City than Diego Rivera's San Angel studio. If you feel energetic, you can walk part way up the hill — it is about a mile to the top — and imagine you are carrying twigs for the fire which the Aztecs used to build there every fifty-two years to mark the beginning and end of an epoch. Then you return to the city by way of Ixtacalco and Santa Anita, which lie on the Viga Canal, once a causeway crossing Lake Texcoco between Tenochtitlán and the mainland. But keep track of the time and do not be late for the bullfight!

15. Bullfighting

I approach with mixed feelings the subject of bullfighting. I have never, like Ernest Hemingway, got up

a learned discourse on the subject, and I realize that I am hardly more able to speak knowledgeably of that Spanish passion than I am to improvise fugues in the manner of Bach. But I do say that it would be a pity to spend a Sunday in town and not go to the Plaza de Toros at the City of Sports, south of the City on Avenida Insurgentes. Bullfights are fairly expensive, especially during the season from October to Lent, and tickets are not always easy to get — although your hotel clerk will help you. The "little season" of *novilladas* in summer — exhibitions by novices — comes very much cheaper and is not without its fair share of thrills.

Don't go to the bullfight, however, unless you can take it — an attitude which depends on ridding yourself of all Nordic sentiment for the horses and bulls. The horses are bundled in blankets and the bulls are escaping the packing-house shambles. You must go with pity and terror for the valorous matador who is risking his life to inflame you.

We have in the States no analogous form of diversion. Bullfighting is in no sense a sport. Bullfighters are artists, not athletes. Apologists sometimes suggest the quasi-analogy of the formal ballet, although bullfighters object that no hazard in dancing is remotely akin to that of facing a bull. It is true that the set forms of classical ballet can compare to established patterns of conduct in bullfighting. Likewise, as in dancing, there are inventions and improvisations on the basis of classical patterns. But after that, as the bullfighters say, the likeness quite peters out. For while beauty appears in both ballet and bullfight, horror sets the bullfighter apart from the dancer. The

dancer risks a strained ligament. The bullfighter exposes his heart to the horn.

I cannot prepare you, in ten words, for what comes to pass at the bullfight, except perhaps by naming the names of some of the actions and props. The bull is the *toro.* He is a small bull, in Mexico, but wiry and usually brave and often more dangerous than the big Spanish bull. The man who sets out to kill or be tortured is the *torero.* You can call him a *matador,* but never, unless you want to be laughed at, call him *toreador,* a term to be saved for the stage. The *torero* is assisted by peons, whom he pays from his stake for the day. The most exacting work demanded of peons is the placing of ribboned darts, *banderillas,* in the neck of the bull. A peon who works at that difficult calling is termed *banderillero.* The riders who prick bulls with lances are called *picadores.*

Now for the opening ritual — the only Mexican ceremony which comes to pass punctually. A fancy-dress rider is announced by a fanfare from brass horns. He rides across the arena and bows to the judges, who consent to the commencement of the day's order. He bows out of the ring and the *cuadrilla* appears, the matadors crossing themselves and advancing, stiff-gaited, in expensive costumes and knobs of false hair and attended by only less splendid peons carrying capes, swords, and *muletas.*

The traditional bullfighter's costume consists of tight breeches which meet with pink stockings below the kneecap, a white linen shirt with jabot, embroidered bolero, *montera,* or black pointed hat, and black ballet shoes. The

costume, the official *traje de luces,* weighs eighteen pounds, and is designed to provide superficial protection from the horns of the bull.

Torero

The *picadores* ride in on their tufted horses, followed by scavengers — they are called monkeys — in white suits with red caps and sashes. The procession is brought up by the mules who will drag out the dead bulls. When

the band reaches the end of the *Paso Doble*, the bull-fighters' theme song, the *cuadrilla* disbands, the horsemen quit the arena, and the bull is admitted. If the bull is lively and fearless, there will be lots of excitement before he is prepared for the kill.

Keep your eye on the matador. He is the most richly dressed man of the lot and has a bun of false hair at the back of his neck. Watch him pass the bull with his cape, so close to his body that the horns touch his chest. If he has a good bull, he will make many brave and beautiful movements, each of which has a name, like the basic movements in dancing. When the trumpet blows, the *picadores* ride in, and when the bull charges the horses, the horsemen stab him. This is one of the torments that strangers object to, but there can be no kill at the end unless this interlude is successful. The proud arch of the neck of the bull must be reduced before the matador's sword can enter the spine.

The interlude when the *banderilleros* place the tri-colored *banderillas* comes as lovely relief. It is gay and exciting. Then the last act of the drama begins. The matador dedicates his bull by tossing his hat to a beautiful lady up in the grandstand and advances upon his antagonist with sword and *muleta*, a fragment of red cotton fabric much smaller than the voluminous cape. Now he exhibits all his valor and grace, drawing the bull into horrid proximity. He shows his valor in stillness of posture, now standing firm on his feet, now meeting the charge on his knees, and sometimes arrogantly turning his back on the bull. If he is good, he is deified by the public. If he is

bad, he is cursed and berated. A bullfighter may be saluted with carnations and violets, with furs, hats, and handbags, and derided on the same afternoon in a hail of rented seat cushions.

When the bullfighter exposes his sword for the kill, and the crowd agrees that the moment is right for it, a religious silence descends on the multitude. The moment is holy. It is then that the stranger knows whether he is really in sympathy or entirely out of it. He is an inflexible Protestant who calls the fight mummery, or he is a believer. He shares in the moment's exaltation of soul, or he is as bleak as an infidel.

The climax comes with a quick flash of the sword and a clean, fast kill. But more often than not, I am sorry to say, there is anticlimax. The bull is not always killed swiftly and cleanly, and what follows after is extremely unpleasant, like any death that comes slowly to stout hearts and winged feet.

16. The Galleries

Most tourists are already acquainted with the names and works of Dr. Atl, Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, David Siqueiros, and Carlos Mérida; but the roster of painters belonging to the School of Mexico City includes many others whose work is exhibited in our country as well as their own.

The work of the following younger artists seems to me well worth knowing: Raúl Anguiano, Federico Cantú, Julio Castellanos, José Chavez Morado, Olga Costa, Jesús

Guerrero Galván, Ricardo Martínez, Guillermo Meza, Carlos Orozco Romero, Feliciano Peña, Antonio Ruiz, Juan Soriano, Rufino Tamayo, Alfredo Zalce; the draughtsman Bénjamin Molina and sculptor Francisco Zúñiga.[1]

The principal year-round dealers in modern Mexican art are Miss Inés Amor of the Gallery of Mexican Art at Milán 18, not far from the Hotel Reforma, and Señor Alberto Misrachi of the Central News Bookshop at Juárez 4, where you can also keep up with American books and newspapers. Both sell inexpensive prints as well as oil paintings and drawings. They can also save you the bother of exporting your purchases by executing the necessary consular papers and shipping the works to your home in the States.

The work of the younger political artists, especially the printmakers, may be inspected (and bought) between the hours of 5:00 and 6:30 P.M. at the Centro de Arte Mexicano, Avenida Donceles 99, Room 301. Galerias Mont Orendain, Puebla 154, give seasonal exhibitions of current painting. And student work-in-progress, under the direction of some of Mexico's most distinguished artists, may be viewed at the University art school in Callejón Esmeralda.

There are also state-sponsored exhibitions of art in the galleries of the white marble Palacio Bellas Artes (famous for its Tiffany curtain) and at the Benjamin Franklin Library on the Paseo — at Reforma 34. This library, by the way, is one of the most substantially useful institu-

[1] See *Modern Mexican Painters* by MacKinley Helm.

tions supported by our State Department in the Latin Americas. The staff there is always ready to help any reader pursue any subject.

17. *Night Life*

In the old days, there was only one night club that people went to — El Patio, which still serves good food at reasonable prices and puts on a typical Mexican floor show. Now there are several night spots, mostly owned by foreigners: Casanova, at Génova 16; Ciro's in the Hotel Reforma; Minuit in the Casa Latino-America; and Sans Souci, Plaza de los Ferrocarriles 6 — all expensive and cosmopolitan. If you like to go slumming in a very mild way, try the Salon Mexico, with its three typical bands which inspired Aaron Copland's suite, *Salon Mexico*. The Leda, out in the doctors' colony, near the carbarns, is noisy and native and jolly after midnight, especially on Saturday. But go there and come back in a taxi, not in your own car. Unattended women, who are otherwise likely to have a dull time in the evening, sometimes join up with a Thursday-night tour of the night clubs. Tickets at 75 pesos may be bought through hotels and agencies.

You might enjoy taking in a Mexican movie — the Alameda, the Chapultepec, the Palacio China — if only to see how the picture industry there is improving. You would enjoy Cantinflas even though you could not understand his absurdities. Most of the theaters show American

and Mexican pictures in alternate weeks. Concerts at the Palace of Fine Arts are advertised well in advance by posters set up at the door of that temple. The symphony season there comes in the summer; winter concerts are supplied by visiting artists.

18. Shopping[2]

The shops in Mexico City contain examples of just about everything made in the provinces. Taxco silver can be seen in several shops on Avenida Madero, where Calpini, for instance, near the Ritz, is agent for William Spratling. (Sanborn's makes its own silver in standard weights.) Tlaquepaque pottery and glass and straw furniture from Guadalajara is on sale at Ceramica Guadalajara, Avenida Juárez 105. Innumerable shops on the Alameda, such as Casa Cervantes, Juárez 18, show examples of regional arts, crafts, and costumes. Luggage is well made at La Palestina on Cinco de Mayo, fine shoes come from Romano on Juárez, and suits of domestic and imported materials are made by Emilio Pérez, next door to Sanborn's. There is a French dressmaker at Palacio de Hierro, downtown, and women swoon over gloves and bags from D. A. Rangel, Uruguay 8 — although they may wait to get their play shoes in Cuernavaca. Sanborn's is always in favor among those in the know because of its reliability in such things as perfumes and fabrics.

[2] An English shopping guide is published weekly in the free tourist bulletin *Esta Semana.*

Antiques at Galerias Ordaz, Madero 17; camera supplies at Hugo Brehme, over Madero 8; Tillett fabrics at Borda, S.A., Madero 29; books and periodicals at Central News, Juárez 4 and American Book Store, Madero 25.

The best buys in liquor are usually found in the big grocery stores, like La Fortuna and La Montanesa. Rum, which sells for about one fourth of the American prices, comes cheapest in straw-covered demijohns called *garrafónes.* A superior Mexican brandy bears the mark Sagargnac. It costs about one third of the price of the Spanish brandies and tastes better. Imported whiskies are very expensive, but there is a reasonably good bourbon made in Mexico by an American house. It is called Waterfill. Clean table wines of the Chianti type are bottled by Mexican vineyards and labeled Santo Tomás. I shouldn't think they are worth exporting under the quota, but they serve well, at low prices, in Mexico.

19. A List of Unusual Churches and Houses

I append a list of colonial buildings that you may encounter when you are shopping or strolling:

Bolivar 51, corner República del Uruguay, Casa de los Marqueses de Uluapa, sometime residence of Simón Bolivar.

Avenida 5 de Febrero 18, eighteenth-century baroque patio.

Calle Donceles 104, elaborate Churrigueresque Church and Convent of La Enseñanza (1754).

Callejón del Ecuador 10, early colonial one-story house with decorated stucco façade.

Calle Emiliano Zapata, corner of La Santisima, Churrigueresque La Santisima Church.

Avenida Francisco I. Madero 2, Casa de los Azulejos, the tiled palace (1735) of the Condes del Valle de Orizaba (now Sanborn's).

Avenida Francisco I. Madero 17, Casa de los Marqueses de Jaral de Berrio, residence of Emperor Agustín I.

Avenida Hidalgo 85, Casa de Santo Tomás de Villanueva, with monumentally carved portal.

Avenida Hidalgo, next to flower market, Church of Santa Vera Cruz, where the Virgin de los Remedios used to pass the night on her pilgrimages.

Calle de Jesús María y Corregidora 57, one of the oldest houses in the city (end of sixteenth century?).

Avenida Madero, corner Isabel la Católica, baroque chapel of former Jesuit monastery, founded 1595. Monastery destroyed after Law of Reform.

Avenida Madero, across from Sanborn's, Church of San Francisco, baroque addition to convent founded by first Franciscans in Mexico, 1524.

Calle de la Moneda 18–22, Casa Guerrero, turreted seventeenth-century palace of native *tezontle*.

Pino Suárez 35, Hospital de Jesús, founded by Cortés in 1527, hence oldest hospital in New World. Chapel ceiling redecorated by José Clemente Orozco.

Plaza Santo Domingo (or 23 de Mayo), baroque Church of Santo Domingo (1737); National School of Medicine, formerly part of Dominican convent and

prison of Inquisition; center of plaza, monument to Doña Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez, the *Corregidora.*

Avenida República de Cuba 96, surviving from 1685, said to represent former Renaissance character of Plaza de Santo Domingo.

Avenida República de Guatemala 88–92, formerly Hospital of San Nicolás, *tezontle* façade.

Avenida República del Salvador 49, former seventeenth-century Church of San Felipe Neri, partly ruined by earthquake of 1768. Churrigueresque retable.

Avenida República del Salvador 75, interesting for stuccowork.

Avenida República del Salvador 81, part of old San Agustín Convent, in *tezontle.*

Avenida República del Salvador 187–191, Casa de los Marqueses de San Miguel de Aguayo. Entrance at Calle de Talavera 20 to typical patio.

Avenida República del Salvador and Pino Suárez 30, Casa de los Condes de Calinaya, eighteenth-century Spanish Renaissance palace on site of house of Don Juan Gutiérrez Altamirano, cousin of Hernán Cortés.

Avenida República del Uruguay 67, the National Library, formerly San Agustín Convent, 1676–1691, with mixed baroque-Renaissance additions.

Avenida República del Uruguay 90, Casa del Conde de la Torre de Cossío, a costly three-story palace of the late eighteenth century.

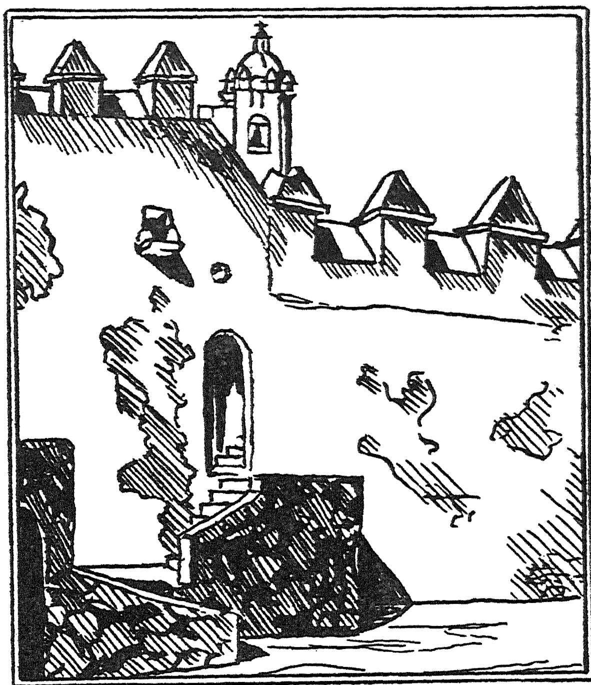
San Juan de Letrán 8, formerly part of principal Franciscan convent in Mexico City.

San Juan de Letrán 24, formerly college of Franciscan

convent, Chapel of San Antonio on top of Calvary Chapel. Poor modern façade.

Calle Soledad (end of street), Church of La Soledad, where underworld of the capital goes to church.[3]

[3] For complete check list of federal "monuments" of Mexican architecture, see *Edificios Coloniales Artisticos y Historicos de la República Mexicana*, Mexico, 1939.



CHAPTER VI

Cuernavaca

1. Perpetual Spring

IF YOU feel queasy in Mexico City, no doubt it's the altitude. If the sidewalks rise up in your face, if your head feels too big, if bells ring in your ears and your stomach is restless; if you are bloated and bored and wish you were home — again, it's the altitude. And what you most need

to do is to get the hell out of it. Now the easiest way to get out of the Valley of Mexico is to go south, over the Ajusco mountains, your hands clasping your stomach if need be, and get down to Cuernavaca as fast as you can.

I can cite no scientific statistics on the subject of touristic disorders, but I should say that about half of the sick tourists I meet complain of the altitude while the other half faint with dysentery. Both of these obstacles to perfect enjoyment can be overcome easily — the latter by mysterious drops that they sell you at Sanborn's, and the former by removal from the Valley of Mexico. Although Cuernavaca is a mile above ocean, it is easy to live in. It seems to be the last 2000 feet that break a man's spirit.

Cuernavaca itself is not a place of great intrinsic distinction, like the colonial cities described in Chapter XI. It was, until lately, a rude agricultural town in the center of a large sugar industry. It has had its bright moments, as when Cortés favored it and the Emperor Maximilian held court there in winter. But the eighteen families who once owned the State of Morelos built their palaces up in the capital and only passed through the town on their occasional trips to their ranches — whereas the fabulous cities of Oaxaca, Morelia, Guanajuato, San Miguel de Allende, owed their glamour to their distance from Mexico City. Provincial *hacendados* built convents and palaces in towns that were close to their lands.

Yet Cuernavaca amply makes up for its rather plain look by its climate. For every June day in the States that is "rare" in the sense of James Lowell's poem, Cuernavaca sees weeks of good springlike weather from November

through April. Even the rainy season is pleasant, for from June to October the rain obligingly descends in the night and the sun shines all day, not too warmly, on the green hills surrounding the town. Leisurely visitors often go to Cuernavaca at once, upon reaching the uplands, and do their touring in comfort from there.

2. *Where to Stay, What to Do*

The easiest way to get out of Mexico City is to go up the Paseo de la Reforma to Insurgentes, where the street-cars and busses cross the Paseo. Turn left and follow Insurgentes clear out of town. You have to look sharp at the name plates affixed to corner houses and buildings to stay on that avenue the first couple of miles. After that, it heads straight for the foothills and you cannot get lost.

There is a fair choice of hotels in Cuernavaca: the well-known old Marik, its face to the plaza, most of its rooms overlooking its large private gardens and swimming pool, and its dining terrace with a view of the snow-clad volcanoes; the spacious Hotel Bella Vista, whose cocktail terrace faces the municipal bandstand and surrounding garden; the inexpensive Spanish hostelry, the Iberia, on the American plan; the lush new Hernán Cortés, down the hill from the plaza, on the new boulevard out to Taxco; the plush Chula Vista, removed from the town; and the new Papagayo with cottages. Here the prices are lower than in Mexico City, yet higher than in provincial cities farther away from the capital. Good

food is always found in such unpromising places that I am not fearful of saying that I like the Cárdenas delicatessen by the post office, across the *zócalo* from the Marik, and a small spot called La India Bonita on the main thoroughfare, Avenida Guerrero.

Half a day at slow pace will show you the sights of the town. The Cortés Palace on the principal square, Plaza de la Constitución, was the country house of Hernán Cortés in 1530. The deep red battlemented structure has been much altered since the time of Cortés, but the loggia upstairs at the back, overlooking, in the distance, the riverside town of Chapultepec, shows the original decorated columns and fluted arches. The Rivera frescoes on the walls of the loggia, the gift of Dwight W. Morrow, who had a house in the town when he was ambassador to the country, rank among the best works of that master. They represent the Spanish conquerors in an attack on a native temple; a battle between the Aztecs and Spaniards culminating in the Spanish investment of Cuernavaca; the building of the palace; the good missionary and the bad priest; and the agrarian leader Emiliano Zapata on his white horse, symbol of the Mexican Revolution.

The Franciscan convent, whose church is now a cathedral, was founded by Hernán Cortés in 1529, the builder being a Franciscan friar, Toribio de Benavente. The thick-walled, barrel-vaulted nave is original. The tower and the small chapel at the main entrance to the atrium were built two centuries later. Behind the cathedral lies the municipal garden, where you will always find visitors

making photographs of a small sculptured boy urinating into the fountain.

The palace across the street from the convent was built by Count José de la Borda of Taxco. The famous gardens, now romantic ruins, once rivaled Versailles in elegance. Maximilian, hating the capital, spent much of his time at the Borda Palace, and the gossips reported that he received his fashionable mistresses through the small door in the wall that borders the lane to the south.

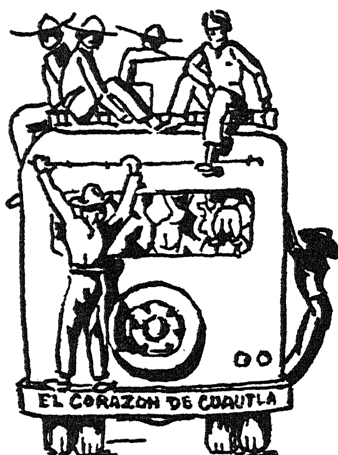
An Aztec ruin, the Pyramid of Teopanzolco, may be seen near the railway station. A double stairway leads up to the remains of sacrificial chambers which crowned a pre-Aztec structure which the conquerors only partly destroyed.

3. *A Day with the Camera*

For a man with a camera, the day of convent collecting I am about to describe is a field day. You leave Cuernavaca some morning at ten, with a basket of lunch and plenty of beer, drive down the barranca that dips sharply behind the Cortés Palace, and take the well-traveled dirt road which winds through rich sugar country towards the town of Cuautla. Where the road to Cuautla reaches the paved highway from Mexico City, you turn left, *away from* Cuautla, and drive towards the capital till you come to a road sign that says K. 88 — which means that you are 88 kilometers from Mexico City. Just beyond

K. 88, turn left on a smooth dirt road until you come to the lane which leads into Atlatlahuacan. There are no arrows to point to the town — which is why you will want all these details — but you can see the high walls of the convent and church, and if you drive slowly into the pueblo you will find the street that leads up to the church.

The Dominican convent is charming, with its cloister of low, barreled vaultings frescoed in pink and magenta.



Bus to Cuautla

You will find a wide view from the roof, where you also will marvel at the convent's enduring construction. It is amazing to see how much was done by the monks with so little; how much beauty achieved years before the New England pilgrims began to build their rude huts and spare meetinghouses. The foundation of the Atlatlahuacan convent goes back, in fact, a hundred years beyond the tran-

sient beginnings of the city of Boston. Yet its thick walls of cut stone and its round Romanesque arches are permanent monuments of a high transplanted culture.

Returning to the Mexico City–Cuautla highway on the way to the next ancient convent, one drives south towards Cuautla to about K. 94. There is no kilometer sign thereabouts, but the left turn to be taken can be identified by the presence there of a covered pavilion, between two railroad crossings. Just beyond the highway the dirt road crosses a bridge, makes a sharp unmarked left turn, and continues, in a bad state of repair, for the 4 miles to Yecapixtla. It is slow going, although busses rattle over it daily from Cuautla. And the convent is by no means so fine as that of Atlatlahuacan. But what takes you there, off the easy highway, is the glimpse that you get of road and bridge building in the first days of New Spain. You will have come upon fragments of stone-paved road in the mountains between Cuernavaca and Mexico City. Maximilian drove over them, and the first automobiles had to ascend them. But at Yecapixtla one sees and momentarily travels old colonial roads.

One of the bridges reached by the sixteenth-century stone pavement crosses a brook through which Captain Gonzalo de Sandoval fought the sober, flesh-eating tribesmen he found there in March, 1521, when the river flowed red for two hours with mixed Spanish and Mexican blood. There is a wonderfully picturesque approach, from that bridge, to the convent, and the church is quite fine with its lofty vaulting and plain decoration — although the typical two-storied cloister is wanting.

The first Augustinian cloister in the New World is in Ocuituco, the residence of the first Archbishop of Mexico, Don Juan de Zumárraga. Ocuituco is only a short distance south, but you cannot go there by car. You must ride horseback from Yecapixtla.

On the way back to Cuernavaca, there is time enough to see Cuautla, the small town to which residents of Mexico City go for the week end in winter to take advantage of the low hotel prices as well as the bathing. The Indians called the mineral springs "Stinking Water," and the smell has nowise been abated since then. But anyone caring to bathe in warm sulphur springs can stop for a swim and still have time to reach Oaxtepec for the picnic.

Returning over the Cuernavaca road, you go as far as the town of Cocoyoc, which can be identified by an aqueduct which crosses the road at the entrance. Just beyond the aqueduct, between K. 38 and K. 37, turn right on a dirt road which leads, in 2 miles or less, to the town of Oaxtepec, which the conquistadors took over on March 12, 1521.

Bernal Díaz, who followed after the conquering squadrons, wrote that more than 15,000 Indian troops resisted the Spaniards at Oaxtepec but were driven off by a small troop of horsemen and finally brought to defeat by the dread musketeers.

"When Captain Sandoval found himself free from that struggle," the diarist says, "he gave thanks to God and went to rest and sleep in an orchard within the town, which was so beautiful and contained such fine buildings that it was the best worth beholding of anything we had

seen in New Spain. There were so many things in it to look at that it was really wonderful and was certainly the orchard of a great prince, and they could not go all through it then, for it was more than a quarter of a league in length."

The botanical gardens of the Aztec emperors, where trees and shrubs and medicinal herbs were systematically planted, no longer exist; but from the roof of the convent there is a good view of green groves watered by the cold mountain streams that run through the town. You can climb up to acres of vaulted roof and eat your picnic lunch among pointed merlons — the inverted square cones with which the battlements of fortresslike churches were always topped off. You may hear, on a week end, local *mariaches*, or minstrels, playing and singing in the shady groves surrounding the convent, and after siesta you might like to discover how rich the place is in quaint, early colonial fresco painting.

The thick cloister columns, built here as elsewhere of cut stone, are plastered and painted with the black and white figures of Dominican bishops and saints, while the former refectory — Dormitorio No. 2 of the school which later was kept there — is the scene of an endearing version of the New Testament miracle of the loaves and the fishes. The barreled ceilings throughout the cloisters are painted in earth reds and turquoise blue in formal designs of continuous interest. You will be pleased to observe, on your tour of the various chambers, that the builders took thought of the warm, healing sun. The immensely thick protective walls of the cloisters are

pierced by wide windows with sloped facings to catch light and warmth; while from the stone benches lining the windows the strangers from Spain must have gazed, with what longing for home, over the wild scape of the land they had come to subdue and convert.

Seven kilometers north of Oaxtepec lies the town of Tlayacapan, where Cortés himself went down to defeat at the end of a two-day battle with the Tlahuican soldiers. The Spaniards had entered the Plain of Amilpas by way of Chalco, and following a route which lay to the west of snow-capped Popocatépetl, they went to Yecapixtla, Oaxtepec, and Tlayacapan. From there they turned south to Yautepec and climbed the divide which led to Cuahnahuac, "the place in front of the wooded mountain," now Cuernavaca.

I picnicked once on the roof of the ruinous Augustinian convent of Tlayacapan, in order to try to pick out the route Cortés must have taken in flight to Yautepec. The view from that spot remains in my mind as one of the grandest in Mexico; but the road out there is not fit for motoring.

The town of Yautepec, your last stop for the day, is set in the midst of unexplored ruins of the Aztec epoch. There, in colonial days, the silkworm flourished, and now there are plantations of bananas and oranges. During the time of Benito Juárez, it was the seat of vandals known as *Los Plateados,* who adorned their persons and bridled their horses in the silver they ravished. Mexican literature abounds in descriptions of that band of marauders.

4. *Another Day in the Byways*

If you are staying in Cuernavaca long enough to want to stay longer, there is another leisurely day involving a swim in warm mineral waters — not the Stinking Water — and lunch by a waterfall. You set out in mid-morning for the pueblo of Tlaltizapán, which the owners of the land all around it used to drive out to, in carriages, by way of Cuautla from Mexico City. Now it is reached by way of Jojutla. You turn left at K. 100 on the road south to Taxco — just beyond the right turn to the caves which people from Mexico City now like to explore on a holiday. (If you do not have to stand on your head to remember the difference between stalactites and what's-their-names, you might visit the grottoes of Cacahuamilpa one day. They lie 40 miles west and are open on Thursday and Sunday.) The road to Jojutla winds through the sugar cane district of Zacatepec, which is one of the show places of the government planners. A large sugar refinery there is financed by the national treasury and is run on a co-operative basis. The land is owned by the peasants who plant and harvest the cane for processing.

After Jojutla, the countryside takes on a tropical look. The pueblos are clusters of thatched tropical houses scattered about in the fields and not seriated along the side of the road. Perhaps you will make your first stop at Tlaquiltenango, where you will see, just off the plaza, the steep walls of a convent. A schoolmistress receives guests

in the ancient cloisters and conducts them through a fine specimen of untouched sixteenth-century Dominican architecture.

It is not often that a skeptical modern can accept the early dates quoted by present-day occupants of Mexico's ecclesiastical monuments, when there are no carved records to go on. But the sheer weight and thickness of the convent of Tlaquiltenango, serving in place of rigid mathematical measurement, have the look of antiquity. One sees that the eye of the builder served for measuring rod. One can almost feel how the cloister went up, stone by stone, rising around its irregular arches, its bulk ever mounting — not in Gothic thrusts but with gentle Romanesque curves which follow the line of the sky.

The frescoes there are anciently primitive, perhaps even contemporary with the original building; for they too are casual and wear the delightful air of impromptu drawing. The walls of the cloisters and staircases are filled with painted wallpaper designs in black and white rectangles, the motives more pagan than Christian, and the barreled ceilings are frescoed in earth reds and ochers, with touches of blue.

Beyond Tlaquiltenango a paved road reaches about halfway to Tlaltizapán, and for the rest of the way, not above 5 kilometers, there is a good enough dirt road leading into the village. Tlaltizapán is the most winsome pueblo in the State of Morelos. The plaza is bowered with unclipped Indian laurel and water flows everywhere. You have to leave your car in the plaza to visit afoot the church where Emiliano Zapata built the tomb

which he never has lived in. Zapata, whose portrait Diego Rivera painted, with horse, in the Cortés Palace, was the chief of a loosely organized band of peasants during the revolution begun by Francisco Madero. His followers burned and destroyed haciendas and city halls all over the place, hoping to eliminate from the State of Morelos all vestiges of the alien culture of Spain. He was a popular hero second only to the violent Pancho Villa, and it is a pity that his wish to be buried with his white horse at Tlaltizapán had to be thwarted. The bones of six of his aides lie today in the tomb which he built.

In the old days, the springs, Las Estacas, constituted a carriage visitor's mecca, but it is doubtful whether today's motorist will think the dusty trip worth the bother. Still, they lie only a few kilometers beyond Tlaltizapán, within the borders of the hacienda of Temilpa, and the roads there are lined with palms and mangoes, while the fields are planted to orange and lime and *carrizo*, which looks like bamboo.

Retracing your route through Tlaltizapán, Tlaquiltenango, and Jojutla, you return towards the Taxco highway as far as K. 13, where you turn left for the springs of Tehuixtla, which appear at the end of 10 miles of paved road, past Lake Tequesquitengo. Just beyond the town of Tehuixtla, the road comes to an end at a river, Río Amacuzac. There you walk through a cluster of restaurants propped up on the bank of the river until you reach the suspension bridge called "The Hammock." The swimming pool lies over the river.

The tepid water is perfect for a winter day's swim —

it is enervating in summer — and not too smelly for comfort. Lunch is served in the restaurants facing the waterfall. *Ron popo*, a kind of eggnog, is made on the spot from fresh eggs, raw alcohol and vanilla.

Coming home, if you leave the Tehuixtla road at K. 9 and turn left on the dirt road which encircles Lake Tequesquitengo, you can see the new country villas around the blue lake and come out at K. 5 on the road back to the Taxco highway.

A pueblo called Tequesquitengo is said to have stood by the side of a narrow lagoon at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The villagers there, peons of the hacienda of San José, complained of parsimonious treatment at the hands of the absentee landlord's stewards and began to steal what they could no longer earn. To punish them, the *hacendado* — so the tale goes — directed the course of all the streams on the land into the lagoon, which rose until it covered the town. I know an old lady who professes to have seen a cross looming over the lake, in her childhood, and children today peer into its depths from the fishing boats, searching for traces of the lost pueblo.

5. *Tepoztlán*

Tepoztlán, an unusually beguiling Indian town, has a way of revealing itself in such a personal manner that visitors often go away feeling that they have discovered the place for themselves. Robert Redfield had already

lived there and had published his book *Tepoztlán, a Mexican Village*, when I first saw the pueblo, but it was so quiet and empty of foreigners when I first drove into its plaza that I felt I had come upon a new world by myself.

Dance of the Moors and the Christians

My wife and I had taken our household along on this outing, together with all the paraphernalia for a day's camping. We parked our car in the plaza and walked about half a mile to the fountain which supplies the village with water. Beyond the fountain, there is no place to go except sharply up the curious Tepoztlán cliffs which look like towers and domes; yet there was a steady flow of pedestrian traffic to and from the steep hills. Old men, young men, and boys came and went, back and forth, tipping their hats and calling "*Adiós! Adiós!*"

There was nothing peculiar in the fact of our cooking

our lunch out of doors in that place, for most of the populace dines in the open. But I suppose our array of provisions looked odd. A good many passers-by stopped to examine the contents of our baskets, and we invited one little boy to stop on for lunch. He had a good appetite for the steak sandwiches, but when he was handed an apple, he stroked it and fondled it, set it down on a rock, and disappeared up the cliff — slipping down again, in about fifteen minutes, with a handful of red poinsettias. These he presented, with a dignified gesture, to the *señora*, my wife. Having tipped his hat, he sat down by the stream to nibble his apple. Is it any wonder that we recall Tepoztlán with such pleasure?

If you are starting from Cuernavaca, you drive up the foothills towards Mexico City and turn right at K. 71 onto a winding paved road that leads to Tepoztlán. If you propose to climb about 1500 feet up the cliffs in back of the village to visit the Temple of Tepoztecatl, you will want to start out before noon with your own picnic basket. If you are less energetic, you can drive out in the late afternoon, walk up to the fountain at the end of the town, and return to the plaza in time to catch the sunset from the roof of the convent.

You must have good wind for the climb to the temple, even though there is an unmistakable path which reduces the grade of the steep ascent which the Indians make. The god who was housed in the temple is the subject of a Nahuatl gospel. He was born, it was said, of a virgin, but his mother's neighbors refused to believe in his miraculous birth and made shame of the girl. She tried to

destroy him by laying him on an ant hill. The ants brought him food. Then she laid him down on the thorns of a maguey plant. The maguey gave him milk. Then, like Moses, though for more sinister reasons, the infant was set in a stream in a basket and, like Moses, was recovered by strangers.

When the boy Tepoztecatl one day heard that his foster father had been appointed to be sacrificed to the Giant King of Xochicalco, an Aztec outpost whose ruins lie not far from Alpuyeca at K. 100, on the Taxco highway, he volunteered to take the place of his father. The Giant ate him whole and alive, but Tepoztecatl cut his way out of the divinity's flesh with a knife of obsidian and lived to perform many miracles on the scale of Paul Bunyan.

Tepoztecatl's suckling on the milk of maguey is symbolic of Tepoztlán's claim to be the mother of pulque, a fermentation of the liquid extracted from the heart of the plant. The god of pulque, Ometochtli, shared the temple at the top of the mountain with Tepoztecatl and was worshiped by pilgrims from countries as distant as Guatemala. When the Dominicans came to the town to set up their convent, one of the Fathers tried to destroy Ometochtli by throwing his image over the cliffs. Ometochtli embarrassed the Father by surviving the fall into the valley below, and it took quite a lot of explaining to prove to the Indians that the new Dominican deity, in spite of it all, was really more worshipful than the old god who caused the milk of maguey to ferment.

The Dominican convent at the east end of the plaza

was begun in 1559. The forecourt (atrium) is remarkable for its unusual breadth and the church for its uncommonly tall buttresses. The naïve quasi-Plateresque façade of the church, with its archaic figures, is one of the most charming examples of that style in Mexico. The Virgin and Child on the moon over the door are of Spanish descent, but the rest of the figures — sun, moon, stars, forest beasts — are delightfully Mexican. There is a fine, open view of the town and surrounding valley from the roof of the church. You can see most of the seven chapels which mark the division of Tepoztlán into *barrios*, the socio-political wards which comprise the municipal structure. Down in the valley and up in the hills there lie ten or twelve pueblos which used to pay tribute to the Tepoztlán chiefs.

6. *Entertainment and Shopping*

The most amusing native Cuernavaca night spot is the Ofelia, on the west side of the plaza, where there is juke box dancing every night in the week and a good band on Saturday. For more restrained dancing there is Maxim's, all through the week, and the Hernán Cortés and the Chula Vista on week ends. Everybody goes to the wrestling at nine-thirty on Thursday and the boxing on Saturday at the Arena Fray Nano, next door to Ofelia.

Most of the shops are near the plaza or on Avenida Guerrero, the street which connects the center of town with the market. Women go to Cuernavaca for shoes,

skirts, and blouses, and for the striped straw bags which they wear over their shoulders. They patronize Carmen Kavlie's shop in the Marik; Olga's, next door to Carmen's; La Gloria and La China Poblana on Avenida Guerrero; and the Tilletts at Hotel Bella Vista. There is a tin shop next door to the coffin shop on the plaza where you will find entertaining designs in trays and mirrors and cigarette boxes.

CHAPTER VII

Taxco and Acapulco

1. The Taxco Hotels

EVERYBODY who goes to Mexico winds up, sooner or later, in Taxco (pronounced Tasco). It is as famous, in tourist circles, as the floating gardens of Xochimilco and the Tiffany curtain in the Palace of Fine Arts in Mexico City. Nowhere else have so many tourists posed before so many cameras and nowhere else have so many painters produced so many bad water colors. It is hard, nowadays, to penetrate through all the publicity and all the dubious quaintness into the charm which people still feel beyond the banality of the funny old town. Yet in spite of all the new artificiality, it is well worth a visit — if for no other reason than to say that you've been there.

Where you will sleep and eat is a matter of taste. There are almost as many hotels as there are silver shops. They range in tone from the aloof grandeur of the Hotel Borda, which is the first thing you see when you approach the town from the north, to the lowly Casa Melendez, where you can still get a bed for a dollar a day. Most of the larger hotels charge from $6 up on the American plan. Besides the Borda, these are the Victoria, high on a hill overlooking the town and run by a friendly pair of Americans; Wells-Fargo's patioed Rancho Telva; the picturesque Hotel Los Arcos, down a steep lane from the plaza; and the Sierra Madre, a comfortable Mexican place around a large, sunny patio. A really enchanting place to stop, if you can arrange it, is the small Casa Humboldt, where good company meets with good food and good taste. When Natalie Scott is in residence — like Bill Spratling, she is an old-timer there — she puts people up in one of her houses and arranges excursions by horseback through the Taxco mountains. Riding, by the way, is the principal sport for visitors who plan to spend a few days. But now I must warn you that wherever you rest your wraps, you will be kept awake by the barking dogs who make the night hideous.

2. *Sight-seeing and Shopping in Taxco*

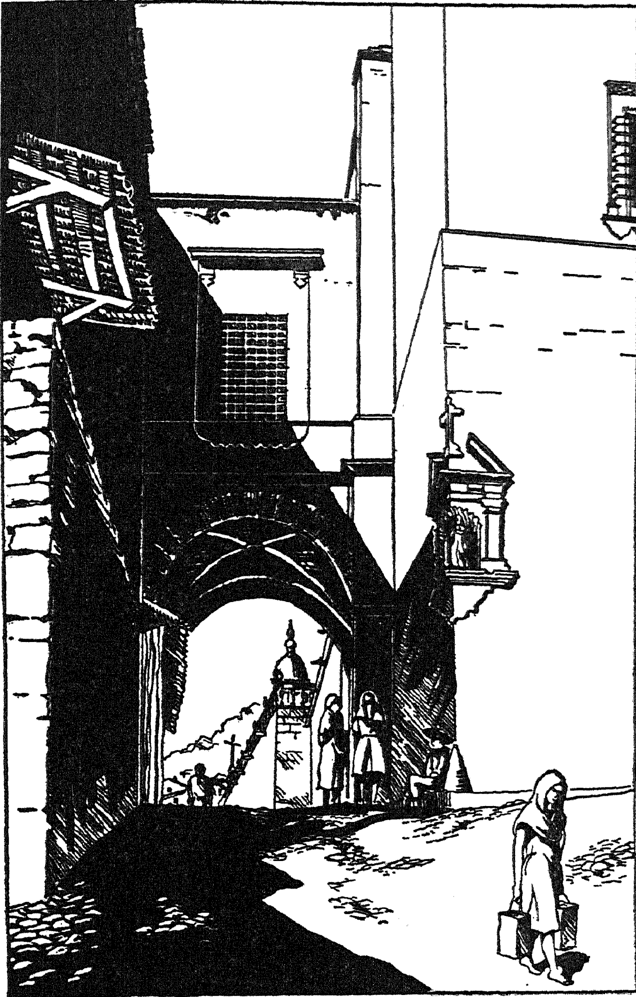
The Taxco highway from Mexico City through Cuernavaca winds in and out from one handsome prospect to another that is equally handsome. Even in the midst of

the dry winter season, the countryside is decked, here and there, with green fields, while farmers plow with their oxen the moist black earth of the watered valleys. Just after K. 90 there is a lovely green dip sprinkled with white plastered churches. Then at K. 98 a wide mountain view opens up and you begin to breathe faster. The dry hills are peopled by rough-looking Indians who come out to the highway to sell what their poor earth produces: the stock of many a merchant is a single brown egg.

Somewhat higher and cooler than Cuernavaca and 56 miles farther south, Taxco lies in the midst of a region which produced a great fortune in silver, in the eighteenth century, for Count José de la Borda. When Philip II of Spain married Bloody Mary of England in 1554, he presented his ugly and much maligned bride with twenty cartloads of silver, of which some part, even then, undoubtedly came from Taxco: for the mines there were mined for the Spanish sovereigns as early as 1552.

The Nahuatl hieroglyph for the town means "the place where ball is played," but the tourist will look in vain for a level spot the size of a ball court. Taxco is all up and down. Its effect depends upon an arrangement of the simplest pink and white houses ascending in terraces over brown hills and barrancas: for apart from the church, there are no architectural glories.

The building of San Sebastián and Santa Prisca, the parochial church on the plaza, was begun in 1751 by Count de la Borda as a memorial to the wealth that he took from the mines. It is said to have cost around four million dollars, of which a large portion went into the



A Street in Taxco

gold leaf which entirely covers the gaudy interior. The baroque exterior shows an arched doorway between free-standing columns of complicated design and surmounted by pairs of twisted columns, known as *salomónicas*. The richly ornamented towers rest on nearly unbroken bases of the native brown stone.

Maintained with great finish, largely on the alms of the tourists, the interior is a royal example of the Churrigueresque style. The twelve golden altars are not so cluttered with modern bisque saints but that you can see the carvings designed by Isidro Balbás, the architect. There are likewise interesting glimpses of oriental design, befitting a church on the stagecoach route from the port where the China ships came to anchor. And since no church is complete without paintings by the fabulous Miguel Cabrero, Santa Prisca has her share of them.

The palace at the lower end of the plaza, once the residence of Count de la Borda, now houses the Taller Borda, the silver shop of Hector and Luis Aguilar, two of the most dependable silversmiths in the town. Count Borda's wife was born in the Casa Verdugo, the present home of the Spratling shops. (It was William Spratling who rediscovered the town, in the twenties, and put the populace back to work pounding silver.)

Casa Chavez, a quaint house in Plaza de Bernal 10, is likewise a silver shop, one of the three or four ranking establishments. Its owners, Antonio and Margot Castillo, are first-rate designers and produce beautiful things. The small Taller Antonio deserves a visit for the inspection of Antonio Pineda's delicate jewelry.

To speak further of silver, perhaps I ought to explain that the tourist in Taxco will get just what he pays for in metallic weight. Dozens of shops reproduce the designs of the masters, but they show no real bargains. If you get a 5-peso discount, it is because the coffeepot, necklace, or bracelet you buy is 5 pesos lighter in weight than a piece made according to standard.

The silver market has brought other handicraft to the place. I know of no other town where you can find more ingenious designing in copper and tin, for example. Several shops, especially Elizabeth Anderson's and Bernice I. Goodspeed's, also show regional costumes of the sort that have been so largely adapted by fashion designers at home. And here and there you can pick up a choice piece of fabric — such as the beautifully textured two-color cottons hand-woven on Danish looms by John and Virginia Stephens, in the Elizabeth Anderson house overlooking the plaza. The Stephens fabrics are really hand-woven and not merely hand-loomed, for they work the shuttle containing the bobbin in the hard way, by hand, in order to keep an eye on the textures. Tillett of Taxco shows hand-printed fabrics and knockout beach shirts for men. Casa Figueroa, opened for a small fee, is a restored colonial house with pictures for sale and — for display only! — a regional kitchen that makes your mouth water with its glazed saucepans and flowered clay tableware.

The daytime diversion of tourists in Taxco, apart from the shopping, is sliding. You wear rubber-soled shoes and creep about on the slippery, perpendicular, cobblestone

lanes. If you can make it, you climb to the top of a hill to see how the town clings to its ravines and rises. On a clear day, you can see the volcanoes, Popocatépetl and Ixtaccíhuatl, and sometimes catch a glimpse of Pico Orizaba. In the evening, you drink "bertas" at Berta's or dance at Paco's on the balcony overlooking the plaza. And that is about all one can say about Taxco.

3. Packing Up for the Tropics

As lately as six or eight years ago, the trip to Acapulco from Mexico City was an expedition which required elaborate planning and patient accomplishment. People used to start out from the capital with a carload of food, charcoal, and gasoline, together with bedding and luggage, and drive down to Taxco to spend the first night. There they lay awake listening to barking dogs until just before dawn, when it was time to get up to start the long trek to the ocean. You left before daylight, and if you were lucky, you got into Acapulco the same day after dark. Once there, you mopped dusty sweat, fought the mosquitoes, and spent most of your time in the market looking for slabs of fresh fish to augment your canned rations.

Today, although many discomforts of tropical beach life remain, it is much less bother to get there in order to face them. You can go comfortably from the capital in less than nine hours, from Cuernavaca in seven, and from Taxco in five and a half, allowing time out for feeding.

Or you can fly from Mexico City in a bimotored plane in little more than an hour.

If you leave Mexico City by motor at eight in the morning, Cuernavaca at nine, or Taxco at ten, you will not need to provide yourself with more than emergency rations in case of car trouble, for you can lunch reasonably well on the highway. You will want bathing outfits and the thinnest of clothing, for even in winter the air never really cools off. Men wear cotton trousers and white cotton shirts tied, Indian-style, over the midriff, and straw hats and sandals; and one buys in the market there, for around a dollar, the meter-long printed cottons which the native boys wrap so debonairly about their lean middles. Women can wear cotton shorts and slacks without giving scandal, while anything goes in the way of depleted bathing suits.

4. On the Highway to the Pacific

The overland route to the beach is well worth a try. You will improve your knowledge of the range of the country, even though you also confirm your impression of the way in which poverty thrives in the midst of natural beauty. Everywhere there is beauty of line, contour, and color in mountain and valley, and likewise there is barrenness and want of useful resources. If you want to understand Mexico as well as enjoy it, you must see for yourself, on every side of the capital, how the soil steams its wealth away in the sun.

There is a long and gradual descent to the ocean from Taxco, marked, here and there, by sharp local rising and falling. Although the mountains are normally dry, in the late winter months the parched hills are abloom with large, curious blossoms projecting from gray leafless boughs. Only rarely now, after Taxco, do the eyes come to rest on a watered green meadow, and oddly enough the towns are not found where those infrequent depressions occur, but search out instead the unwatered highway.

The first stretch of mountainous travel ends at the town of Iguala, just off the highway at K. 190. If you pass through on Friday, market day in Iguala, it might be fun to make a tour of the plaza. Sometimes, though not often, the tourist will come across a fine piece of silver, for some of the rarest jewelry in Taxco is made in Iguala from ancient designs.

Beyond Iguala, the road enters the colorful canyon of Zopilote, crosses the Río Balsas (at K. 250), and then enters upon the plateau of Chilpancingo, the capital of the State of Guerrero. You can take lunch at the edge of the town, at the cool, airy inn called simply "K. 300," or go on to the colonial plaza and take potluck at the Hotel Freppiedi, which is cheaper. You can see all there is to be seen in that place without leaving the plaza, except, perhaps, during the last two weeks of December, when the annual fiesta spreads over the town. If you have brought lunch in a basket, you can wait until K. 333 and spread your cloth in a cool green canyon.

At around K. 334, you will see mountain vistas of

breathtaking beauty. About 5 miles of motoring there will repay you for at least half your effort. From that region on, Indian pueblos are strewn over the highway every few miles until you come to the Cañada de Xolapa, where the road crosses Río Papagayo. And there you get another taste of the tropics with their coconut palms and frilled banana fronds and a steamier heat than you will encounter around Veracruz. You are almost at the end of the road when you catch the first moving glimpse of the green sea and the blue bay of Acapulco, where contact between the Americas and the East was established by the steep-decked galleons which sailed out of sixteenth-century Spain.

5. *The Acapulco Hotels*

Like Cuernavaca, Acapulco affords a wide choice of hotels — none of them very luxurious and most of them quite expensive, but so widely distributed as to provide for almost any whim in respect to location. You can have rooms up in the hills overlooking ocean or bay, or you can be down near the beach. The more pretentious hotels will be found in the hills: the huge Casablanca overlooking the bay to the west, the sprawling Las Americas overlooking the bay towards the east, El Mirador, where food is respected, and Los Flamingos, to which regular clients return year after year. At these establishments board and room for a couple may be had for around $20 a

day — and in most of them you may have to struggle for light, water, or service. (Readers in bed are warned to take their own lamps!)

There are other hotels near the plaza, of which the new Gran Hotel Bahia is the most elegant, while the Colonial serves the best food; and then, at the approach to the village and close to the beach called Los Hornos, there are small, modest inns where you will be not much more wretched than anywhere else at one third of the price: the Quinta María, for instance, or El Cortijo near by. You are also said to get a good deal for your money at R. A. Barkley's Las Palmas Courts on Playa Langosta.

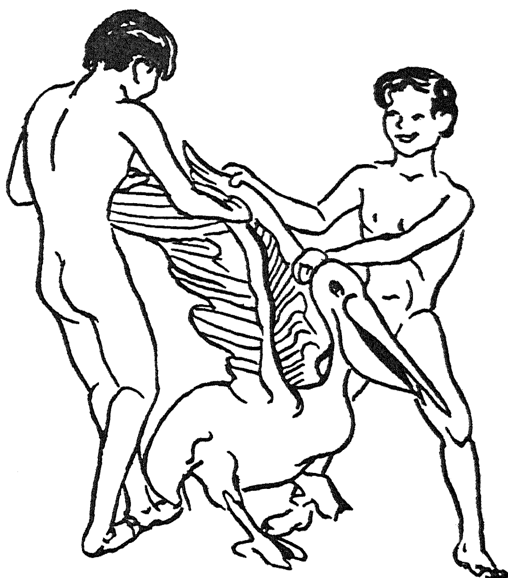
The only really native food in a town which satisfies itself, for the most part, on extremely rude cooking is *seviche*, a dish of raw fish steeped in lime juice and chilled in a sauce of tomato, raw onion, garlic, pepper, and origan. It isn't half bad.

6. Bathing and Fishing

The touristical habit is to lounge and bathe at the beach called Caleta in the morning, until half-past one, and adjourn to the thick-trodden part of Los Hornos in mid-afternoon. If you prefer to swim privately, you can go, morning or evening, to the open beach at Los Hornos, a short block from the inns that I spoke of. There are no dressing rooms there, but if you happen to stay at that end of town, you can walk from your rooms in your bathing gear. If you fancy you need an umbrella, you will

have to go to the Coney Island set-ups which they have at both beaches and crawl around on the bottle tops which cover the sand.

Adventurous swimmers also visit the beach at the golf club, at the southern end of the bay, or tempt Providence



Two Little Boys Walking a Wounded Bird

in the open ocean at Pie de la Cuesta, where the tide is too strong for safety. In the bay, the water averages eighty degrees the year round, and that, I suppose, is why people go there. They can always count on the sunshine and the warm, soft, salt water.

On my last visit, when I stayed near the Pájara Azul — that part of Los Hornos beach which lies in front of the

inns that I like — the surf was swarming with pelicans, and Bill Estler sketched two little boys in their birthday suits walking a wounded bird until he was limbered up again for the air. Those little boys, and their mothers and sisters, were the only occupants of half a mile of clean beach.

Before you go fishing, you must wander down to the docks at around five o'clock, after the boats have come in, and choose the boat you like best for next day. They all have two rigged chairs, but some of them have no further deck space; and most people find it dull to sit in the hot, smelly cabins when there are more than two in the party to take part in the fishing by turn. The syndicate price for game fishing is around $50 a day.

You can also see at the harbor, in the late afternoon, the kind of fish that are running. There are swordfish — I saw an eighteen-footer one winter — and giant rays; but most fishermen are content, from November to April, with good six-foot sailfish, four of which make a day's catch from one launch — although I have seen a fifth fish explained away for 10 pesos. Stay away from night fishing. It's only a clip game.

7. *Other Means of Loafing*

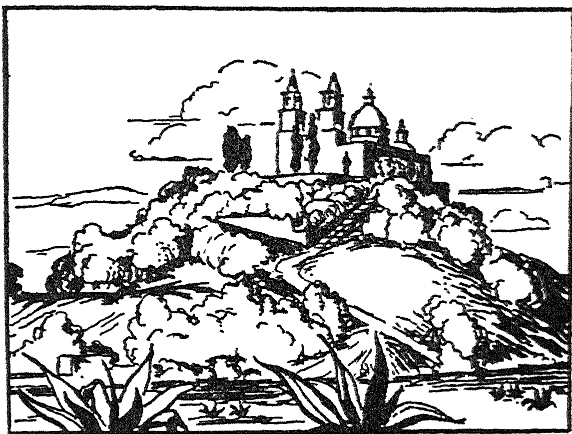
Apart from swimming and fishing, there is really not much to do. A drive may be taken to Pie de la Cuesta, where hardy swimmers risk their lives in strong tides while more timid people lie in hammocks and look out

at the ocean over the tops of their highball glasses. There are short drives to be taken up and down the peninsula forming the bay, where hundreds of villas have sprung up of late on that waterless tract, and an excursion by launch can be made to Puerto Marqués, where, after a swim, you can eat a native lunch of crisp sea food on a warm sandy beach.

Acapulco itself can be explored in five minutes. About the only new excitement I encountered the last time I went down was the discovery that the debris had been removed from the street in front of the church on the plaza. It had been there for two hundred years, ever since the belfry fell down in an eighteenth-century earthquake. Many tourists, however, find a vicarious thrill in hiring young boys to dive from the cliffs below Hotel Mirador. It is really astonishing, although it takes a stronger stomach than even a bullfight demands. After saying a prayer, the divers throw themselves into space from an altitude of about 125 feet. They must clear the side of the cliff by about fifteen feet or plunge into rocks. The basin they dive for holds enough water for diving only in the split second of the falling away of a wave. So you can see that the sport is quite tricky. The same boys give exhibitions of deep-sea diving and spearing, and if you have played water polo you might join them down under the sea.

In the late afternoon, you can sit on the plaza drinking *ron coco*, a delectable if somewhat cloying drink served in a scooped-out green coconut shell — a kind of rum collins flavored with coconut milk. In the evening, you have your choice of dancing in conventional night clubs

in the steaming hotels, where you can ogle celebrities, or drinking cold beer in the outdoor cantina up the street from the Hotel Colonial. The *mariaches* all gather there and sing regional tunes on demand, for a fee into which one inquires beforehand. The draught beer is excellent there and the warm night of music extends as far into the morning as the customers choose. Lots of nice people fish, swim, and loaf in the daytime, drink pale beer to music at night, and let the rest of Acapulco go hang.



CHAPTER VIII

Veracruz by Way of Puebla and Córdoba

1. Milpa Alta

FOR the Veracruz trip, which includes the most spectacular drive in all Mexico, you will want to start out with coffee, a basket of fruit and some sandwiches, and both woolen and cotton clothes in your bag: for you will run, I must warn you, into all kinds of climate and weather.

If on the way out of Mexico City you take the old road past the floating gardens (from Huipulco, K. 16 on the highway to Cuernavaca), you will find that beyond Xochimilco the road wanders pleasantly through picturesque Indian pueblos. At Tecomitl a branch road takes

off from the plaza to Milpa Alta, one of the few Valley towns where handicraft is still practiced. You will actually find a roadside sign to direct you!

After driving over the cobblestone street which meets the paved road at the entrance to Milpa Alta, turn left at the church, then right, and right again around the back of the church, to the plaza. Wednesday is market day, but on any day the hand-woven fabrics indigenous there are displayed in the houses where the women loom them. If there are no goods on view in the market, you have only to utter the magic word *bolsa* or *tela* to find yourself soon surrounded by chattering merchants who will take you to see as much of their wares as have not been bought up by buyers from New York and Dallas. These are strips of coarse, hand-loomed cotton adorned with quaint figures and flowers — in blue and red, chiefly, but also in bright combinations of yellow and red or yellow and blue. The strips are commonly cut into patterns of something over two feet and made into bags, which sell there at 3 pesos; but you can buy uncut strips of several lengths at 2½ pesos a pattern, or around 75 cents by the yard.

Then you must drive back to Tecomitl over the road that you took into the foothills, for the other road out of Milpa Alta is not passable. From Tecomitl you head, via Chalco, for Santa Barbara, and there you pick up the through highway to Puebla.

After Santa Barbara, the highway soon enters the uplands and climbs over some of the most massive mountains in Mexico. At the summit, called Llano Grande, it reaches

an altitude of nearly 11,000 feet. At Río Frio, just after the summit, there are garages, rest rooms, and cantinas — a glass of tequila will do you no harm at this point — and after 18 miles of miraculous views of the icy volcanoes, the road reaches San Martín Texmelucan, at an altitude equal to that of the capital. From that point, you can make the side trip to Tlaxcala, a town which lies 14 miles off the highway on a good road.

2. *Tlaxcala*

Hernán Cortés entered Tlaxcala on September 23, 1519, after three major battles against as many as 50,000 Tlaxcalans. The victorious Spaniards, after dressing their wounds with the fat extracted from a few obese Indians whom they killed and cut open, entered into a treaty proposed by Doña Marina, the native princess who was Don Hernán's mistress. It was this Tlaxcalan treaty that fixed the success of the Conquest, for it so impressed Moctezuma II that he offered, after some show of resistance, to pay tribute to Spain in return for peace in his valley.

Tlaxcala today is notable for the tweeds and plaid cotton shirtings woven by the descendants of the flesh-eating friends of Cortés. The principal tweed shop lies at the far end of the plaza, as you enter the town, and is approached through a feed store. The whole town will be out on the street to give you directions to the shops and the factories. The tweeds, which used to sell at less than a dollar a meter, now cost nearly two dollars, but even so

they make a good bargain. The striped woolen charro materials, which Mexican cowboys use for their breeches, come in contrasting colors and look smart made up into jackets with real silver buttons. Another Tlaxcalan product is the woven cotton material which looks like embroidered Perugian linen. It is seen everywhere in the shops made up into lunch cloths and bedspreads.

It is instructive to see the Tlaxcala handicraft in the place where it comes from, but if you feel crowded for time you can see most of the things on the highway in Texmelucan, where there also are two primitive convents, Franciscan and Carmelite, that are worthy of notice. In shops on the right-hand side of the highway as you enter the town from Mexico City, you can see ancient looms on which youths will be weaving the Tlaxcala cottons, while at La Albertina, on the opposite side, the bearded head of the house will show you the woolens. But you would miss, if you failed to take the side trip to Tlaxcala, one of the great sights of Mexico.

The most delicious church in the world stands on an eminence about a mile from the Tlaxcala plaza — the pink and white wedding-cake church of Ocotlán. Nothing else anywhere even nearly resembles it except the same architect's chapel in town. Two sparkling white towers composed of carved columns and obelisks overhang a pair of diamond-tiled pink and white bases which in turn frame a shell-shaped façade filled with white saints and archangels. The focal point of the enclosed sculptured picture is Saint Francis holding three mystical globes which support a crowned Virgin.

The interior has not been defaced, as in too many Mexican churches, by ornamentation in the popular chromatic style. It is as delightful and charming as a capricious baroque opera house and equally theatric and festive. The carvings are the lifework of one man, the Indian Francisco Miguel, who spent twenty-five years on the golden altars and ornate inlaid roof and nearly as many more years on the dressing room in back of the principal altar. That chamber is all gold and green, pointed up brightly in blue, crimson, and white. Apostles stand in rich dress on a gold cloud over an altar of silver. The floor underfoot is a mosaic of marble and the inlaid cupboards which housed the Virgin's jeweled dresses are lovingly carved.

A church with a special Moorish and Gothic flavor stands on a small hill above the plaza in town — San Francisco, whose origins go back to 1521. It is not, as the sexton may tell you, the scene of the first Christian mission preaching on the new continent — that was Tabasco in 1519, when Cortés was the preacher — but some strategic baptizing on the site of Saint Francis's Church in Tlaxcala is thought to have helped turn the tide in the Spaniards' favor at the critical moment of meeting Moctezuma II.

3. *Cholula*

Back on the highway to Puebla, and some 8 miles short of that city, you come upon the town of Cholula. Take an unmarked fork to the right and drive through that seat

of legend and fable. Cholula was a vast temple city in the days of the Aztecs, and one of its legends is that there was a temple for every day in the year and for every god in the pantheon.

At the time of the Conquest, Cholula lay on the readiest road from Tlaxcala to Tenochtitlán, and Cortés, contrary to the advice of his Tlaxcalan allies, determined to pass through it on his way to meet Moctezuma. The Cholula *caciques* received Cortés and his men with an appearance of friendship, but as it turned out, Moctezuma had ambushed an army in the rocky thickets surrounding the city. Doña Marina conveniently discovered the plot, and the Spaniards, not wishing to be popped into the vats of tomatoes and peppers that they saw being warmed up in the plaza, shot down, without warning, hundreds of the captains and priests of Cholula. Moctezuma's forces went home "faster than at a walk," says Bernal Díaz, and the crisis was passed.

Now it is said that there is a church in Cholula for every day in the year. The one that is seen from a distance, on a hill commanding the town, was built on the top of a man-made *teocalli.* The church itself, Los Remedios, is of no great architectural interest, but the view from the top of the hill is exciting. The Aztec temple beneath can be seen at the end of a tunnel on the far side of the hill.

Any boy in the town will be found a competent guide to show off the principal churches: the Capilla de los Reyes (1604–1660), a mosquelike structure with sixty-four columns and forty-nine domes; and the Franciscan

church of San Gabriel (1604) which unexpectedly bears a true Gothic aspect.

4. Angelic Puebla

The city of Puebla de los Ángeles, Mexico's fourth largest metropolis, is an agreeably leisurely place where people get up late in the morning and do most of their business in the late afternoon; so that if you arrive only just before dark, you will find it in its most hospitable mood.

There is a shocking want of good hostels, for a town of its size, but you might enjoy a typical Mexican inn on Avenida Maximino Avila Camacho, half a block from the plaza: the Hotel Arronte, which once was a viceroy's palace. If you can get room 34 or 35 at the front of the house, and install yourself promptly by means of an antique German elevator, you can stand on your balcony and see sunset reflections on Mt. Orizaba, catch glimpses of shining tiled domes, and watch the lights come on in the streets. After a visit to one of the best bars in the country, at the hotel entrance downstairs, you can join the town's population in a tour of the plaza, past the small shops in the portals and along the massive cathedral, until you are ready for dinner.

You can dine at the Ritz — which, being shabby, is like no other Ritz in the world except that the cooking is good. This untidy establishment on the plaza boasts a real chef. Do not order the table d'hôte dinner, but ask

for the à la carte menu. There is good *vol-au-vent*, *huachinanguito*, that most luscious of fish, and superb fillet of beefsteak. Be sure to remember to say — or to point to — the *huachinanguito*, the little red snapper, which is served to you whole. If you are prepared to try a hot dish of the country, there is no better place for the eating of turkey with the native spiced sauce I have already described. It is called, you remember, *mole de guajalote*. If you insist on French wine, it is there in the cellar, although not found on the wine card.

A single morning, if you start out with a guide around nine o'clock, gives you plenty of time to follow the tourist routine. At the Hotel Arronte, or indeed at any hotel, the Royalty, the Colonial, or the new Lastra, you can get a diagram of the town and hire a guide by the hour. He will take you to the cathedral, El Rosario Chapel, the Hidden Convent, Casa Alfeñique, and a pottery factory, all inside of three hours. On the other hand, Puebla and its environs can supply plenty of quiet enjoyment for two or three days.

The early seventeenth-century Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, which runs the full length of the south side of the plaza, is a true Spanish bishop's church, its vast length filled with a choir. This plainer, twin-towered sister of the Cathedral of Mexico City, the work of Juan Gomez de Mora, is usually viewed in its severe, great gray mass from the plaza; but the most glamorous view is to be had from the rear, where a theatrical composition of chapels and belfries is pointed up with yellow

Casa Alfeñique

It is a pleasure to walk through the streets of the city and peer into blossoming patios. Every Mexican household has its garden: perhaps a few flowering plants potted in gasoline tins and kept green with water carried, shoulder high, in clay vessels filled at distant and difficult sources; or a colonial patio, like those of Puebla, filled with bougainvillea and fuchsia, columbine, rose, and narcissus, with calla lilies, spider lilies, Christmas flowers, mimosa. I counted in one tiny walled garden in a Mexican town more than twenty different blooms in the middle of January.

Two charming pueblos lie within easy reach of Puebla on good pavement: San Francisco Acatepec and Tonantzintla. The Church of Santa María de Tonantzintla has been called the giddiest church in the world, for sharp mineral color has everywhere been laid on over the earth color used by the builders, and bright-colored animals leap around over the altars and walls. The Observatorio Astro-Físico, a short walk from Santa María, was largely the creation of Harvard brains and American money. It is operated by Mexican astronomers under the patronage of the Mexican President.

The Indian craftsmen of San Francisco Acatepec, a brightly tiled church whose walled atrium is entered by a fine Renaissance gateway, made the best of two worlds when, in the seventeenth century, they decorated the new house of faith with majolica serpents.

5. *Orizaba and Córdoba*

If you leave Puebla just before noon, you can reach Tehuacán in time — that is, in Mexican time — to take lunch: perhaps the eight-course meal for 5 pesos (including broiled steak) in the Gran Hotel Mexico in the center of town, on Avenida Maximino Camacho. Tehuacán is close to the site of mineral springs which produce healing waters in vogue for the treatment of kidney and liver complaints. The "cure" consists in drinking the water for twenty-one days, and many rich South Americans fly up to take it. They stay at the Gran Hotel or at the Hotel Garci-Crespo out on the highway. For myself, I prefer to go straight down to Córdoba.

There is no sign on the highway to point out the Córdoba road, but when you turn back towards Puebla and pass Garci-Crespo, you come in a few hundred yards to a fork in the road. Take the road to the right. Your first glimpse of Orizaba Valley from the side of a mountain in midafternoon is bound to be one of the great interludes of your Mexican journey. Down there below the plateau, which is brown and dusty in spring and winter, lies a rich piece of country, moist and green the year round from the fogs that cover it some part of each day. The road to the valley looks perilous. There are scores of steep hairpin curves. But if you reach it before the late fog settles in, you can navigate it safely and comfortably. The rattletrap busses — like one that I saw

called the Powerful Jesus — scale the mountain so nimbly that they give you confidence in your own three-geared car.

Just below the crest of the mountain, there is a turnout where you can stop for a prolonged view of the valley. Then, around K. 289, near the town of Acultzingo, there can be seen, on a clear afternoon, the majestic summit of Mt. Orizaba, the highest mountain in Mexico and, on our continent, second only to Mt. McKinley. The first recorded ascension of Mt. Orizaba was made by American soldiers during the Mexican War.

The town of Orizaba lies on a slope of the peak. It is an industrial city in which cotton spinning, known to the Aztecs, is now carried on with more modern techniques. Beyond Orizaba, after the drop into subtropical country, there are two choices for spending the night: the colonial Villa of Córdoba, named by Don Francisco Hernández of the city of the same name in Spain, and the modern resort of Fortín de las Flores. The Hotel Ruiz Galindo at Fortín de las Flores sports the much publicized swimming pool filled with gardenias. The rates there run about $11 a day, American plan, and the place swarms with outlanders. The town is still cheap.

Villa Córdoba, 130 miles out of Puebla, was founded in the early years of the seventeenth century and remained a small hamlet hovering around its church and wide plaza until the resort at Fortín began to bring visitors a few years ago. Now the place is all furbished up, the plaza is paved, and three new hotels have been built in or near the town's center.

The old Hotel Zevallos was a private palace built by José Manuel de Zevallos of Santander, Spain, seventy years after the foundation of Villa Córdoba. A wide, well-furnished terrace which runs across the upper arcade of the palace has a view of the plaza, where, on warm nights, people sit out of doors in front of cafés until midnight. If you stop in the town overnight, you can visit the botanical gardens after breakfast and then go out to the Ruiz Galindo to swim and take lunch. You can fill your car with gardenias and orchids, of which you will get a couple of dozen in a banana-bark cask for about 30 cents.

6. Veracruz: Hotels and Harbor

All sorts of discouraging things are said about the road beyond Córdoba by people who haven't been over it in the last fifteen years. The real truth is that you can drive the 70 miles from Córdoba to the ferry at Boca del Río in less than two hours without damage to person or car. The first 40 miles are well surfaced, and then there are 30 miles of built-up dirt and gravel regularly traveled by busses and trucks through the year. It is said that people with financial interests along the alternative Puebla-Jalapa-Veracruz route have sabotaged plans for developing Orizaba Valley, but work now being done on the highway suggests that before long the pavement will reach to the Gulf.

A gradual descent carries you almost imperceptibly from the subtropics into the tropics until you come in

sight of the Gulf. The crossing at the mouth of Xamapa River, the Boca del Río — you may have to wait a few minutes if the ferry is on the other side of the river — is in itself a diversion. The barge is propelled along a network of ropes by a motley crew of good-natured, well-disposed brigands who charge you 2 pesos and sing as they shirk. The paved road which you shortly pick up after

Dance of the *Raspa*

the crossing takes you straight into Veracruz, the home of the lively dance called the *raspa*, 464 kilometers down from Mexico City. On the way into town, you will pass Hotel Mocambo, where highlanders who think Acapulco prices too steep often take refuge from the high altitude and take a chance on the weather. If you have lunched at Fortín, you ought to get on into the seaport at about

six o'clock, which is early enough for a good first impression of a town which is really only alive in the night.

There are not many commendable inns in the town. Even so, you may prefer the town to the beach. It is livelier. Edificio Victoria, on federal property out near the lighthouse, is by far the most comfortable of available places, though it lacks "atmosphere." It costs around $3 a person to sleep there, in small private apartments exposed to the wind. The Colonial, on the plaza, is cheaper and plagued with street noises. The new Diligencias, not quite done as I write, faces the plaza and looked, in the process of building, as though it were planned to give comfort. The Rex, which faces the Customs House, is a colorful provincial hotel, but I found it noisy when I stayed there one night in a room overlooking the street. There are probably quieter rooms off the patio.

If you can manage to reach the roof of the Edificio Victoria before it gets dark and take tea or a cocktail out in the open — supposing the wind to be not too violent — you can get a good view of the harbor, the port, and the Gulf. The town is nothing, really nothing, to look at, but the harbor is lovely. At the far end of it stands the old fortress of San Juan de Ulúa, on the island where the Spaniards under Don Juan de Grijalva landed on Saint John's Day, June 24, 1518. To the right of the fortress and out in the Gulf, you will see Los Sacrificios Island, so named by Captain Grijalva because of the ceremonial plucking of hearts from live human bodies that went on there when he first saw the place.

Having seen smoke arise from the beaches, the explorers

put to shore on the island. They saw masonry houses with steps leading up to stone altars where obscene idols surveyed five Indian victims whose chests were cut open and whose arms and legs were hacked off.

"At all this we stood greatly amazed," says Bernal Díaz, "and gave the island the name of the Isla de los Sacrificios, and it is so marked on the charts."

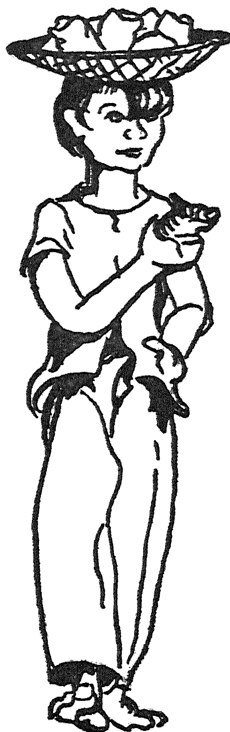
7. *Veracruz after Dark*

After watching the lights come on over the harbor, it will be time to search out your place in the life of the plaza. The place to begin your evening's adventure is at a sidewalk table at the Colonial bar, where a tall glass of rum collins is about as good a beginning as you can possibly make. You will soon be surrounded by fishermen carrying baskets of cooked shrimps and stuffed crab. These are wholesome to eat, as well as delicious, and so are the oyster cocktails sold from a portable wagon. (I buy shrimps and hold off on crab until dinner.)

You will find a third of the town's population eating and drinking on the two busy sides of the plaza. Another third will beseech you to buy almost anything — peanuts, cigarettes, tortoise-shell combs, metropolitan newspapers; or merely ask boldly for money in return for a blessing. The other third rides by in the streetcars which jangle along in an unending procession. The motormen and conductors own the cars and the tracks and run their trams day and night to keep themselves busy.

When you are ready to dine — you must, to dine well,

be prepared to dine late — move on to Restaurant Prendes, up on the corner, where there is a commissar who knows all about food. Start with a cocktail of crabmeat. The sauce, which is pungent and quite faintly sweet, is



The Peanut Vendor

something you've craved but never yet tasted. If you want soup, they do oyster stew brilliantly. The oysters are small, but you get a lot of them. Then, the first night,

choose between *huachinanguito*, if you did not have it in Puebla, or steak Prendes, which turns out in this place to be a tender, pink fillet of beef under a hillock of blended fresh vegetables.

If you have had a good time up to now, entertained by strolling musicians and filled with good food, make your plans for dining tomorrow on wild duck and rice. The price you have paid for this book will have been usefully spent if you succeed in having a dinner such as Prendes can get up in season.

Some time ago, on a trip which I am about to describe, I saw bags of unplucked duck on a train and inquired the name of the market to which they were going. I was told that the duck never got to the market, for buyers met the two trains from upriver and bought up the ducks in the station. I spoke to my waiter that night and asked him whether he could get duck for a dinner I wanted to give the next evening. He said "*¿Cómo no?*" and the next night I had five friends to dine on a casserole of split duck, good saffron rice, and two bottles of red Santo Tomás. With the duck, we had only clear consommé with garlic and egg, and a salad of crisp, curly lettuce and blood-ripe tomatoes. One of my guests had spent a year in the port, yet he had not known that such cooking existed. Every year now, along about February, I have a duck dinner at Prendes.

For coffee, one moves on to the café called La Parroquia, across from the church on the plaza. If you are afraid to be kept awake by the best coffee in Mexico, the *café express* that is served in that place, try a little sweet coffee

essence in a glass of hot milk and sample a glass of the local *cremas*, made in the flavors of the well-known liqueurs. Then just sit for a bit until, not too late, the town goes to bed.

The next day, since there is nothing to do around town in the daytime, you may as well go out to Mocambo to swim or take a launch into the Gulf. The launches tie up in front of the Edificio Victoria when the weather is good. They come back from commercial fishing about eleven o'clock, so that if you want to leave early, you must make your arrangements the evening before. The owners provide trolling lines and hand lines for a crude sort of fishing. There is only one boat that goes in for real deep-sea fishing, and that is the big launch which belongs to the Edificio Victoria. From the small launches, which cost around $2 an hour, the fishing cannot be said to be serious, although it is fun to pass a lazy day on the Gulf. Be sure to wear a straw hat from the market and likewise take a sweater in case you stay out in the Gulf until late afternoon. If the weather is going to be bad, the boatman will warn you. He cares as much for his launch as you do for your life.

8. Tlacotlalpan

During one of my Veracruz visits, while I was waiting for the S.S. *Constitución* to come from Tampico on the way to Progreso, I dimly remembered having heard of a river excursion somewhere in that region. Allen Ullman,

the artist, was with me, and we canvassed the town to find out how the trip could be made. Nobody, least of all the hotel clerks, seemed to have any idea about it, but we persisted in asking until we found a man who suggested the launch ride up the Papaloapan to a place called Tlacotlalpan.

"Is there an inn there," I asked, "run by Don Pepe Something-Or-Other?" For all I could remember of the trip I had heard of was that you slept under netting on a tall iron bed in the house of Don Pepe.

"*¿Cómo no?*" said the man, or was it "*¿Quién sabe?*" At any rate, we left Veracruz at six the next morning by train. Even the clerk at the station did not know at what time the boat ascended the river from Alvarado. We discovered later that we might have left Veracruz around noon, but we did not regret the long morning's loaf at the end of the line in the bleached village of barefooted and lighthearted gentry that is named for Don Pedro de Alvarado, Don Juan de Grijalva's errant lieutenant, and I pass on what we found.

The two-hour trip on the train might be embarrassing to more squeamish travelers, for when the narrow wooden-benched cars are jam-packed with people, as they usually are, you have to lock knees with the opposite peon or else stand up all the way. But you can eat your way out, as reward, to the river. Although one is advised to eschew the usual food handed in through coach doors and windows, one smells, on that trip, such irresistible flavors that one waives all precaution and eats hugely of turnovers. Those hot, flaky pastries contain pastes of

crabmeat and rich fillings of guava and honey. You eat half a dozen and then long for more, when lo! at the next stop a fresh basket appears, along with bottles of faintly chilled golden beer.

Arrived at the mouth of the river, if you go in the morning, you can kill time for a couple of hours out in the oyster beds, paying a small sum for the privilege of helping the oystermen reap their mollusks, and later listen to stevedores chanting as they load the river boat with stores for the towns on the Papaloapan — towns whose only access to the world is by water.

The trip up the broad, quiet stream takes all afternoon, and one may think of Don Pedro de Alvarado eating jellied fish with the Tlacotlalpans on his second voyage out of Santiago de Cuba. That was during the third week of June, 1518, and I dare say that the dugouts the natives fished from when he saw them were identical with those you will see on your visit — *canoas* hollowed out from the trunks of big trees and poled through the shallows. The boat stops in midstream to discharge cargo and passengers, and whenever a dugout seems to be at the point of upsetting, everyone laughs.

One thing we forgot, along with everything else but Don Pepe's name, was that a hamper of food is a part of the gear for the journey to Tlacotlalpan. Don Pepe's housekeeper was dismayed to discover that we came empty-handed. She had nothing for supper. There were two eggs for breakfast, and there was always the hope that two early risers out in the hen yard might produce a pair more. But we had to take supper in a fly-bitten restaurant

from a plate of cold pickled fish such as Don Pedro ate. Apart from its historical savor, it was not very tasty. Be advised to take lunch and supper with you.

We sat out the evening alongside of a juke box in the plaza and retired to high, narrow beds sheathed with netting. Since quinine gives me a headache, I take my chances without it down in the tropics; but as it turned out, no mosquitoes interfered with our sleep. At the end of the downstream voyage next day, we picked up the Veracruz train and shared seats with wild duck and fresh fish.

9. The Totonac Pyramid

Each year the highway engineers make it somewhat easier to make a more entertaining return from Veracruz to the highlands than the route over the highway by way of Jalapa and Puebla. You go through Jalapa to a town called Perote at K. 280 from Mexico City and cross on a good enough road to Teziutlán, from which place you reach the town of Papantla on pavement.

Teziutlán is an old-fashioned colonial town in the midst of green country. I arrived there one time with my wife and some friends by mistake, having taken the wrong fork in the night at Zacatepec, K. 230, on the way to the Gulf from Mexico City. We heard later that many motorists make the same error, for the road is not posted. When we reached Teziutlán, it looked very much like Jalapa except that the parish church seemed to be on the wrong

side of the plaza. I got out of the car and addressed myself to a native.

"Is this Jalapa?" I asked.

"*Sí, señor,*" said the man.

"But," I said, "unless the late floods have floated the church to the other side of the plaza, I have a feeling that this isn't exactly Jalapa, *señor.*"

"No, *señor,*" said the man, "it isn't Jalapa."

He only tried to be friendly, and I tell this story about him because it is a good illustration of what comes to pass when you fold up your maps and try to inquire your way. You practically never find anyone to direct you.

If you are in a hurry to get back from the Gulf to Mexico City, there is not any point in going out of your way to Teziutlán. You keep on the road from Perote to Puebla and make the trip from Veracruz to Mexico City in possibly less than ten hours. But if you want adventure, do go to Teziutlán and on to Papantla, by way of Martínez de la Torre, San Rafael la Colonia and Tecolutla. If night overtakes you, stop at Nautla and sleep at a new beach resort. But if you can make your way to Tecolutla, which has one of the finest beaches in Mexico, you can stay at a reasonably comfortable inn, the Hotel Tecolutla, and be ready for Papantla next morning.

If you plan in advance on returning from Veracruz by way of Papantla, which is only 10 miles from the famous Totonac pyramid, El Tajín, you would do well to visit the Totonac Room in the National Museum in Mexico City before you start out. You will see examples of burial yokes in polished basalt and jade, Totonac masks

with the grinning faces, and some carved stone *palmas*, which are the figures of gods set against backgrounds of carved palm leaves. These objects will give you a taste of one of the greatest of pre-Aztec cultures.

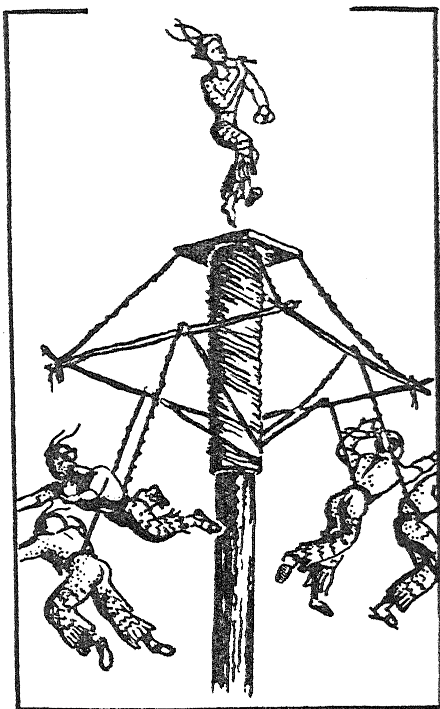
Seen from the air, El Tajín looks like a set-back apartment house in the midst of a park. At close range, as you approach it on horseback, it is found to rise in seven recessions, or set-backs, to a height of some 70 feet from a base about 80 feet square. The precision with which the twelfth-century Totonac engineers cut and fitted the stone was never equaled by the Aztec builders, although the Temple of Quetzalcoatl at Teotihuacán has a similar structural form.

A fascinating detail of the Papantla structure is the existence of 360 rectangular niches which give upon the seven recessions. They were probably shrines, one for each day in the astronomical year. Like the classical Toltecs, the Totonacs worshiped the sun, moon, and stars. Some of their gods can be seen in bas-relief fragments dug up when El Tajín was discovered. It was this polytheistic Totonac religion that the Spaniards encountered at Los Sacrificios outside of Veracruz harbor. At the time of the Conquest, however, the temple city of Papantla had given way to Cempoala as the center of Totonac culture.

10. The Voladores

During the eight-day festival of Corpus Christi which follows Trinity Sunday, and on a few occasional and less

predictable feasts, it is possible to see at Papantla almost the last remnant of the forbidden and perilous dance called the *Voladores*. That dangerous rite was performed in pre-Conquest times to celebrate the beginning of each



Dance of the *Voladores*

fifty-two-year cycle marked out on the calendar. With the advent of the Christian religion, the dancers hastily found a parallel to ancient belief in the new doctrine of the resurrection of Christ and were thus able to get the consent of the monks to retain the old spectacle.

Five male dancers dance the ritual on a slight, movable platform at the top of a pole at least a hundred feet high. Four of them represent the four birds that were traditionally thought to guard the four cardinal points of the compass, while the soloist stands for his tribe. They climb the pole by pulling themselves up on vines and the leader stands on the platform, a wooden cap hollowed out from the trunk of a tree and loosely fitted to the top of the pole, while the four birdmen sit on the horizontal bars of a framework attached to the cap. The soloist dances to the notes of a flute which he himself plays. He whirls on his toes and leaps into the air. (The current Papantla soloist performs on a cap only twelve inches wide and without any railing!) Each of the birdmen takes his turn on the platform and tries to outdo the leader in breath-taking antics.

The climax of this aerial circus arrives when the birdmen tie themselves to the ends of four ropes wound around the circular cap and leap into the air from their perches. The cap is spun by the raveling ropes, and while the soloist continues to dance on the whirling platform, his companions weave in and out through the air. Their careening bodies make ever widening circles, as the ropes swiftly unwind, until they at last reach the ground.

If you ride out to El Tajín, the chances are that you will not have time to go on to Pachuca that day. Beyond Poza Rica, where you turn west over the mountains, there are sections of winding road which you might well prefer to travel by daylight — although I know engineers who don't mind them at night. So unless you liked the

looks of the inn on the Papantla plaza, you could go back to Tecolutla and start the next day for Mexico City by way of Pachuca. There are several places the other side of Pachuca where you can get lunch, notably Huauchinango, a picturesque mountain town where the Saturday market is full of hand-woven *sarapes* in designs that rarely find their way to the city. At Pachuca, 81 miles farther on, you are only about 60 miles from the capital.

CHAPTER IX

Ancient Mexico: Oaxaca

1. The Road to Oaxaca

NOTHING, surely, can do more to extend one's conception of American citizenship than to visit the seats of the early American cultures. Whether we are Mexicans, Guatemalans, Peruvians, North Americans, we can all of us find common ground in our early history. The recovered arts and crafts of the former inhabitants of our continents are our mutual heritage. If we North Americans are not related by blood to the creators of those civilizations, as many Mexicans are, for example, we can still take our share of pride in the fact that the soil of the part of the globe we inhabit has produced so much that was fine in building and governing.

If your trip to the Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacán and your visit to the National Museum at Calle Moneda 13 in Mexico City have given you a taste for antiquity,

you can greatly enrich your experience by two trips which are easily and inexpensively made: overland or by plane to Oaxaca (Wah-hock-a) and to Yucatán in a plane.

The train to Oaxaca oddly depends more upon weather than the airplane does; but unless the service is canceled by washouts, you can leave Mexico City at 5:00 P.M. from San Lazaro Station on Monday, Wednesday, or Friday, sleep in a narrow-gauge Pullman, and be in Oaxaca at 8:00 A.M. DC-3 planes leave daily at 8:30 A.M. and 11:45 A.M., arriving at 10:00 A.M. and 1:15 P.M. The motor trip, with good luck, takes twelve hours.

The motor road to Oaxaca, the Christopher Columbus section of the Pan-American Highway, runs to some 368 miles from Mexico City, of which 60 miles near the end may be hard going. Some day, one hopes, the road will be paved from Cuautla, in the State of Morelos, to Matamoros, where the Columbus road now begins. The route to Oaxaca would then be shortened perceptibly. At the moment, most motorists drive up to Puebla in the late afternoon, stop the night there, and cover the remaining 280 miles the next day. The quickest way to Oaxaca, of course, is by plane. But going over the road increases one's sense of wonder at the speed and efficiency with which the Spaniards got over stiff terrain afoot and on horseback; for the vistas you catch at almost every turn of paved highway today were only warnings of tough country to travel in those days. The churches and convents which high-light the towns on the highway tell the story of colonial expansion through Atlixco, Matamoros,

Tehuitzingo, Petlalcingo, in the State of Puebla, and Huajuapan, Tamazulapan, Yanhuitlán and Nochixtlán in the State of Oaxaca.

On your way this time to Puebla, you might stop off at Huejotzingo, which you passed by last time you went over the road in order to reach Puebla by nightfall. Situated on the highway between Texmelucan and Cholula, Huejotzingo ("In the Knot-grass") was a stagecoach "station" on the Veracruz route in colonial times. The early sixteenth-century Franciscan monastery is approached through an atrium in which the four typical corner pavilions have survived in good shape. The Gothic church is resplendent with carved Moorish portals, Romanesque porch, and towering dome; and the Romanesque cloisters are adorned with black and white frescoes painted four hundred years ago. The Shrove Tuesday carnival includes a comical pageant celebrating an exploit of Agustín Lorenzo, a bandit who preyed on colonial travelers.

Atlixco, your first stop after Puebla, is a small textile town abounding in chapels gleaming with bright Puebla tiles. People from Puebla drive the 18 miles down to the valley to enjoy the warm winter sun. The hotel on the plaza is not so primitive but that you could spend the night there, if you liked, instead of in Puebla. Then you could take the pleasant drive to the top of San Miguel Hill to get a view of the valley. At Acatlán, K. 286, there is a new inn with quiet rooms at the rear, off the highway.

Huajuapan de León, although it lies in the State of Oaxaca, does its business in dried goat meat, brown sugar,

and palm-leaf hats with dealers from Tehuacán in the State of Puebla. It takes its surname from Don Antonio de León, one of the heroes of the Mexican *Independencia* when that movement spread out to the south in the year 1812. Situated in the Mixteca highlands, Huajuapan is a clearinghouse for the Indians whose ancestors enlarged the fascinating city of Mitla which you shortly will visit. When you see how wild and ragged they look, you will be surprised to remember that their nation produced one of the earliest American systems of writing. There is, by the way, a reliable non-Mixtecan garage in the place, and a quaint colonial inn, the Garcia Peral.

Between Huajuapan and Tamazulapan you will go through some fine country, for you cross the colorful ranges of the Sierra Madre del Sur. The Oaxacans drive out to Tamazulapan to take mineral baths and drink sulphur water. You can get a fair lunch there.

The Convent of Santo Domingo in Yanhuitlán — a pueblo which does not appear on the maps but which lies in a colorful valley at K. 427 — was founded just twenty years after Cortés landed at San Juan de Ulúa and seventeen years after Alvarado's conquest of the Mixtec-Zapotec country. It is said that in the last years of the sixteenth century Don Francisco Casas, the landlord of Yanhuitlán, imported architects and painters who had worked for Philip II on San Lorenzo del Escorial, the most spectacular Renaissance convent in Spain. They enriched the original structure, which had pointed windows, with Plateresque decoration of Doric origin. The now ruinous convent and the rebuilt church, whose carved

cedar walls pertained to the earlier structure, has lived through two wars, the War of Independence and the War of Reform, during both of which epochs its fortresslike structure gave shelter to troops.

Nochixtlán, "the place where cochineal can be found," lies on the unfinished part of the highway at the end of the Mixteca Alta, the Indian highlands. The Spaniards learned quickly to exploit cochineal, a dye which consists of the dried scarlet bodies of female insects that reside in the cactus. During the colonial period, they shipped it all over the world. Occasionally a valuable archaeological object finds its way to this town and the visitor who knows what it is may find a great bargain.

At K. 521, within a few miles of the end of the road, the highway enters the Zapotec country. As you will presently see, the Zapotecs and the Mixtecs, hostile neighbors for hundreds of years, developed, alone and in mixture, cultures that were in some ways more advanced than those of the Aztecs and Maya. Their descendants speak some of the fifty Indian dialects which are said to persist throughout Mexico.

The Valley of Etla which you see on your map — "the place where beans grow" — was the richest source of food in the Zapotec empire, and in colonial times, great haciendas and prosperous flour mills dotted the valley. Today, the capital city of the State of Oaxaca gets its water supply, its cotton fabrics, and its best cheese, *Quesillo*, from Etla.

2. Hotels in Oaxaca

You can probably take a chance on hotels in Oaxaca because there are more rooms than guests in that remote place. Most people move from hotel to hotel, hoping that the next will be more of something or other than the last proved to be. The newest hotel, the Marqués del Valle, along one end of the plaza, offers the most modern comfort. (The *Marqués* in the name is Hernán Cortés, who took his title, Marqués del Valle, from the Oaxaca region to which he sent Don Francisco de Orozco in 1521.) And I like the Hotel Ruiz for the good Mexican food, various and abundant, though the front rooms are noisy, and the old Francia for its fine spacious rooms. The Monte Alban has a nice patio, but I find the place rather sad. People with cars can stay quite luxuriously at near-by Rancho San Felipe at around $10 a day. Prices at the older inns in the towns are still low — about $4 a day, sometimes less, all included.

3. A View of the City

The city of Oaxaca, birthplace of Benito Juárez and Porfirio Díaz, was founded by royal patent in 1526 on a site once used by an Aztec outpost to spy on the Zapotecs. In 1533 it became a see city, although the population was still less than five hundred. There are few remains of the early colonial architecture for the reason that earth-

quakes at the end of the seventeenth century and in 1707 destroyed the first buildings — as nineteenth-century quakes damaged what followed. Yet there is reason enough to spend the first day absorbing the atmosphere, walking the streets, and peering into the later colonial palaces that have now become woodworking shops or whatever.

The church of green stone with twin domes, just off the plaza, on Alameda León, is the sixteenth-century Cathedral of San Juan de Dios, whose baroque façade, constructed in the seventeenth century in the style of a stone altarpiece, contains handsome sculptures which survived the valley's six subsequent earthquakes. The structure as a whole fared less well, for old paintings show less heterogeneous architectural forms than the much altered church now exhibits.

Four blocks up the street from San Juan de Dios, the Dominican convent, founded in 1529, enlarged in the year 1600, badly shaken in the earthquake of 1608, was rebuilt and augmented in the great baroque age of building. There is a legend that the Dominican Fathers had only fifty cents in their treasury when the first stone was laid, but over the years faith reared that small sum into an expendable capital of six million dollars.

Like the cathedral, Santo Domingo has a fanciful baroque entrance in the form of a reredos, and the interior fulfills, to a degree just short of unique in the country, the portal's fantastic promise. The walls and ceiling are completely covered with the rich ornamentation of gilded and polychromed sculptures in high relief. The ceiling

design over the choir resembles the branching out of some tree, with the busts of saints perching like birds among leaves.

The adjoining chapel with the lavish doorway, El Rosario, was the personal gift of a wealthy Dominican friar. Its interior rivals the parent church in gilded extravagance. The tree motif, explicit here in the ceiling, represents the history of the Dominican family. The original altar was made in Mexico City and transported with almost unthinkable patience and effort over the practically nonexistent roads of the epoch. It was destroyed during the War of Reform, of which Oaxaca was a turbulent center, and French soldiers, not many years later, chipped the gold leaf off the walls of both chapel and church. The Dominican cloisters, which once made a square of almost 600 feet of cut native stone, are being restored by the federal Department of Colonial Monuments.

Soledad Convent, which was built at the end of the seventeenth century for a large community of Augustinian nuns, has fairly survived the convulsions which have so often rocked the whole valley. It may be that the artificial terrace on which it was raised absorbed shock; although the townspeople will tell you that the bejeweled Virgin, Our Lady of Solitude at the Foot of the Cross, has protected the church which was built upon her miraculous shrine. Soledad's outdoor brown stone sculptures today are the finest the city affords. The Franciscan monastery, on the other hand, has so much suffered from shock that about all that is left of the original buildings is the porch of the church, and the façade of the

Third Order chapel with its quaint, primitive figures.

La Concepción, the church elevated above the southern end of the principal plaza, Plaza de Armes, is a relatively plain sort of baroque in the native green stone. With its low, modest towers and unpretentious dome, it is quite appealing and restful. But the favorite church of the indigenous people is the market chapel, San Juan de Dios, said to mark the site of the first Christian church in Oaxaca. The *décor* is strictly contemporaneo-chromographic.

If you speak little Spanish, or none, you must arrange, sometime that first day, for a guide to go with you to the archaeological ruins. Out in the field there are no English-speaking attendants. Everyone goes to Federico E. Holm, at Libertad 24 (Telephone 34). His fees are, as we say here, *regular* — not too high. You might also, after lunch, drop in at the Oaxaca museum and prepare yourself somewhat for Mitla and Monte Alban. If you want to go shopping, you will find huaraches and hammocks at La Ciudad de Mexico, Hidalgo 41; typical hand-woven textiles at Guillermo Brena, Pino Suarez 58; pottery at Arteaga 3; antiques and popular arts at Casa Cervantes, Porfirio Díaz 5; and all sorts of things at the market, where stocks are freshest right after breakfast.

4. *The Ruins of Mitla*

The trip to Mitla, which lies on an unfinished projection of the Pan-American Highway, can be easily taken

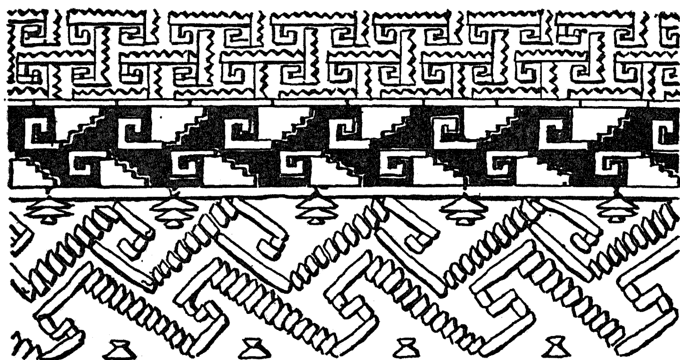
between breakfast and lunch. It is only 26 miles from Oaxaca. On the way out, your guide will show you the ancient cypress at Santa María del Tule, just off the highway. This old tree (*Cupressus disthica sabina*) excites wonder by reason of its 160 feet of tangled circumference and the long span of its life, which credibly extends back 4000 years. And perhaps you would enjoy the small side trip to Teotitlán del Valle, the oldest extant Zapotec village. The women there weave shawls on the same kind of looms that their ancestors used and display them in the market on Sundays. The people you will see there are of the characteristic Zapotec type: short of stature, wide in shoulder and thigh, and with heads enlarged beyond attractive proportion.

There is beautiful metalwork all through the State of Oaxaca, but perhaps the finest example of sixteenth-century hand-forged iron in Mexico is the fence at the parish church of Tlacolula, right on the road. It shows a fanciful view of the Crucifixion of Christ wrought in Indian forms. The baroque decoration of the Sanctuary of Our Lord of the Cross is also the work of Indian sculptors.

You come upon the ruins of Mitla, the Realm of the Dead, without any warning, for the city was built on a plain and not on tall platforms. You must not scold your guide if he seems unable to tell you much of Mitla's history. It goes back, in fact, to prehistory. Its inhabitants left almost no traces in legend — yet it had a culture incomparable, in American history, for refinement of forms and ingenuity of structural techniques.

Nobody knows how old the foundation of Mitla may

be. It is quite certainly at least a thousand years old, and perhaps hundreds more. It is pre-Zapotecan, most scholars say, and the Zapotec nation entered the valley not later than 1000 A.D. The walls have withstood wind and earthquake because the stones which face them are set together in a curious way, as your guide will be able to show you. No mortar was used. The parts were locked into place with tenons, thus sustaining the interior rubble



Mosaic Detail at Mitla

of field stone and adobe through a system of pressures. The fourteen abstract mural designs that scholars have counted, the complicated mosaics, were not carved in the surface but locked — prefabricated! — into the masonry. One set of patterns on a single wall is computed to have been wrought from 80,000 separate pieces of stone. The intellectual effort that went into the building of Mitla is one of the prehistorical wonders, no less, of our continent.

The form of the original city is somewhat obscured by the church which stands in the midst of it and incorporates some of its walls, as well as by ruthless pillaging by colonial builders. But there were here, as elsewhere, paved plazas with arrangements of buildings around them. One of the palaces, the Hall of Columns, is identified by six rounded monoliths in a straight line down the center of a roofless, 130-foot terrace, while other cylindrical fragments lie there in ruins. Perhaps it was here that the priests who ruled the tall, slim, pale-skinned Mixtecs received suppliants from as far away as Tehuantepec. And certainly sacrificial rites were performed at the shrine directly before it.

Over the principal entrance of the Hall of Columns there is a lintel composed of three solid stone slabs which are estimated to weigh about thirty tons each. The nearest known source of such stone is almost two miles away. How it was brought in to Mitla and lifted up into place in such size and weight remains a great technical mystery.

Another curiosity of the city of cruciform tombs is the ornamentation of two mausoleums which must have been raised after the art of mosaic masonry had been unhappily lost. The decoration of those tombs appears, at first sight, to be identical with that of the walls of the temples and palaces, and yet it is found, at close view, to be not mosaic but its imitation in sculpture. A few remnants of painted surface exist, which you must get your guide to point out. They will help you to visualize the look of the plazas when they glistened with red and white paint.

If you crave refreshment after your inspection of the various tombs, you can get it at a quaint inn, La Sorpresa, where you can examine a collection of typical flora while you wait to be surprised by warm beer and hot tamales and *tacos*. Indian women will follow you to the door of the inn with baskets of coarse handmade lace and red woolen sashes. They are willing to sell for about half what they ask.

5. *Monte Alban*

Most of the tourists who go out in the morning to Mitla drive up to Monte Alban after lunch, but I do not see how they can ever sort out their impressions when they get back to their rooms in the evening. If the trip is worth making, it ought to be worth an additional day. It is more fun to sit in the late afternoon at the Café Moctezuma and watch listening crowds spring up out of the pavement whenever the strolling musicians appear. So I suggest that you spend the afternoon hours, after siesta, knocking about in the town, and postpone the visit to Monte Alban until morning.

Archaeologists of the nations, and particularly Mexicans, have gone to town at Monte Alban. They have uncovered on that 6300-foot mountain about as much as can be thought to be learned of long-vanished peoples. Dr. Alfonso Caso, lately Rector of the National University in Mexico City and formerly head of the Institute of History and Archaeology, organized the first scientific

expedition to Monte Alban to study Zapotec hieroglyphs. He moved in upon the largely unexplored site, a thousand feet above the Marquis's valley, and set to work to uncover the 20 square miles of mountain top which had been laid out, by Mixtecs and Zapotecs, in pyramids, temples, and tombs.

Dr. Caso first removed jungle growth from the central plaza, a rectangle 1000 feet long and more than 600 feet wide and bounded by pyramids ascending from masonry platforms. When he opened a staircase leading up the north side of the plaza, some 130 feet wide and rising in thirty-three steps, he discovered that the pyramid he had begun to explore had been built upon earlier structures. Monte Alban, like Teotihuacán, had clearly had a long history.

Dr. Caso believed that some of the ornamentation found in the plaza came from a culture influenced by the Olmecs, traditionally Mexico's earliest builders and sculptors, but the accompanying hieroglyphs have not yet been deciphered and have therefore yielded no dates. In general, the architecture and sculptures suggest that the history of Monte Alban falls into five periods. The first two are pre-Zapotec and go back to the first years of our era. The third and fourth are eras of Zapotec occupation, while the last era was Mixtec, the result of seizure by force. In all Mexico, only the Maya cities in the State of Chiapas can be older.

Before examining the uncovered areas, you can get several views of the terraced promontory of Monte Alban which stands at the junction of three fertile valleys in

the midst of tall peaks of the Sierra Madre del Sur. You may climb to the south end of the plaza and look north across the partially excavated structures that dot it, or ascend the grand staircase at the north and look back to see how the plaza was lined with multiple structures. You can also overlook from the ball court a host of small monticles on Monte Alban's seven hillocks before you start down the mountain to examine the tombs. You will be impressed by the vast plan of the place and will wonder, as I do, how the sum of slave labor which must have been used in the building could have supported itself so far from a source of supply.

The tombs on Monte Alban are perhaps not so grandly conceived as those at Mitla, but in their present condition they are more exciting to look at. Your guide will take you to tomb 104, where an over-all mural design tells the story of Xipe-Totec, the god of Spring whom you saw in a glass case in San Juan Teotihuacán — a god whose victims were robbed of their skins. A few tombs were despoiled in the days before scientific investigation began, but the gold jewels on view in the Oaxaca museum will give you some clue to the wealth with which the rich dead were endowed by the Mixtecs and Zapotecs.

In January, 1931, Dr. Caso uncovered tomb No. 7 and found the undisturbed wealth of one nobleman. The vault containing the treasure had been covered with two layers of stone and stucco, and when these were laid open, a skull and two rock crystal goblets were revealed by a flashlight. When Dr. Caso and his assistants were able to enter the tomb, they found an egg-shaped

onyx vase, like a Greek amphora, and many gold jewels strewn among the bones of half-sitting skeletons. For example, on the arm bones of one skeletal figure they saw golden bracelets. The prince entombed there, with slaves and priestly attendants to follow him to the legendary River of Death, wore a gold diadem, and his skull was inlaid with turquoise mosaic. The floor had been paved with fragments of flint-polished turquoise, but dampness had destroyed the original patterns by loosing the hold of the pitch in which the stones had been set. Pearls and small golden bells were found in profusion all over the area, and fragments of pottery vessels which had once contained food and drink for the journey to heaven.

The explorers worked with their helpers for thirty-six hours before they turned the tomb over to guards, and later they catalogued more than 500 articles, of which one of the strangest is the plain crystal goblet now shown in the Oaxaca museum. Even today, when the cutting of diamonds is under scientific control and taken for granted, the cutting of rock crystal remains one of the most difficult arts in the world: yet the goblet from Monte Alban is flawless.

Another curious thing is the amount of the turquoise remainder, for no ancient turquoise deposit has yet been uncovered in Mexico. Where did it come from? Surely not by boat from the Orient, as romanticists say. That is too unlikely. Trade lines extended south out of Mitla and Monte Alban for hundreds of land-measured miles, but not west by water. Perhaps the turquoise came from the Andes. It was so rare that the Aztecs, who learned

the technique of turquoise mosaic from the Zapotecs, ranked it with jade, set its value above that of gold.

If you visit the Oaxaca museum once more, you will look with new interest upon the exhibited treasures— now that you have explored their original sources. Perhaps the most spectacular single gold object from tomb 7 is a breastpiece representing a human head wearing a jaguar's mask set with gold feathers, but I like best, among jewels from that funereal place, the three-inch mask of the god Xipe-Totec. In this shocking portrait, the god wears the skin of one of his victims. If you inquire around on the plaza, you may be able to collect a thin silver copy which, when plated with gold, will make a nice souvenir of your visit to Monte Alban!

6. *Tehuantepec*

Until the Pan-American Highway has been surfaced beyond Oaxaca, the best way to get a glimpse of Tehuantepec is to take the southbound plane which lands you in Ixtepec, the heart of the Isthmus, in a little more than an hour from Oaxaca. San Jerónimo Ixtepec, the commercial center of the southern part of the Isthmus, is not in itself a lively tourist objective, except at the unscheduled times of arrival of the three daily trains. The Hotel Rasgado there, however, will serve as a base for the bus trips to Juchitán and Tehuantepec, where people go to see the *tehuanas*, the native women dressed in the festival

costumes in which Miguel Covarrubias paints them.[1] They wear, at the least, their second-best dresses at the daily Tehuantepec market, so that you can always be sure of seeing them decked out in the regional finery. The *tehuanas* are distinguished by a remarkable carriage. They instinctively move with the grace which dancers must study, while the sway and rustle of their ruffled and pleated skirts accentuate the proud, still thrust of torso and shoulder. The view from the hill which gives Tehuantepec its name — Jaguar Hill — takes in the Tehuantepec River with its sandy beaches and extends as far as Ixtepec and Juchitán to the east, and, on the south, to the Gulf of Tehuantepec, the colonial center of the California trade.

Juchitán, a town of some 20,000 inhabitants, is almost purely Zapotecan, whereas Tehuantepec, in colonial days, was a Creole city. The *juchitecos* are proud of their race and their language and put up with an obvious want of material means rather than risk interference from the federal government.

Adventurous travelers may want to go on an additional hour by plane to Tuxtla Gutiérrez, the capital of the State of Chiapas. From Tuxtla, "the place of rabbits," a boat trip can be made to San Cristobal las Casas, a picturesque center for exploration amongst primitive Indian tribes. San Cristobal las Casas is one of the last outposts of the popular arts. Superb hand-woven fabrics can still be bought there for the proverbial song.

[1] See his *Mexico South.*

CHAPTER X

Ancient Mexico: Yucatán

1. *Mérida*

THE city of Mérida can be reached now in less than four hours by plane from Mexico City, whereas in the old days its communications were more readily kept up with the States than with the Mexican capital. When I first went there, I went the hard way, and after waiting fifteen days in Veracruz for a boat, I well understood why the Yucatecans preferred Miami, New York, even Paris, to Mexico. In fact, I began to see why they never called themselves Mexicans. Still, my journey across the Gulf was by no means unpleasant, although we shipped more donkeys than passengers. The weather was good

and we made the trip in two days. When a *norte* blows up, the crew is in for an indeterminate spell of bad sailing — and the north winds blow most of the time.

I have an idea, however, that matters of temperament set the Yucatecans apart from the rest of the Mexicans as much as the swamps and the jungles which have shut off communications by rail. The province has had a long history of holding out on its own. The Maya resisted the Spaniards, the Spaniards resisted mixed marriage, the Creoles resisted the Revolution, and the whole population resists the Mexican government.

In nearly every other part of the country, the Indians have learned to speak Spanish. Not so the Maya. If anyone, employer or stranger, wants to speak to the Yucatán Indians, he must speak in their language. As I sat in the plaza one day in Mérida, I saw a slightly tipsy country-bred Indian dangling a varnished squash from his thumb. I had never seen such an object — a calabash punctured in three or four places, stopped up with straw, suspended in a raffia cradle, and shining like an Oregon apple. So I hailed the bearer. A flood of melodious speech issued from two rows of white teeth, but what was said was beyond me and I could not reply. The man turned to the people that had gathered around and said something that made everyone laugh.

"He is speaking Maya," said a lady who sat on my bench. "He wonders why you do not answer him. He wants to know if you will not speak to him because he is drunk."

"Please explain," I hurriedly said, "that I do not reply because I can't speak his dialect."

"Humph!" said the Indian, when my message was relayed. "Tell him that he is the first Yucatecan I've ever seen in my life that cannot speak Maya."

The laughter that rang through the plaza over that very small joke also illustrates one of the aspects of temperament which distinguish the people of Yucatán from those of the highlands. They are more *alegre*. In spite of the poverty into which the province was plunged by the division of henequen lands, the peninsular people are lively and gay. Those who were formerly rich still live with much grace and distinction, though their places grow shabby, and those who were born to be poor take what nature provides and laugh at their poverty.

In other parts of the country, where there are annual crops, the redistribution of land has not so much interfered with production. Elsewhere, a hundred small landowners now produce less corn and sugar than a hundred families of peons could raise on supervised haciendas, but they do produce something. In Yucatán, where the whole population is dependent on henequen, the division of land amongst paupers was catastrophic. There are four or five years between planting and harvesting when life must be supported by capital wealth. The new owners had no long-range resources. They could not even renew the old plantings which produced the rope fibers. When the war came, the peninsula was producing only a fraction of its former capacity. You will, to be sure, see plan-

tations along the roads into the jungle, but they do not stretch as far as they used to into the interior.

War revenues, which never reached the old levels, were swallowed up by decades of debt. There was little left over to spend on the ruinous houses and gardens built along Mérida's elegant boulevards in Porfirian times. Hence the capital city belongs, in its way, almost as much to the past as the ruined cities which invite tourists to the Maya peninsula.

Most visitors stay at the Hotel Mérida, where the bedrooms are cool, and take their meals there, in the dining room off the patio, or at the coffee shop on the plaza where the citizens think they are eating North American food. Other hotels are the Itzá, which has plenty of atmosphere and is reasonably comfortable, and the Gran, whose chief virtue seems to be its extremely low tariff. The staples of diet are sea food and venison. For dessert, you must try a *champola vienesa.* The Yucatecan *champola* is made with coffee and not, as in Cuba, with apple juice. In fact, it is nothing but cold milk and hot coffee and vanilla ice cream. But you will never taste such fine flavors of vanilla and coffee elsewhere in the world.

Half a day in the town is about all that is needed to visit the museum of Maya antiquities, the hemp factories, and shops. You can buy cheap though not very durable "Panama" hats, bright-colored string hammocks, real tortoise-shell combs, and copies of Maya jewelry in gold filigree.

2. *The Jungle City of Chichén Itzá*[1]

When I last went to Chichén Itzá, 77 miles out in the jungle, I found that private car rentals had gone up to around $30, while I could still reach the ruins by bus for about half a dollar. An hour before the bus left, accordingly, I sent Pedro, my *mayordomo*, a well-seasoned traveler, to occupy a couple of seats. When I drove up to the station at noon in one of the hand-painted carriages that serve there as taxis, I found him in tears. Those who came first were served first, and my seat had been forcibly taken. We could see nothing to do but start down the street with our bags, looking out for a carriage to take us back to the plaza. But the conductor straightway ran after us.

"The driver wishes to speak to you, *señores*," he shouted.

"He is very kind," I replied, "but what can he say that would be of use to us now? The seats are all taken, and we cannot stand up for six hours on the way to the ruins."

The boy begged us to go back to the station. He shouldered our bags and coaxed us with smiles. When we reached the packed *camión*, the bus driver rose up from his seat, faced his passengers, and made this astonishing speech:

"*Señores, señoras*," he said, "here is a visitor who has come all the way from the North to visit our ruins. With-

[1] See Sylvanus G. Morley, *The Ancient Maya.*

out doubt, he has spent long days and nights on his journey. Shall we disappoint him? Shall we say, since he has thus come so far, he can now go no farther? Shall we tell him to walk? Listen! Who will give up his seat to the visitor from our neighboring country?"

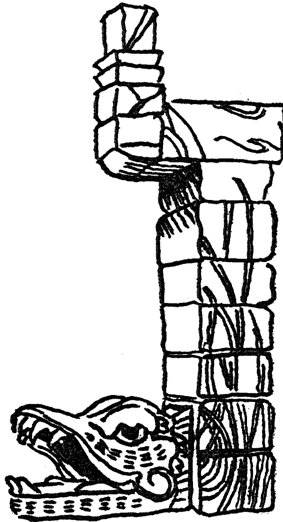
Aroused by such splendid speaking, the passengers rose to a man and cheered the bus driver, the United States of America, and me, the American. I am no orator, but I was compelled to speak in the interest of our own good-neighbor policy.

"*Señores, señoras,*" I replied, "it is true that I have come a long way to see your great jungle cities. But I see that most of you make the journey from Mérida standing up on your feet in the aisle, and I am no more unable than you are to put up with discomfort for so rich an experience. I beg you to make room for me to stand up and no more."

But I was commanded to sit in the choicest of seats and the six-hour ride became a continuous festival of conversation and music. With so many new friends to point out what to see and explain what I saw, the afternoon sped by quickly. The end of day arrived swiftly, as it does in the jungle, and as we drove into Chichén Itzá I saw the great central pyramid thrust its gray peak into the white moonlit night.

If one thus presumes to go by oneself, and not by arrangement with the Mayaland Tours, one is not permitted to stay at the Maya Lodge, a comfortable, well-screened hostel with cottages in the midst of the jungle — nor to hire Mayaland guides. One stops instead with Doña Vic-

toria, who has a couple of rooms for stray lodgers and whose son was schooled in touring the ruins as water boy to Dr. Sylvanus G. Morley, the great Maya scholar.



Detail from the Temple of the Tigers

The city of temples surrounding the pyramid called El Castillo was constructed during the tenth or twelfth century. It represents the last flowering of the rich Maya culture which reached its high peak of perfection under the influence of the classical Toltecs. When the Spaniards first reached Yucatán, the original forms of the structures now seen from the pyramid were plainer to the spectator's eye than they are today. Fray Diego de Landa, the first peninsular bishop, noted that staircases mounted

the castle's four faces — each with ninety-one steps and monolithic balustrades ending in serpents' heads. On top of the pyramid, at the height of 100 feet, there were four vaulted chambers with sculptured bas-relief decorations. These constituted the ultimate temple of Kukulcan, god of wind, rain, and fertility, the chief Maya deity.

The principal ceremonial staircase, tumbled and overgrown since the Conquest, has now been restored. If you have a clear head — the angle of ascent is about 45° — you can climb from the 195-foot base to the top, along with the goats that swarm over the place, and get a good view of the old Maya city. From that height one begins to appreciate the ponderousness of the masonry project. The pyramid and its satellite temples, the Ball Court, the Temple of the Warriors, the Atrium of a Thousand Columns, are seen to repose on a vast platform some 10 feet high. When you consider that every block of stone in those acres of platform had to be hewn with stone implements and transported by hand, you can get some idea of the range and daring of the huge enterprise. You can imagine what tens of thousands of slaves must have worked under threat of starvation and torture to please the priests and the kings and to placate the gods.

Although the serpents in the pyramid sculptures are thought to prove that this was Kukulcan's temple, for he was Quetzalcoatl with a new Maya name, it is also clear that the god of the sun had his share in the ceremonial honors that the priests offered there. The number of steps in the four ceremonial stairways totaled 364, the number of days in the ritual calendar, and the walls of

the nine terraces in which the pyramid rises were pierced by 52 shrines, one for each year in the Maya cyclical unit of astronomical time.

You can see from the top of the pyramid an avenue of stone paving blocks connecting the platform with the sacred well. This well and the *cenote* of Xtoloc were the only sources of water for the immense population which must have lived in lost suburbs of Chichén Itzá. Yet the people did not observe that the cisterns were formed by the collapse of a thin limestone roofing. They seem not to have drawn the conclusion, from the fact that the waters were of the same eighty-foot level, that they could tap unexposed regions and add to their water supply. Neither, in spite of the traffic which their building demanded, did they ever discover the wheel as a means for conveying burdens. They were artistic and intellectual people, but they seem to have been wanting in any great quantity of practical sense.

You must try to visualize, while you stand on the castle's ceremonial staircase, the ascending and descending figures of Maya priests and warriors during Kukulcan's festival. After preparing themselves by fasting and chastity, they dressed in their ceremonial costumes and marched from the house of the king to the foot of the pyramid. There they set out their idols on mounds of green leaves, made the new fire, and offered sacrifice of cooked food and liquors made from dried beans and calabash seed. They climbed the steps in serpentine columns and planted banners at the foot of Kukulcan's temple while clowns and mountebanks went through the town

demanding gifts for the god and his priests. After five days of placation, Kukulcan descended from heaven. More often than not he disdained their burnt offerings of mere birds and beasts and asked for men's hearts to boot.

Before quitting the castle, one must traverse with one's guide the tunnels cut through the external structure and visit the remains of an interior pyramid constructed in pure Maya style. Several meters of frescoes were uncovered when the interior pyramid was explored, but since their exposure the paintings have rapidly faded. Still, it is possible to get some idea of their former appearance. They look like illustrations in old Maya books. The Maya, like the Greeks, applied color lavishly to both interior and exterior walls.

Of the ball court where the Maya aristocrats played a fast game called *tlachtli*, there remain the two playing walls nearly 300 feet long. A stone ring decorated with the plumed serpent was fixed in each wall, about 20 feet from the ground, and the point of the game was to throw the hard rubber ball through those rings. Since the game was quasi-religious, sacrifices were offered in the temple which you see at one end of the court. The referees sat in the handsome pavilion across from the temple.

Two structures reconstructed by archaeologists from the Carnegie Institute occupy the opposite side of the platform — the Temple of the Warriors and the Atrium of a Thousand Columns. Like the castle and ball court, the Temple of the Warriors and the Atrium were built at the end of the Maya-Toltec epoch, and in aesthetic achievement they are not surpassed anywhere in this hem-

isphere. The pyramid on which the temple rests is in itself a glorious monument. It rises in four terraces from a base about 130 feet wide and is ascended, on the west side, by a staircase inclined at 66°. The friezes which encompass the several terraces consist of alternating bas-relief figures of warlike eagles and warriors and tigers — the tiger being another of Kukulcan's symbols, as seen in the bas-relief frieze of the exquisite near-by Templo de los Tigres. The surmounting Temple of the Warriors is decorated with emblems of Kukulcan, notably the plumed serpent, and with masks of other more indigenous deities. Remnants of color show that the temple was once richly polychromed inside and out.

The pyramid, like the castle, was built over an earlier structure. The temple inside, built for the rain god, can be entered only by special arrangement with the caretaker, who gets a *propina.* It contains an astonishing *chacmool,* a representation of a god who was placated by human sacrifice performed on his stomach.

The Atrium of a Thousand Columns stands at the right of the Warriors. The pillars are not monolithic, as at Mitla. They are composed of layered square slabs of stone. No one knows what went on in the myriad lanes between the long rows of columns, but I think it unlikely that the place was a market, as the caretaker tells you. The *décor* is sacred: warriors, eagles, tigers, plumed serpents — Kukulcan's panoply — decorate altars, doorjambs, and cornices. The warrior profiles seen here do not have the look of "typical" masks but rather of por-

traits from life. This is the most personal sculpture you will find in Maya antiquity.

Now cross the platform to the Camino Sagrado which leads to the sacred *cenote*, the well whose waters were tabu in old times for both drinking and bathing. Jewels and other treasures of gold have been dredged up from its depths, along with bony remains which show that death by drowning was offered to insatiable gods: the death, it is said, of young maidens.

Exploration of so many ruins is about enough work for one morning. You will perhaps feel more like wandering out to the House of the Nuns, the Caracol, and the cistern of Xtoloc in the cool of the late afternoon. The structure called Las Monjas, the House of the Nuns, with which I recommend you to begin the afternoon's explorations, belongs to a quite different era from that which produced Kukulcan's pyramid and its neighboring temples. It belongs to the epoch known as the Old Empire. It was perhaps a king's palace, for unlike the temples it has several chambers with both doors and windows. The rich decoration is mainly abstract in form, although there is a carved mask of a deity in the archaic style, and some figure carving in the annex called La Iglesia.

On a roundabout way from the Nuns to the Caracol one visits the so-called House of Writing, chiefly remarkable for a row of blood-colored impressions of somebody's hand. The climactic round edifice called the Snail was the observation post of the priests. The cylindrical tower, imposed upon platforms, is reached by a pair of

broad staircases and contains an interior circular staircase which formerly climbed to the roof where the priests made their astronomical measurements. The sculptures are Maya-Toltec once more — the familiar warriors and serpents and priests — although a true Maya mask in a pure Maya cornice suggests that the Caracol, like the castle, was begun in one age and rebuilt in another. Minor structures, like the Red House and the Deer House which lie north of the Caracol, were not tampered with. The Red House is a simple and winsome example of what is known as New Empire. Built on its own platform, it is quite unadorned save for its cornice and battlements.

3. *Old Chichén Itzá*

The visitor who has as much as three days to spend in the jungle can wind his way, with a guide, to two or three groups of buildings which the more hurried traveler is not likely to see — such as the Bird Cornices, the Tortoise, the Temple of the Sculptured Doorjamb, the Southwestern group, and the Dated Temple. But everybody must wrap up his legs against the onslaught of ticks and walk out one day to Chichén Viejo.

Old Chichén Itzá, except for some cutting away of dense jungle growth, has been left pretty much as it was when modern scholars discovered it. Some of the ruins go back to the first regional settlement, perhaps as far back as the sixth Christian century — although the Maya chronology is a problem for specialists. I should be reluc-

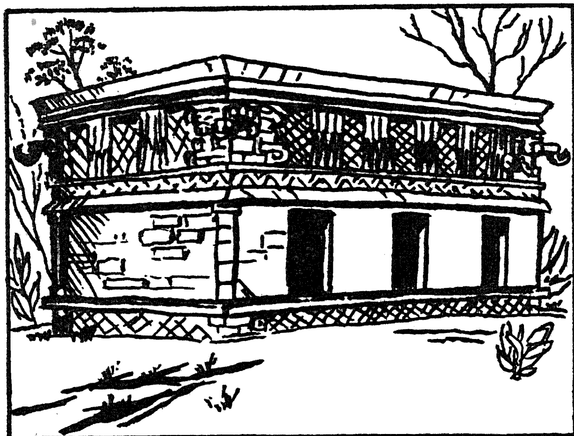
tant to speak of the matter of dates if I were not aware of the spectator's instinctive desire to know how old the things are that he sees.

There are two systems for the translation of the Maya time hieroglyphs into our calendar reckoning, the Thompson-Teeple and the Spinden correlations, which are exactly 260 years apart from each other. If the Round Calendar of the Maya astronomers came to an end in 1539 (say) in the Thompson-Teeple correlation, it ended in 1279 according to Spinden. It is not very helpful to have to choose, then, between 575 A.D. and 835 A.D. for the building of the so-called Paul Martin Temple, the oldest structure in Old Chichén Itzá, but that is as close as the archaeologists bring us. Still, we can put the building of Chichén Viejo into a kind of perspective. It belongs, it appears, to the third of the six Maya epochs which extended from the last century of the pre-Christian era almost up to the conquest of Mexico.[2]

Those epochs, as described by Thomas Gann in *Mexico from the Earliest Times to the Conquest*, are as follows: first, the Early epoch which lasted until around 500 A.D. and produced the so-called Old Empire cities such as Palenque, Copan, and Tikal; second, the Transitional epoch, which lasted up to 600 A.D. and during which great advances were made in the stone carver's art; third, the Great epoch, the age of expansion into Yucatán and

[2] The "Tuxtla statuette" in the National Museum in Washington, D.C., a Maya figurine of jadeite from San Andres Tuxtla, Veracruz, has been accurately dated as of 98 B.C. The connection between the Maya and the older, newly discovered La Venta culture, in remote Tabasco, still needs exploration.

Spanish Honduras from some time around 600 A.D. to 800 A.D. and possibly after, when Maya culture flowered abundantly without outside influence; fourth, the Nomadic epoch, the uncounted Maya Dark Ages which followed upon the abandonment of Old Empire towns;



Los Dos Dinteles

fifth, the New Empire epoch, characterized by a flamboyant style which bears to Old Empire architecture something of the kinship of the Renaissance style to the Roman; and sixth, the Toltec epoch, when Chichén Itzá was rebuilt and augmented and when tribal dissension crept into the Maya alliance and led to the conquest of the Maya country by the Spaniards.

Chichén Viejo represents the Great epoch, just as the House of the Nuns represents the New Empire, the Caracol a combination of New Empire and Toltec, and the castle and its grand retinue the final mixed Toltec epoch.

Out in Chichén Old Town you can see other examples — I have spoken of two, the wheel and the cistern — of that curious want of practical wisdom. To achieve pointed roofing, and not knowing the vault and the keystone, the Maya builders were obliged to lay slab upon slab of thick stone in terraces. The clumsy vaults were then kept from toppling by massively balancing ceiling weights with roof pressures.

The most charming of Old Chichén temples, Los Dos Dinteles, is a rare restoration of pure Maya construction. You can see there the flat arches, the triangular vaulting, the multiple cornices, and the peculiar sheathing which connected a Maya house with the ground. Then, if you like, you can see another side of a culture which, in Los Dinteles, appears to have reached almost excessive refinement. Your guide can point out phallic symbols all over Old Chichén. The men of that day asked the gods to be virile and the earth to be fertile, and they sculptured, from the patterns of their own lively bodies, the forms that would give the gods the idea that they sought to implant in their minds.

4. *Life among the Maya*

One of my friends spoke of feeling, as he wandered day by day through the jungle, that a part of the historical picture of the old Maya nation was visibly wanting. There was, he said, no trace of life, and especially of the life of the hundreds of thousands of workmen who must

have been needed for the building and upkeep of the priestly areas. And it is true that the archaeologists have not uncovered, as yet, the domestic purlieus of which all surface traces have melted away. The buildings raised to the gods were enduring. The home hearth has perished. However, a careful, if disapproving, observer has left us a detailed account of the life of the Maya at the time of the Conquest; and since the rich ritual was already greatly reduced in his time, Bishop de Landa took pains to describe just those things that one misses today in the unpeopled jungle.[3]

The Maya were a peaceable people who fought, for the most part, only in resistance to slavery. Until they learned to use bows and arrows, perhaps under Toltec instruction, they took game with traps, snares, and darts. They had a strict code of laws, in which adultery was the primary civil offense. The man who caused a wife's infidelity was punished by having his intestines pulled out through his navel.

The bishop describes the Maya figure as tall and robust, but we must remember that the Spaniards themselves were mostly sturdy and short. The beau ideal called for bowed legs and crossed eyes. Children came by their bent legs naturally. They were carried astride the thighs of their mothers. But the cross-eyed effect was achieved by artifice: tapes were stretched from the bangs to the eyebrows.

Babies' heads and foreheads were flattened by bind-

[3] In his *Relacion de las Cosas de Yucatán*, of which a translation by William Gates was published by The Maya Society, Baltimore, 1937.

ing, and when they grew up their faces were scarified. The men seemed to the bishop more vain than the women, for they alone used mirrors for make-up. When a man was cuckolded, his friends made the joke that his wife had hidden his mirror in back of his hair. The men wound cloth strips of the breadth of a hand around their waists and their calves and covered themselves fore and aft with featherwork fringes. They tied square fabric mantles over their shoulders and wore sandals of deerskin and henequen fibers. They lived in plastered mud houses thatched with palm leaves, and since there were no doors to lock, the law looked upon theft with stern eyes.

There are no domestic remains at Chichén Itzá, but when you look down from some summit you can imagine the rows of thatched huts extending out from the plazas. Nearest the temples stood the plastered and frescoed houses of the chiefs and the priests. Back of these were the ample but impermanent houses of rich men and noblemen, and in the outer regions, the huts of the people. Fields hewn out of the jungle were planted in cotton and corn and the slaves of the rich tended shade trees and flowers.

Being a peaceable people, the Itzás had time for sport and amusement. The social events were largely supported by men — the women coming late to the parties to take their men home. There was much visiting and giving of presents, much eating and drinking. It was great fun to get drunk, kill your neighbor, and burn his house down. Then if you slept with his wife, you were not an adulterer.

5. *Uxmal*

Your hotel clerk in Mérida will arrange for the 50-mile drive out to Uxmal, and a couple of hours out there will be all you will need for a cursory survey: although I must tell you that the working archaeologist generally prefers Uxmal to Chichén Itzá because of its greater integrity as a purely Maya memorial.

The road from the city comes to an end beside an elliptical pyramid capped by two temples which stand — measuring to the roof of the taller — about 100 feet high. If you feel up to the climb, you can get a good view of Uxmal from the top. Not so much restoring has been done here, up to now, as at Chichén Itzá, but in times past the place must have been equally large and important. El Adivino, the House of the Soothsayer at the top of the staircase, is decorated with columns, masks, and richly carved cornices. A few wooden dentils survive over doors to various chambers; otherwise, walls, windows, and door-jambs are of hewn stone reared at what cost to this height.

The partially restored quadrangle beyond the base of the pyramid, looking west, is the Casa de las Monjas, or Nunnery. One of the Spaniards wrote, whether from hearsay or history, that the quadrangle housed vestal virgins who fed sacred fires from epoch to epoch. It is more than likely that the ninety separate chambers enclosed by the walls of the edifice suggested a convent to the pious explorers. Four detached buildings form a not-quite-

closed-up patio about 260 feet long and more than 210 feet wide. The principal entrance, located in the middle of the southern wing, is a spacious archway with typical vaulting. Each of the buildings giving onto the patio has its own system of ornamentation. The East building, for instance — a structure about 110 feet long, something over 30 feet wide, and close to 30 feet high — is ornamented by six delicate latticework screens imposed upon the coarser stone latticework of the masonry walls. The masks above the main doorway and at the rounded façade corners represent the Maya rain god.

The somewhat longer West building is adorned by a pair of intertwined serpents with jars of feathers resting on the tips of their tails. One of the few human figures in this whole cluster of buildings appears in a fretwork niche in the façade of this wing. The friezes of the North and South buildings contain small models of palaces whose forms harmonize with the prevailing rich latticework texture. An old Spanish writer speaks of the polychromed surfaces in blue, red, and yellow which made the whole quadrangle sparkle.

Going south from the Nunnery, you pass through the ball court, not yet restored to its former grandeur, and go on to the 600-foot platform of the Casa del Gobernador, the Governor's Palace, as the Spaniards romantically dubbed it. As lately as 1841, when John L. Stephens explored Yucatán, the tripartite structure still stood in the form in which the Spaniards had seen it; but sometime after that the rotted *zapote* beams gave way to the weight of thick walls of cut stone and tumbled most of the tall

700-foot frieze to the ground. What remains of the lines of masks serpentining over a latticework ground is spectacular evidence of the elegance of Maya design. It has been computed that 20,000 carved stones went into this building. The masonry of the walls was so skillfully joined that no traces of mortar are visible.

Smaller buildings poetically named Las Tortugas and Las Palomas stand near by. Las Tortugas is decorated with turtles, and Las Palomas (the Doves), a building 240 feet long, has curious openings under the eaves. If you are willing to risk ticks in your legs for the sake of an erotic adventure, you can wander across the fields some 400 yards to the house called El Falico and see the prodigious reminder — the only one in that place — of ancient phallic religion.

I found that my second visit to the museum in Mérida, after my trips to the ruins, was of more use than the first because I could better imagine how the things that I saw must have looked in the place that they came from.

If you like the Yucatán climate and ambiance, you can go on to visit Campeche by train and pick up your plane there for the return to Mexico City. Campeche, a town which raised up a turreted sea wall for protection from pirates a long time ago, is a center for fishing and shooting. The place has a quiet and colorful tropical charm which one tastes and remembers.

CHAPTER XI

The Colonial Cities of the Meridian

1. Querétaro

I DON'T want to sound snobbish, but this chapter is dedicated to the seasoned and sensitive traveler who will go out of his way to see full-flavored colonial Mexico. It is for people like the New Yorkers who took lunch with us in Cuernavaca one warm, bright winter day. They enjoyed the view there: the *barranca* where Indian warriors were ambushed by Spaniards, as related in Diego Rivera's frescoes in the Cortés Palace in town; the clipped greens of the golf course amid the yellowing hills; to the north, the pink and gray walls of the Franciscan convent; to the south, the blue Taxco mountains; and behind us, the stately volcanoes.

"One senses something of Mexico's quality here," said one of our guests. "Please send us out to see more of it. Taxco, if you will forgive me, seems commonplace after the Umbrian towns. Acapulco is shabby and mean — you see that! — compared to San Remo. Surely after so many years of visiting Mexico," the lady continued, "you must know beautiful places to visit. Do plan something for us that is really distinguished!"

I promised a chapter about the lovely colonial cities which rarely appear on the fifteen-day tours. Here it is.

You start out over the Pan-American Highway going north from Mexico City at around half-past nine. You retrace the highway through Villa Gustavo Madero, past the fork to Pachuca; past Actopan, where, if you failed to stop when you first approached Mexico City, you can afford half an hour in the frescoed Augustinian convent.[1] At K. 167 you turn left to Querétaro. The paved road passes through 90 miles of plain, pleasant country, which in late summer is pink with wild cosmos. The first 45 miles in the state named for Father Hidalgo, before you cross into the State of Querétaro, wind through wheat fields and grazing lands, maguey plantations and woodlands. The dam which you cross between K. 220 and K. 225, called La Presa Madero, has turned thousands of dusty acres into green meadows. The whole trip to Querétaro ought not to take more than five hours. The public motorcars called *turismos* make it in less time than that.

(I must say, by the way, to the people who travel by train or airplane, that they also can tour the colonial towns.

[1] See p. 53 above.

They can take the inexpensive eight-passenger touring-car service as far as Querétaro — the hotel porter will make the arrangements — and go on to San Miguel de Allende by train. The bus trip from San Miguel to Guanajuato is so tough that I recommend it only to the hardiest travelers, but a party of four would not find a private car very expensive. Then there would remain only the problem of making one's way from Guanajuato to Morelia by bus, which isn't too bad. There are trains, planes, and first-class busses from Morelia back to Mexico City.)

The best inn in Querétaro is the Gran Hotel on the principal plaza. This hostelry used to cater to large rural families who came here to shop and assist at fiestas. The first time I stopped there I was shown to a room designed to sleep seven people; for the country families slept all in one room, barricaded with tables and bureaus against the thieving of maidenly virtue and matronly jewels. A couple can stay there today in modernized rooms — food included — for about $7 a day. If you poke around in the bar, you may find some French wines.

After a wholesome Mexican lunch with a dish of the sweet beef of the country, you can begin the sight-seeing with a drive through the town in one of the cabs stationed beside San Francisco, the church just below the hotel. The drivers are competent guides and charge no more than a dollar an hour.

Querétaro, for all its colonial history, was one of the towns where the Independence was born. It was in the municipal palace, which the guide will point out in the

Plaza de la Independencia, that one of Mexico's heroines, Doña Josefa Ortiz Domínguez, learned that the Spaniards meant to strike at the Mexicans before they could begin the rebellion. Doña Josefa sent a warning to Father Hidalgo, the *cura* of the town of Dolores, on the night of September 15, 1810, and the following morning the padre summoned his army of ranch hands to begin the march on the Spanish positions that was planned for December. He set out at once for San Miguel el Grande (now San Miguel de Allende) to start the war which, after eleven long years, brought conditional freedom to Mexico.

In the center of the Plaza de la Independencia you will see the monument to Don Juan Antonio de Urrutia y Arana, Marqués de la Villa del Villar del Águila, who introduced potable water through the stone aqueduct we shall presently see. The present Marqués de la Villa del Villar del Águila is one of the town's leading characters. Stripped of his wealth by the expropriation of lands, he works hard to support a large family connection, but he is everywhere treated like royalty.

Just a stone's throw from the Plaza de la Independencia there is a small plaza dedicated to Doña Josefa who lived there as the wife of the Spanish *corregidor*. Called the Plaza de la Corregidora, it is adorned with a bronze monument composed of round figures and bas-relief plaques. The chief figure represents the Mexican people delivered from Spanish rule, while one of the plaques shows how Doña Josefa's message was carried to Father Hidalgo.

The driver will most likely go next to the Convent de

la Cruz, where the Emperor Maximilian was besieged by the Liberal forces. Maximilian had entered Querétaro on February 19, 1867, on his horse Orispelo. On the surface, it appeared that he enjoyed a royal success. The streets were filled — so his diarist says — with cheering throngs of fond subjects. Beautiful women threw bouquets of flowers from balconies draped with French colors. But the Emperor's two principal generals, Márquez and Miramón, quarreled at supper that night and the fall of the empire was forecast in their feud.

Most of the empire, in fact, had already collapsed. Only four towns of consequence were still held by Imperial forces: Veracruz, Orizaba, Puebla, and Querétaro. Now two Mexican armies approached Querétaro from the north and the west and Miramón proposed to engage them before they could meet. Márquez opposed Miramón's strategy and counseled delay. And while the two generals quarreled, the Liberals joined forces strongly and encircled the city on the sixth day of March.

Miramón ordered attack, Márquez resisted the order; and during those irresolute days of delay, the Emperor transferred his headquarters from the Hill of the Bells to the seventeenth-century Convent de la Cruz, where the marquis's aqueduct came to an end.

"From the roofs and towers within the city," wrote the diarist, Don José Blasio, "a great part of the immense camp (of the Liberals) could be seen. Their flags floated everywhere from the crests of the mountains and at night their numerous fires indicated their presence."

In the early morning of March 13 the Mexicans opened

fire from the hilltops in an effort to reduce Maximilian's headquarters position. The Imperial troops were feeding on cat meat when the siege came to an end two months later. The Emperor, with his personal staff, surrendered to General Corona of the Liberal army and was imprisoned in the Convent of Santa Teresa.

"The siege of Querétaro ended," Don José wrote, "after a valiant resistance of seventy-two days offered by seven thousand Imperials against forty thousand Liberals."

Before you follow the Emperor into his *cárcel*, you might drive on to the aqueduct. Built early in the eighteenth century, it was 5 miles long. Seventy-five of its arches remain, some of which, nearest the convent, are 50 feet high. The Liberals began to destroy it on March 11, 1867.

The Convent of Santa Teresa looks just as it did in the Emperor's time, although its seventeenth-century builders would not have known it. Its nineteenth-century neoclassical front is recognized by the Mexican bureau of monuments as the work of Francisco Eduardo Tresguerras, the great native architect. Maximilian spent a few days in cheerful rooms off the bright, sunny patio of Santa Teresa, then lately renovated at the expense of the Marquesa de Salva Nevada, and was afterwards lodged in the damp burial crypt of the Capuchin church to wait for his death. You can drive out to the place where he died, the Hill of the Bells, where he had first made his encampment, but meanwhile there are two or three baroque structures to visit while they are still open.

There is the Convent of Santa Rosa de Viterbo, for in-

stance, built (from 1699 to 1752) in the Plateresque style with carved baroque buttresses. Its present form, often wrongly attributed to Eduardo Tresguerras, was mainly the work of a Querétaro architect, Mariano de Casas. The church interior contains profuse decorations in the way of gilded Churrigueresque carving. Note the colonial organ, the doors with carved moldings, the pulpit inlaid with ebony and ivory and tortoise-shell filigree. The cloister, which now serves as a hospital, is notable for its wide double arches.

The Convent of San Agustín, completed in 1745 and used as a federal palace since the time of Porfirio Díaz, was built in a frankly pagan baroque style at the expense of one individual, Don Julián Díaz de la Peña. The cloister is decorated with Atlantean half-figures of men whose minds could hardly have been on their prayer books; and with sensuous gargoyles which surely recalled the monks' minds to their bodies instead of their souls. The rather sparse picture galleries in the San Agustín Convent are supplemented by the municipal museum of art next door to the Church of Saint Francis on the principal plaza.

The Convent of Santa Clara, which occupies several blocks in the heart of the city, was founded by Doña Luisa de Tapia, niece of the conqueror who was landlord of the region. It was later enlarged by the family of Don Juan Antonio, the Marqués de la Villa del Villar del Águila. It was said at one time to house five thousand nuns who were ruled by unmarried women of the Urrutia family. The convent church, which was finished in 1633, was rebuilt in the richest Mexican baroque style — not,

as they say once more in the town, by Tresguerras.

The Convent of San Francisco on the plaza was begun in the late sixteenth century and finished in 1698. The choir stalls here are correctly attributed to Eduardo Tresguerras, whose phenomenal energies drove him to wood and stone sculpture and to oil painting as well as engineering and architecture. The cloister contains a fine arcaded staircase.

The Jesuit monastery and church, Del Sagrario, are notable for the great sophistication and finish of the decorative stone carving, while San Felipe Neri (1800–1805) shows the baroque style breathing its last Mexican breath — aided by injections from Paris.

When you take a walk through the town before dinner, you can examine the private houses made of Querétaro stone. They were built by the sons of grandees who made fortunes in mines in the colonial epoch, and you will, without fail, want to buy one. But now your driver will want you to follow Maximilian to the Hill of the Bells.

From May 22 to June 12, 1867, Maximilian slept among Capuchin tombs. He knew that his empire had come to an end, but he supposed he could live in exile in Europe — until June 13, the day set for his trial, when he was returned to the Convent of Santa Teresa and shown that he could hope for no generous treatment from Benito Juárez, the Liberal general. Princess Salm-Salm, the American bareback rider, had tried hard to buy his escape, but Maximilian refused to go free and leave his staff to the fusillade. He learned in the evening that he was sentenced

to death. He wrote his last letters, borrowed the money for sending his body back home, and said good-by to his friends. His execution was heartlessly postponed until June 19, when he was removed to the Hill of the Bells at seven o'clock in the morning. Two hours later his friends heard the roll of the drums and knew that the young monarch's body was riddled with bullets. The whole town went into mourning and repeated the Emperor's dying words, "A blessing on Mexico." His body happily does not lie in the ugly mausoleum set up on the Hill of the Bells but in a Viennese convent, the burial place of his fathers.

Your tour can take to the road the next morning for San Miguel de Allende by way of Celaya. There is no great hurry. There is time before starting to bargain for opals in the Gran Hotel lobby, to try on huaraches of the sturdy type made in the place, and to taste the candied lemons and figs at the sweet shops. For the whole distance to cover is not 80 miles and lunch can be had in Celaya at the Hotel Isabel, Avenida Hidalgo 15.

2. *San Miguel de Allende*

The first time I went to San Miguel, ten years ago, the road to Celaya was barely passable and there was none at all from that town to San Miguel de Allende. We drove over the desert. Now Celaya is reached over pavement and a gravel road has been run through to San Miguel. A more direct road from Querétaro is likewise in pros-

pect, but even so, Celaya is worth a visit as the home of Tresguerras. He was buried there in a chapel designed by himself to adjoin the Church of Saint Francis, and the Church of Our Lady of Carmen (at the corner of Avenida Alvaro Obregón and Calle del Carmen) was designed and built by him. Its tower, which rises above a neoclassical (quasi-Doric) portal, and its green and gold dome are his boldest works, while the nave of the church is filled with his paintings and sculptures. His statue in bronze, with his big head and intelligent face, stands just outside in the street.

San Miguel de Allende, as I have written elsewhere,[2] is not a place to be seen and enjoyed in a day: yet I have known certain hard-working tourists who were unable to spend a whole day there and feel fully employed. I remember being addressed, when I lived there, by a woman who said, "What in God's name do you people who live here *do* with your time? I've been here four hours and I've walked from one end of the town to the other, examining churches. What shall I do next?"

This is a place where, if it hits you just right, you want to buy a house right away and stay a long time. If it doesn't so hit you, you may find it dull. It has so few "sights." Its charm really consists in its hillside setting and views, its well-watered gardens, in the dependable sun, and the slow seeping of time in its plazas.

When you have taken your rooms in the Posada de San Francisco, opposite the pink Gothic church on the

[2] *A Matter of Love: and Other Baroque Tales of the Provinces,* by MacKinley Helm.

Pink Gothic Church, San Miguel de Allende

plaza, or at the cheaper Hotel Colonial — or at the new Hotel Bugambilia if and when it is finished — you might climb on foot to the Camino Real and look back, towards the west, on the town. If you go in the late afternoon, you can watch *nochecita*, that soft time of day, creep over the valley and village.

The town is so small that I almost hate to point out, except from the top of the hill, the few places to see. The pink tower to the left of the principal plaza is a local mason's idea of Gothic. It may not *be* Gothic, but it is a cheerful pink poem attached to the Renaissance ode of which nave and apse were composed centuries earlier.

The *camarín* behind the high altar is, as you may see in the morning, one of the early works of Tresguerras. Its floor forms the roof of a crypt of which Maximilian was reported to say, "This tomb is worthy of kings." An ironical thing that one has to report is that there lay buried there, in his time, some notable foes of old Spanish monarchs — members of the *Junta Conspiradora* which had taped out the plans for separation from Spain. One of those gentlemen, Don Felipe González, was the first to suggest that Father Miguel Hidalgo be asked to join the conspirators — a move which provided the Mexicans with their first able general. The body of Don Anastasio Bustamante lies there too, although his heart is in Mexico City where he twice ruled as Dictator-President in the eighteen-thirties.

The charming little *plazuela* to the right of the plaza and a block towards the hill is shrouded in springtime by a violet mist. It is jacaranda in blossom. Patronized, for

the most part, by peons too timid to sit in the plaza, the *plazuela* provides space to admire the façade of the Church of Saint Francis, a Churrigueresque work of the late eighteenth century. The cupola was later designed by the same Felipe González who sleeps in the pink Gothic church.

Just before the volcano of Paricutín sent up its first wisps of smoke from a Michoacán meadow, an earthquake which shook central Mexico toppled part of the tower of Don Felipe González and killed a workman. The saints in the church were put on probation. The interior, filled with nine neoclassical altars in the Tresguerras style, may be seen at its best when it is filled with Maundy Thursday's chiffon streamers and flowers. Indeed, all of Holy Week is a time of excitement and color in San Miguel de Allende. The structure along the left side of the Plazoleta de San Francisco is an early seventeenth-century convent, and the small church attached to the convent, called the Tercer Orden, is the oldest church in the city.

Ruins of a somewhat earlier structure can barely be seen from the hill, out there in the valley. They date from the time of the Franciscan Father, Fray Juan de San Miguel, who founded the city in 1542 with a mission for the Chichimeca and Otomi Indians. The town became a presidio before 1560 — a fort, so to speak, charged with keeping the lanes safe for travelers, and it was then that the first Spanish families moved in to govern the natives. Two centuries later, some half a dozen heads of Creole families were ennobled by Fernando VI and the city en-

joyed a rich golden age of baroque building and private luxury.

The red stone palace catercorner from the Inn of Saint Francis is the former town house of the first Conde de la Canal and his heirs. The villa surrounded by tall gray walls that you passed at the edge of the town, on the road from Celaya, was the home of the first Conde de Casa de Loja, Vizconde Landeta. The buildings of the epoch survive, as you can see, together with some of the old family names — but the fortunes are gone.

There is no one spot on the Camino Real from which the whole municipal panorama is visible, but by taking a few steps to the left or the right you can make out a cluster of towers and lanterns and domes some three blocks north of the plaza. That is the Oratory of San Felipe Neri, one of the products of the golden age of the town. Begun in 1712, its original ornament was, for baroque, somewhat plain. But in the *camarín* of the enclosed Sacred House of Loreto (1734), the architect, Antonio Pérez Espinosa, piled his fantasies high: the donor, Count Manuel Tomás de la Canal, sparing no expense in preparing a place of sepulture for himself and his wife.

Next to the Oratory, as you can see in the morning, stands the tiny Church of Our Lady of Health. Its façade is baroque, a hollow shell of the local carved stone set up by a priest who exchanged his inheritance for that work of art. Next to that chapel is the College of Saint Francis de Sales, which at one time was the most active

center of philosophical learning in Mexico. Its graduates received degrees from the University up in the capital, and among its alumni were Don Ignacio Allende and the Aldama brothers, leaders in the rebellion against Spanish dominion.

Now, if you look straight through the town, just below the plaza, you will see the towered edifice known as "The Nuns," a convent founded in the time of Carlos IV by Doña Josefa Landeta, daughter of the first Count de Loja and Doña Maria Josefa de la Canal. The young nun spent all her rich dowry on the house which she lived in when she became the bride of the Church. Today, the nuns have to share their Renaissance cloisters with cavalry troops and art students. Their private apartments are closed to the public, but their neoclassical tower and cupola are landmarks far out in the valley.

Beyond the town, west and south, you will see a bleak church with forbidding gray walls. That's San Antonio, where the girls of the town go to Mass every week to pray for sweethearts and husbands. If they get their man, they go back again to pray to have babies.

While you are still up on the hill, you can walk past the white country house of Cantinflas, the Mexican Charlie Chaplin, on the upper side of the highway opposite Calle de la Huerta, and look at the charming chapel called La Ermita which the house of Cantinflas adjoins. La Ermita, which was given a new face of pink stone in the last century, is almost as old as the Third Order church. The Virgin of Loreto, who came here from Italy,

really, and has her own rich dwelling now in the Oratory, spent her first night in San Miguel de Allende in this humble chapel.

At the beginning of Calle Santo Domingo, which climbs the hill above the Camino Real, stands a Dominican convent of nuns. The plain convent chapel used to house the Virgin of Guadalupe when she was made patroness of San Miguel el Grande. That Virgin's first rival, the Virgin of Solitude, lived in Calvario Chapel, a block down the Camino Real, at the head of Calle de San Francisco.

I think you will take some small, quiet pleasure in roaming the streets the next morning and peering through open doors into blossoming patios. Or you can just sit for a while in the plaza and take in the atmosphere of a town that has seen life come and go for four hundred years. Many people stay on and on for the pleasure of breathing dry air and taking the hot baths at near-by Taboada, where it is said that rheumatic pains drop away. I cleared up a bad sinus there in a couple of months.

There are many fiestas with regional dancing to go to, especially that of the first week of March. On the 2nd of February the town swarms with foot pilgrims on their way to San Juan de los Lagos, and two weeks before Easter a quaint procession comes to the town from Atotonilco. Nowhere in the country is the 16th of September, Mexico's Fourth of July, more warmly remembered, for San Miguel de Allende, the birthplace of Don Ignacio Allende, calls itself the Cradle of Liberty. The fiesta *par excellence* is that of the first week end in October when

Saint Michael, the archangel, descends from his altar to review a parade which passes three times through the plaza with music and dancing by feathery Indians — and with an array of *súchiles*, towering flower-decked structures which tipsy peons swarm over when the procession is ended.

3. *Guanajuato*

The road to Guanajuato is not paved, but its crushed gravel roadbed — copper-colored in stretches, and sometimes pale green, and sometimes, as in an oddly Dantesque piece of country, bone white — carries traffic safely both summer and winter. If you leave San Miguel de Allende by nine o'clock in the morning, you can stop at Atotonilco and Dolores Hidalgo and still reach Guanajuato in good time for lunch.

Ten miles out from San Miguel, on the new dirt road to Dolores Hidalgo, you come to Atotonilco, whose cloth banner of Guadalupe was Mexico's first national flag. When Father Hidalgo's army of peons advanced upon San Miguel el Grande, as the town was then called, they paused for a while, on the morning of September 16, 1810, and carried the banner away. Our Lady of Guadalupe thus became the Insurgents' patroness and she had many a fierce battle to fight with her rival, the Virgin de los Remedios, whom the Spaniards adored.

Dolores Hidalgo, about 20 miles beyond Atotonilco, is itself of small interest now, apart from its pretty, green

plaza and Churrigueresque parish church (1712–1788); but during Miguel Hidalgo's curacy it was an exemplary village. The *cura* had taught his people thriftier arts than were elsewhere known in the country. They planted the mulberry bush, in spite of a royal embargo, and harvested silk. You can visit Father Hidalgo's house, if you like, and see the church where he called the first troops to arms — if such a traditional term may be used to describe the enlistment of ranch hands who bore more shovels and slingshots than muskets. (Just before midnight of the 15th of September the Mexican president, as you may recall, repeats from a balcony overlooking the Zócalo in Mexico City the *grito* of Father Hidalgo — the cry which launched the struggle for freedom.)

The first 10 miles of the 40-mile drive from Dolores Hidalgo to Guanajuato make an easy ascent to the highlands beneath the sierras that have to be crossed. There are sections of the subsequent 30-mile mountain drive which stand in great need of improvement, but there is nothing too perilous for a good driver to handle. There are short surface stretches of shale not yet powdered by traffic, and high in the mountains there are places where cars cannot pass — although there are numerous turnouts. On the whole, it is no road for night driving. Yet it is perfectly safe in dry weather and between spells of rain in the summer, and where it is hewn out of rock and passes through forests, it is rather magnificent.

The first glimpse of Guanajuato is caught at a bend in the road 2 or 3 miles from the city and perhaps 1000 meters above it. Upon a high knoll in the foreground of

that first dazzling view there is an old mining community whose life was momentarily revived by the war. It is worth a short visit. La Valenciana, like Taxco, was a one-man town in its heyday. The landlord was the Conde del Rul, whose house can be visited. Like the Conde de la Borda of Taxco, the Conde del Rul built a church from his profits — although it is said he was greatly assisted by wages withheld from the miners. And like Santa Prisca, San Cayetano de Valenciana was made — or remade, to be accurate, from an old church that went back to the year 1640 — in the florid Churriguerésque style (1765–1788). The interior, approached through an arcade in the rear, to the left, abounds in gold and polychromed figures in the usual droll combination of Christian and heathenish feeling.

The town which the native Tarascans who lived there called Gunaxhuato, "a hilly place where frogs abound," lies at an altitude of nearly 7000 feet. It stretches down the leeward side of a mountain into three sunny barrancas, hence its buildings often appear to climb up its hills. The University rises in recessed patios to the height of five or six stories, and if you climb to the top, you will think that you walk in a dream of old Babylon. Yet for all that it is a hill town, like Taxco, it has ample flat spaces for plazas and markets. After finding rooms in the town, you might drive to the top of the Cerro de Santa Fe to see the "Pípila" monument and observe, more nearly at hand, how the place clings to its hills and fills up its hollows.

There is not much to choose from in the way of hotels. A single proprietor controls most of the rooms. His

Posada de Santa Fe has swallowed up the old-fashioned La Luna in the Jardín de la Unión, and when the twenty-four rooms of the Santa Fe and its downtown annex are filled, guests are sent up to sleep in the large, quiet chambers of the proprietor's home on Boulevard Presa. On the same avenue, a block or two below the innkeeper's villa, the same family is putting up, as I write, a large modern hostelry, the Hotel de la Bufa. Considering the hotel monopoly, the food is respectably good.

After lunch and siesta you might admit to a seat in your car one of the tribe of street arabs that plague tourists in front of the inn and let him direct you to the top of the hill with the Pípila monument. The road, a rude one-way lane called the Carretera de Pípila, lies off the Paseo de la Presa, and another track, equally primitive, leads back to the town.

The statue standing on top of the hill is a grim portrait in stone of a romantic young hero, a youth who lighted a torch, covered himself with a flat paving stone, and advanced, like a turtle, to burn down the doors of a warehouse where the Spaniards took refuge from Hidalgo's Insurgents in the year 1810. I have told his whole story, with a good deal of embroidery, in one of my tales.

Now if you stand in front of the statue, facing the town, you can pick out the buildings and gardens which you can visit on foot. The little Jardín de la Unión in the center, with its laurel trees clipped in the shape of green drums, is the social heart of the city. It is there that the band plays familiar dance music three nights in the week, from seven to ten, when the whole town turns out to

perambulate. The hotel from which we started is there; and likewise a small baroque church and the Juárez theater — the boxlike building with the classical front and corona of females in bronze.

Pípila, Hero of the Revolution

You will see the rectangular shape of the cemetery in the left background of your view. On your way back to town, you can descend a stone staircase there, down into the bowels, as they say, of the earth, and — if you have no dread of nightmares — inspect two parallel rows of dressed and undressed cadavers. These are the bodies of people whose families neglected to pay for eternal interment. The dry air of the place has preserved them as un-

holy spectacles and they take their revenge on the callous public by receiving their visitors with diabolical grins.

To the right of the pantheon — as you look down from the hill — the eye falls as follows: on the barreled roof of the municipal market; on the Alhondiga, Pípila's warehouse, a palatial structure surrounding a patio; on the Parroquia, the church with a clock in the right-hand tower; on the Jesuit church with its neoclassical dome and flaking pink walls; on the Sanctuary of Guadalupe, whose arched entrance closes a road which leads up the opposite hill; on the mines of the Counts de Rayas and San Cayetano above them; on the Church of the Notch high up in the hills; on San Francisco's pink towers and domes off to the right of the Jardín de la Unión; and finally, climbing up into the right-hand barranca, the Paseo de la Presa, lined with the summer villas of the last century's gentry.

After descending the Cerro de Santa Fe and seeing the cemetery, you may like to visit the building referred to in bronze on the Pípila monument: *Aun hay otras alhóndigas por incendiar.* This passionate comment — "There are other alhondigas yet to be burned" — further pertains to the Pípila story which we never quite seem to conclude.

The Insurgent army had advanced upon Guanajuato by way of San Miguel and Celaya under Father Hidalgo, and after one day of attempting to fight it, the enemy locked himself up in the Alhondiga de Granaditas, as the warehouse was called. It was then that Pípila Martínez, of San Miguel de Allende, was ordered to burn

down the carved wooden doors which barred the Insurgents from the first Spanish stronghold. The battle won there, the first Mexican victory in an eleven-year war, was soon canceled out. The Padre was betrayed and captured, with Ignacio Allende, Juan Aldama, and Mariano Jiménez, and the heads of all four were suspended in cages at the four corners of Pípila's warehouse as soon as Guanajuato was won back by the Spaniards.

The Alhondiga today is a prison pervaded by a kind of outlandish hilarity. Most of the inmates are killers, but they are said by the guards to be not really bad people. They have murdered for love and are only infrequently vicious. They are allowed freedom to roam through the courtyards and sometimes out on the streets of the town. They make and sell all sorts of gadgets which resemble the worked bone or scrimshaw of American whalemen — although the carved pieces of bone are scratched with hot needles instead of fishermen's jackknives.

One of the more agreeable features of life in the prison might well be copied at home; for if it sounds scandalous, it is not half so shocking as the things that one hears of life in American prisons. There is Ladies' Night every week in the year, when romance brightens up the chill corridors and every man, however unsocial his crimes may have seemed, can make love like a man all night long.

The barrel-roofed market down the hill from the prison is about what you see in any Mexican town, but the cobbled street which climbs up again across from the market is well stocked with ceramic inventions, some of which are not offered for sale elsewhere in Mexico. A

walk from the market to the Jardín de la Unión will take you past all the shops. And perhaps you will want to explore the steep lanes which lead up the hills from the principal streets, lanes so narrow that it is sometimes just possible to squeeze between the confronting walls of the houses. One such lane is called El Callejón del Beso, the Little Street of the Kiss. Altogether, you will find here the quaintness of Taxco a hundred times over, plus a basic dignity which you would look a long way to match.

If you have an extra day for a more leisurely survey, there are a few good interiors to see. A local belle, Doña Josefa Teresa de Busto y Moya, rounded up fourteen miners on the family payroll and started to build the Jesuit church in 1747. The plans developed in high baroque style in the hands of a skilled architect, Felipe Ureña, and the well-proportioned interior is filled with rich ornamentation. The Parroquia is the earliest baroque church in the town; and for a purely seventeenth-century Mexican edifice (1671–1696), it is sculptured, from tower to portal, in exceptional style.

4. The Road to Morelia: Yuriria

The trip to Morelia completes the circle of the central colonial cities. The road lies to the south through Silao, Irapuato, Salamanca, Moroleón, and Cuitzeo, and although the whole distance is under 150 miles, it is well to start early, with lunch basket and thermos. The road is by no means all paved and there are several delightful stops on the way to Morelia.

Silao and Irapuato lie in one of the richest agricultural regions in Mexico. The soil is well watered and fertile and produces much of the seasonal garden sass for the markets in Mexico City. You are almost certain, at whatever season, to be able to order a bowl of ripe strawberries at the Hotel Rioja in Irapuato, a little more than 40 miles of smooth riding out of Guanajuato, so you might, if you like, postpone breakfast till then.

At Salamanca, the next town on the road, you must stop to inquire the way. It lies straight ahead through the town. The left turn onto pavement leads back to Celaya. Salamanca boasts another romantic old convent, an Augustinian foundation of 1616, rebuilt in 1771. The carved stone columns and arches of the huge cloister are superbly original.

The road south to Morelia from Salamanca is not very good, so you take it easy and coast along about 50 miles to Moroleón. About a mile south of the center of Moroleón, a rough road branches off to the left to Uriangato, and seven miles beyond Uriangato there is a quaint lakeside town called Yuririapúndaro, which was already old before the time of Cortés.

The building of the fortresslike Convent of San Pablo there was begun thirty years after the Conquest, in 1550, by Fray Diego de Chavez, an Augustinian monk still revered in the parish, and the Plateresque church was rebuilt in the following century, in the form of the Latin cross. Its façade was adorned then with Italian Renaissance motives — including the figures of caryatids who could not have been christened in the Christian religion. The

cloister seems to have been done over at the same time, for the columns are more sophisticated and Spanish than the primitive Gothic traceries of the ceilinged arcades. The capitals are whimsically patterned with birds and young Mexican lambs. This is a grand place to spread out a picnic, with cold drinks from the plaza alongside the convent.

The main road is reached again by the same route — through Uriangato; which reminds me that one must remember not to inquire the way to Yuriria from Moroleón, for the townspeople there know only the road which the horsecar takes to Uriangato. You could easily break up your car if you followed the tracks.

It is only 12 miles from Moroleón to Cuitzeo, the next stop on the way to Morelia, and almost at once the road runs past the ruins of a colonial ranch, the hacienda of San José de Cuaracurio. Out of the dozens of splendid rooms in the big house which the Revolution destroyed, there remains in repair only a small apartment which the schoolteacher occupies. The few acres of land left to the historical owners are planted in alfalfa and corn, but much of the tract now lies idle. One sees again how the country suffers from the distribution of land among peasants who are too poor or too ignorant to plant and harvest what the land can produce.

5. *Cuitzeo*

The white town of Cuitzeo is visible from the crest of a hill overlooking an empty lagoon that borders the northern approach to the village. The big pile of stone off the plaza is another sixteenth-century Augustinian convent, Santa Magdalena, whose cloister is unique in Mexico by reason of its double polychromed arches. These are graceful and light and, for their time, extremely "advanced" in the Plateresque style. The two-story belfry was added in the next century, but the merlons on the battlemented roof are proof of the structure's antiquity. Although not so well kept today as the convent in Yuriria, to which the monks have been allowed to return, Santa Magdalena abounds in much the same joyous, half-pagan spirit.

When I showed pictures of the Convent of Santa Magdalena at home, an architect wondered why the Spaniards built so crudely in our southwestern country when they produced such wholly mature and enchanting architectural works farther south. I supposed that the answer to this very sharp question is found in the level of labor. The Mexican Indians had reached a higher level of artistic culture than their North American kinsmen, and it was they, after all, who did most of the work. The monks were so few that they were able to exercise only the most casual supervision. They showed pictures from printed

books to the Indian workmen, masters already of structural and sculptural skills, and the natives then went to work on their own initiative. As inventors and copyists, those men had no equals in the tribes of the North.

There are more than two miles of causeway across the dry lake of Cuitzeo to the south of the town, at the beginning of the 30-mile run into Morelia. Begun in 1873, the causeway was finished in 1944, and the lake went dry in the following year. Now, when the sun shines obliquely across the chocolate sand of the bottom, you get the illusion that water sparkles out in the distance; but the water supply from the mountains was unwisely dammed up and the whole lake lies perfectly dry except during the "season of waters." The townspeople long for the days when they had good fish to eat at their doorstep.

6. *Morelia*

Although most of Morelia lies flat on the top of a mesa, the first view of the place, from the lovely, low-lying countryside that lies to the north, gives the impression that here is another town on a hillside. An Augustinian chronicler wrote that the viceroy Antonio de Mendoza chose the site for the city because it had the seven virtues that Plato required (in the *Laws*) in the location of an ideal city: it was far enough from the sea to protect the citizens' morals, yet within reach of trade; it had no near neighbors to quarrel with; there was water at hand; and it had a fair proportion of hill, plain, and wood.

At the Pípila statue at the approach to the city from Cuitzeo — this one shows the boy hero under the weight of his flat shield of stone — you bear left up the hillside, past the Plateresque Convent of San José, until you reach the main street. The aqueduct — the subject of this chapter's headpiece — crosses the street at your left and the plaza lies a few blocks up the street to the right.

There are two hotels on the plaza, the Virrey de Mendoza (the viceroy's palace) and the Alameda. The Virrey has atmosphere and sometimes no water. The Alameda has gallons of water and no atmosphere. You can take your choice. My own choice, as between the hotels, lies with the Virrey's large bedchamber at the front of the house, where the bed would accommodate a viceroy's family. But I like best of all to relax in the Victorian elegance of Quinta Catalina, Mr. Branch Simmons's English mansion out in the park near the aqueduct. It costs no more there to have your breakfast in bed, from a tray set with fine china and silver and served by three or four aproned maids, than to take your coffee and milk in the banal downtown restaurants.

Yet it was while I was taking breakfast one morning on the balcony of the Hotel Virrey, overlooking the plaza, that I had my first taste of Mexican politics. Pancho, our chauffeur, was a relative of one of the heads of the party in power, but he stumped for the rival of that party's candidate. He came up to the balcony to tell me that I must sit still for a moment and watch the demonstration which was about to be staged. Within half an hour the plaza was filled up with *paisanos*, not city folk, and a

great ovation began for the candidate of the party in power. Photographers from the metropolitan papers swarmed over the balcony of the Hotel Virrey and took pictures of the crowds down below.

"We must watch for the papers," said Pancho. "We shall see those pictures tomorrow, or perhaps the day after. And now," he continued, "I am going to show you where these peons come from and where they are going."

We drove down to the railway station just before lunch. Hundreds of cotton-clad ranch hands were given liquor and food and were bundled, in closed ranks, into box cars.

"These very same people," Pancho said, "will shout *Viva!* for Señor X tomorrow morning in Pátzcuaro. Let's drive over and see them."

We followed the demonstrators to Pátzcuaro and on to Uruapan. The cameramen followed after. And during the next few days the metropolitan papers carried full-page accounts of the political rallies. In the pictures, only the plazas and captions were different. "Morelia for Señor X!" said the papers on Sunday. "Pátzcuaro for Señor X!" said the papers on Monday. "Uruapan for Señor X!" said the headlines on Tuesday. The crowds were identical, and never a picture showed a local townsman.

In this city we enter into the precincts of Father Hidalgo's twin hero, Father José María Morelos y Pavon, in whose honor the colonial city of Valladolid took its present name of Morelia. Father Morelos had been a pupil of Father Hidalgo in the College of San Nicolás, and like his teacher and patron, he was a country pastor — *cura*

of Caracuaro in Michoacán — in the year 1810. Ordered south by Hidalgo with hardly more than a score of green soldiers, he enlisted an army of nine thousand men from the hills above Acapulco and turned north to encounter the enemy, from whom he seized enough arms to equip his own troops. A small, stubby man and a victim of migraine, Father Morelos turned out to be one of Mexico's greatest generals. During the first year of the war he reduced all of the country south of the Valley of Mexico except Acapulco. If Father Hidalgo up north had not been sickened by the stabbing and looting and rape attending his victory at the Alhondiga, the war might have been brought to an end in little more than a year. Mexico City might have fallen swiftly while the morale of his army was high. But as it turned out, Hidalgo was caught while he temporized, and General Morelos had to carry on with his small army alone. Puebla, Veracruz, Acapulco, had to be stormed one by one while time passed.

But Morelos had time, over the long years of the war, to formulate policies which were to govern the country after his death. He denounced the rule of King Ferdinand, declared himself for republican theory, and advocated the redistribution of the great haciendas and ecclesiastical lands. The general's hopes for an early cessation of war were shattered in December, 1813, in the fourth year of battle, when his army was destroyed in the night on a hill above Valladolid. The general's opposite was Agustín de Iturbide, who made himself emperor some nine years later. Morelos went into hiding after his licking and independence from Spain lay almost

as far in the future as it had when Father Hidalgo lost his handsome white head.

Iturbide, who had at first identified himself with the Mexicans, turned royalist when social reform was first mentioned by Father Morelos. After his defeat of the general he savagely slaughtered his countrymen in defense of his property. One of Morelos's lieutenants joined up with Iturbide and betrayed his former superior, whose execution was then promptly ordered by the viceroy up in the capital. The first phase of the War of Independence soon petered out and it was not until 1820, when Iturbide somersaulted again and published the so-called Plan of Iguala, that separation from Spain began to have the appearance of a settled reality.

The new plan was political. It did not return the land to the people, it merely called for a local monarchy. The Church was left in possession of all its estates and the Spaniards and Spanish-Mexicans were confirmed in traditional privilege. The Indians and mestizos had no place in the scheme. They were meant to be slaves. Don Agustín de Iturbide took Morelia (or Valladolid) in May, 1821, and from there the success of the Plan of Iguala spread so rapidly that soon his new flag flew over all the principal cities apart from the coast and the capital. Within a year Iturbide had set up an empire. He took the name Agustín I and scattered new titles among his companions.

The town of Morelia is proud of its past and preserves its mementoes in its public buildings. To get the feel of

the place, you might go first to the Museum of Michoacán on the corner of Calle Allende and Calle Abasolo. The museum is housed in the colonial palace of Iturbide's godfather — the finest house in the town, it was noted, when Maximilian went to Morelia. It houses today a collection of Tarascan ceramics and sculptures, some of it collected and classified by the brilliant young painter Jesús Guerrero Galván when he taught classical drawing in the College of San Nicolás. The museum also exhibits many relics of the later colonial period and the age of Hidalgo, Morelos and Agustín Iturbide; but a richer display from the period of the *Independencia* will be found in the Casa Morelos, Avenida Morelos 323, where the general's trappings are kept in the house that he owned, along with paintings and manuscripts of his epoch.

Spaniards from Salamanca founded Morelia in their native tradition and gave it a perceptible flavor. The cathedral, for instance, which separates the great plaza into two parts, the Garden of Martyrs and the Plaza of Peace, is a superb quasi-Oriental example of the Plateresque style executed in pink igneous stone. Begun in 1640 by Bishop Ramírez de Prado, the cathedral was dedicated in 1706 and completed in 1744. It was designed in the form of an Eastern basilica, which is a cross of two equal arms. The vertical arm contains three broad aisles and there are four chapels, of which that in the eastern position sheltered the baptismal font at which Father Morelos and Emperor Agustín I were baptized. "Modernization" in 1814 was conducted along the rather decadent neoclas-

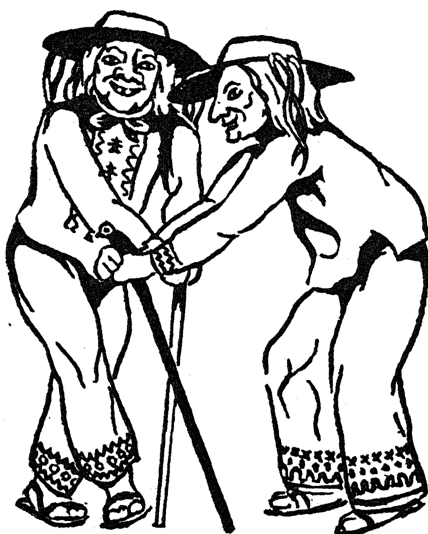
sical lines which have put so many bad Doric interiors into Plateresque churches. The exterior remains the most beautiful in all Mexico, among the cathedrals.

The top of the cathedral tower affords hardy climbers the finest available view of the city. From that vantage point one can lay out the walks and drives to be taken — such as the drive to the aqueduct, an eighteenth-century bishop's idea of a progressive works project, and to the near-by baroque Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe. One sees the domes and spires of the Franciscan and Capuchin convents, the Church of the Roses, Our Lady of Help, the Carmelite church, and San Nicolás, all of them worth, at the least, walking past when the hot sun is low in the late afternoon.

The Franciscan convent was founded in 1525, when the town, which took its name Valladolid in 1541, still bore its Indian name, Guayangareo. The conventual church was not raised, however, until 1610. The Capuchin convent, begun in 1733, was founded for nuns from the families of tribal chieftains. The doorway and tower represent the flowering of Mexican high baroque. The balcony of the western annex of the Church of the Roses has a pretty view of the street where the College of the Roses once stood: a family seminary of which the most exalted pupil was the Empress Ana María, spouse of Agustín I. The Carmelite convent displays three cupolas which illustrate Mexico's three greatest architectural periods: Plateresque, high baroque, neoclassical. The College of San Nicolás, built around 1580, contains frescoes painted

by Marion Greenwood, an American woman who took a lively part in the revival of painting in Mexico.

About the only evening diversion there in the town, apart from sitting in the *portales* at one of two or three outdoor tables in front of the Hotel Casino, is dining on chicken in Calle Hidalgo, just off the plaza. The police obligingly rope off the street after dark, at about nine o'clock, and the neighborhood women set up outdoor kitchens. A stout, white-haired woman with two handsome daughters keeps the best table. I know of no greater available pleasure than to be hungry and then be well fed by those ladies while the wandering minstrels sing regional tunes. I should like to think of my readers concluding their colonial tour among the aromas of Calle Hidalgo.



CHAPTER XII

Pátzcuaro, the Volcano, Guadalajara, and Home

1. Lake Pátzcuaro

MORELIA and Guadalajara are connected by about 230 miles of hard surface and another paved road runs from Guadalajara to San Luis Potosí, traverses the mountains east of that city, and joins the Pan-American Highway at Antiguo Morelos — which, at K. 542, is almost halfway from Mexico City to the American border. Hence you can, if you like, go on to Lake Pátzcuaro and Pari-

cutín, thence to Guadalajara — at the end of your Mexican journey — and return home by way of the San Luis Potosí cutoff. Or, if you are crowded for time, perhaps you will choose to go only as far as Uruapan to see the volcano. (You can, of course, even plan from the start to go to the volcano first, make the round of the baroque towns in reverse — Morelia to Guanajuato to San Miguel and Querétaro — and go from the latter to pick up the Pan-American Highway at K. 167.)

Lake Pátzcuaro — the name means "Place of pleasure" — lies 22 kilometers off the Guadalajara highway from K. 357, which is 42 kilometers west of Morelia. The town, which shares its name with the lake, lies on a rise of land at an altitude of more than 7000 feet and at a distance of 2 miles from the water. Don Vasco de Quiroga established a mission in 1540 to the native Tarascans, near the summer home of their chieftains. The bishopric was transferred to Morelia in 1580, and after that the town went to sleep. It has slumbered in its primitive plazas for long generations, awakening only on Fridays, when the Indians paddle over the lake from their pueblos and carry their wares up the long hill to the town.

It was in the Posada Don Vasco, a modern hotel on the hill between lake and town, that I saw a bulletin which made the picturesque lives of some of my Mexican friends seem quite conventional. The bulletin read: "American ladies are requested not to take their guides to their bedrooms."

"Why do you say *American* ladies?" I heard an American woman protest to the clerk.

"Because, *señora,*" said the boy, "Mexican ladies do not take their chauffeurs for lovers."

At the cheaper Hotel del Lago, an old-fashioned fishermen's inn near the railway station, the food is both good and abundant. It is in places like this that you taste the real Mexican cookery. Dancers from the Indian villages perform regional dances two or three nights a week at both places — especially the sprightly and humorous dance of the *Viejitos*, the Little Old Men. Two or three small hotels on the plaza provide extremely plain living at costs well below average even out in the provinces. Wherever you stay, you will eat, until you get sick of them, the small white Pátzcuaro fish broiled in butter. Restaurant Prendes in Mexico City makes a great to-do about them.

The Pátzcuaro museum, the best museum of popular art in the country, is housed in the former College of San Nicolás, Don Vasco's first enterprise in New Spain. The teachers were moved to Morelia in 1580, and Don Vasco's buildings, after years of misuse, have lately been put into order. The rooms are arranged in series of kitchens and living rooms representing the various styles of handicraft and homemaking found in the towns on the lake. There is a typical Tarascan flowering patio with a "modern" primitive cottage, while two of the galleries display Tarascan antiquities. There are amusing reconstructions in wax of imperial ballrooms. And when Don Salvador Solchaga was curator there, he built up the finest collection of colonial lacquer in Mexico. Designs from the old pieces of lacquer are copied and sold in the plaza to-

day, although the ancient techniques which survived the Conquest are almost unknown among modern craftsmen.

Tarascans in the State of Guerrero first learned the Peruvian methods of lacquer production, which differ from the Chinese techniques principally in the use of animal rather than vegetable essence in the transparent varnish. They learned to apply coat upon coat of transparent oils and ground colors to shaped pieces of wood and to rub each coat of color into the surface with the palm of the hand. In the old days quantities of pure gold went into the patterns of boxes and trays but today only Don Salvador and his pupils and a few of his imitators use gold and true color and go to the bother of rubbing in color by hand. Don Salvador learned the techniques from his father, an upper-class *caballero* who had a fancy for indigenous art. Most of his work is commissioned by museums in all the Americas; but on the chance that he has a stray piece for sale, you can ask a museum attendant to point out his house.

The town's commerce is conducted around the two principal plazas. As you drive into town, you take the first right towards the Augustinian church, now the movie palace, and one of the plazas lies there at your left. The Friday market is conducted in the second plaza, one block to the south, where a few poor remnants of craftsmanship are exhibited every day in the portals. If you have enough Spanish to ask for some better examples of lacquer, the merchants will take you into their houses and show you the stuff they have done on commission. Some of it is good, though not often so pure in design as Señor Sol-

chaga's. Attractive cross-stitch embroideries — blouses and table linens — are for sale in a sidewalk shop in front of Hotel Concordia. Better, in general, than the Pátzcuaro pottery is Tzintzuntzan's ceramic production. The black-and-beige pottery of Vicente Rendon at Tzintzuntzan, 10 miles up the lake towards the highway, is of museum quality, although inexpensive.

In the Friday market you will see unpainted masks that will make decorative notes on your walls when you oil them or paint them. (For painted masks, wait till you get to Uruapan.) And if you look closely along the side street connecting the plazas, you will see a small silver shop where they sometimes sell silver fish which your fishing friends will like to hang on their watch chains.

Don Vasco's plaza lies on up the hill past the Pátzcuaro museum. The church there, La Colegiata, was begun as the bishop's cathedral. It was never finished because the episcopal see was so shortly removed. Indians from the villages visit the unfinished church to venerate the miraculous image of Our Lady of Health, molded from a plastic paste of cornstalk or sugar cane in the ancient Indian manner. Other *santos* in the same style will be found in the Franciscan convent, the plain, thick-walled structure a block south of San Nicolás Plaza. The bishop is said to be buried in the Jesuit church, La Compañia, which also stands on the hill. While you are still in the upper reaches of town, inquire the way to the mirador, El Estribo, from which you can get a magnificent view of the lake.

You may enjoy a day on the lake with a small outboard motor, casting plugs for *truchas* among the black rocks.

The bass are not very sporting because the water is tepid, but the lake is delightful. You can watch the native fishermen dragging their butterfly nets, and they in turn will watch you! They laugh when they see the red and white plug carry a line to the shore, but if you get a strike, they are filled with awe and amazement. A man is no fool who can deceive a big fish worth a peso!

2. The Barter Market at Erongaricuaro

You can see the next thing to primitive Indian life on the island across from the pier, Isla de Janitzio, with its grotesque monument to General Morelos. But if you want the genuine article, you will have to make your way to any one of the several lakeside pueblos less known to tourists — to such a pueblo as Erongaricuaro.

People who think that a return to the system of bartering would solve the world's ills would get a good object lesson quite to the contrary on a visit to Erongaricuaro. The Indians there, to be sure, trade what they have for what they have not, but the trading is conducted on no terms of equality. The smart guy gets the best of the bargain, as he does the world over.

Luis, the English-speaking desk clerk at Hotel del Lago, arranges for cars — the road is littered with rocks — and chances are that he would be willing to drive out there with you, one Sunday morning, to visit the traders.

Indians from the lakeshore and islands paddle to Erongaricuaro in *canoas* laden with lake trout, bass, and minute

charales, while the hill people trot into the market with loads of wood and green vegetables. The bartering is mostly conducted by women, and the experienced wives of the fishermen, knowing the ways of urban Pátzcuaro, take advantage of the wild, unkempt hill creatures. They translate exchanges into nominal sums: offering a small trout, for example, for ten copper centavos, and exchanging it for four sticks of wood upon which they have placed the same value. But the four sticks of wood would have fetched five times the money elsewhere in the region, while the fish would be worth only ten centavos wherever.

Wood is hacked out of the forest with knives, made in Connecticut, oddly enough, and is toted over bent shoulders for hours. It is worth money in Mexico City. *Charales*, on the other hand, are seined by the thousand offshore; and besides, they contain small food value. You can eat all you like of those nearly invisible minnows in Manrique's bar in Mexico City with a glass of tequila — if you don't mind the rebuke in their staring black eyes as you pop their crisp, French-fried vertebrae into your mouth. An armful of wood for a handful of minnows is a poor deal for the woodsman. The only commodity with which the hillmen can break even is a thick paste made from pumpkin called *tecuao*. It is sticky and sweet and smells of molasses, and the fishermen have to pay well for small dabs of it served on green leaves.

As I stood one day on the lakeside, watching the fishermen unload their boats and climb up the rocky hill to the market, I saw a duck-spearing contest out on the lake.

Four boats crept up from all sides on a flock of wild duck in a marsh and at a signal the boatmen cast spears simultaneously. They seemed to be killing a nice bag of birds.

Women tourists used to comb the Pátzcuaro towns for the red and black pleated skirts of the region, but with the wool shortage the skirts have become hard to find. Ownership of a pleated wool *falda* three or four meters wide sets off any Tarascan mother as a woman of consequence. It is gathered and tied to the hips in the daytime and covers a whole naked family for warmth in the night.

3. *The Volcano of Paricutín*

You can find out in Pátzcuaro whether the volcano of Paricutín is currently sending up fireworks. If it is, then you ought not to miss them. You can go to Uruapan from Pátzcuaro by train or go back to the highway towards Guadalajara and turn south at K. 430. From that point, Uruapan is only 35 miles.

On the paved road from Pátzcuaro, you pass through Tzintzuntzan and reach the Guadalajara highway at Quiroga. About 2 miles west of Quiroga you will see a signpost pointing to Santa Fe de la Laguna, where you can buy some of the choicest pottery specimens to be found in the district: candlesticks, vases, and water pitchers decorated with cherubs. About halfway from there to K. 430, where you turn off for Uruapan, you come upon the small pueblo of Zacapu, where you can buy woven belts and sandals. At Cheran, the first village

on the way to Uruapan from K. 430, there are cross-stitch and drawn-work blouses for three and four dollars; hand-woven sashes, called *fajas*, for less than a dollar; and red pottery pitchers of the Nehuatzin type found in the Pátzcuaro museum. In the next town, Aranza, you will find carved ceremonial masks, at around two dollars, and lace blouses for three dollars and more. Paracho, the next town beyond Aranza, is peopled with woodcarvers. At Casa Monroy, on the plaza, there are objects of inlay and carving: chess sets, cigarette boxes, guitars, and musical toys.

One day in February, 1943, the news went out over the radio that a meadow out near Uruapan had exploded under the feet of a farmer. In the weeks that followed, the newspapers described a flow of lava which engulfed several pueblos and built up a volcanic cone to the height of nearly 2000 feet — an altitude now reduced to less than 1500 feet by the cracking and breaking of the walls of the crater. Uruapan itself, the City of Flowers, was laid waste for a time, the streets knee-deep in ashes, and roofs collapsing from insupportable weight.

But the flowers are blooming once more in the town, and leaves grow again in the forest through which one drives out to San Juan Parangaricutiro, where one engages a horse and a guide for the forty-minute ride to the crater. The burned-out woods around Paricutín, when I saw them in the late afternoon light, were all silver and gold, the stripped trees looking as though they had been encrusted with metal. Where the setting sun struck the column of smoke — it has reached in the past as high

as 4 miles — the whirling ash was the color of fire. One of my friends, a member of a geological mission to Paricutín, says I may state, without enlarging the truth, that hot boulders as big as houses were shot into the air. They exploded in the cold atmosphere and fell piecemeal to the foot of the ember-red mountain, enlarging its mass. Many small craters blew out later at the foot of the cone.

When my guide, on my first trip there, politely suggested that it was perhaps time to leave, I said I had meant to stay until midnight. He told me that I had already watched the explosions for nearly five hours. I could scarcely believe him, time had passed so quickly. On the way back to San Juan, I discovered one reason, perhaps, why he was anxious to see the place quit of me. Midnight, at that time, was an hour devoted to the ritual worship of the gods of fire. I caught just a glimpse of that primitive worship. Wooden crosses were lighted with torches and waved towards the crater to placate the gods who were spoiling the land: an example, such as one frequently hears of, of ancient piety joined with the newer religion.

You will probably spend the night in Uruapan, a town laid out by the same Fray Juan de San Miguel who founded San Miguel de Allende. The hotels Progreso and Mirador attempt to be modern, and the little Villa de Flores, at Avenida Emilio Carranza 11, is charming. Fray Juan de San Miguel's convent, in the Franciscan fortress style, can be seen in the morning. Tarascan sculptors carved small Mexican motives all over its Plateresque portal and arch of triumph.

Market day falls on Sunday, but you can always visit the lacquer shops and pottery factories. There is a better variety of lacquer in the shops of Uruapan than in the Pátzcuaro plaza, and with a little careful research you can also pick up authentic designs in green, brown, and black glazed pottery — some of it like the models you saw in the Pátzcuaro museum. There is a great amount of eating in the central plaza at night. Tarascan cooks excel in tamales and crullers of various flavors.

4. *If You Have to Go Back to Mexico City*

If you go back from Uruapan to Mexico City, you might try stopping for lunch at the resort hotel at San José de Purúa, after the breathless 40-mile sweep of mountains east of Morelia and a pause for the view at Mil Cumbres, K. 245. The San José spa lies 7 kilometers south of the highway from K. 182, which you can identify from a white-turreted military station on the north side of the highway.

Toluca, at K. 63 — famous for its Friday market — stands at an altitude of 8700 feet in the highest of the seven valleys in which half of the nation's economy flourishes. (The other six are the valleys of Mexico, Guanajuato, Aguascalientes, Jalisco, Morelos, and Puebla.) The Valley of Toluca, dominated by the snow-capped Nevado de Toluca, the extinct volcano of Xinantecatl (14,900 feet), was once the seat of an important pre-Aztec Indian community, of which a meager remnant lives in the Mat-

latzinca pueblos. Some uncovered remains of that culture, an offshoot of the Toltec civilization in the Valley of Mexico, may be seen at Calixtlahuaca, 5 miles northwest of Toluca. (A hired car will perhaps prove cheaper in the long run than taking your own car.)

Of the 12 square miles of ruins, enough mounds have been opened to indicate that the old hillside city was a religious center of self-sustaining importance. After a fairly stiff walk from the road, at that altitude, the spectator comes upon the ruins of a sacred courtyard and a ball court. The principal temple — a temple of Quetzalcoatl? — was built with a commanding view from the hillside. It is of circular shape, rising in a series of flat cylinders, suggesting, perhaps, a coiled serpent. The archaeologists burrowed into the temple and discovered the remains of an earlier structure. A paved court farther on up the hill is surrounded by low flat-topped pyramids, of which the smallest has been christened The House of Skulls. Ten stone skulls are set into the wall. There are several rows of stone projections, which, when in use, must have produced as grisly a sight as priestly ceremonies have ever afforded: for they are thought to have been "hooks" to hang heads on.

The most spectacular piece of modern road in the making in Mexico, with bridges as handsome and durable as those of the colonial epoch, connects the old Indian spa of Ixtapan de la Sal with the old-fashioned village of Tenancingo, which is more than half of the 50 miles to Ixtapan on the way south from Toluca. The graveled mountain road from Toluca to Tenancingo is daily ne-

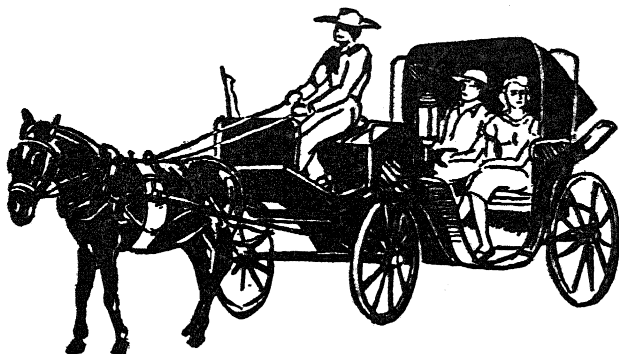
gotiated by the *turismos*, to which, at the present writing, the visitor is to be commended. You can leave your car at the San Marco Hotel in Toluca, go by *turismo* to Ixtapan de la Sal for a few pesos, stay at one of the many plain inns (Hotel Viena serves excellent food), and try the hot baths three times a day for what ails you.

5. *Guadalajara*

The distance from Uruapan to Guadalajara is a little more than 200 miles. You can stop on the way at Zamora, K. 467, to buy pieces of the green Patamba pottery, and at Jiquilpan, K. 525, to take lunch and look at the Orozco murals in the public library. They are not masterpieces of that Mexican master, but when Jiquilpan was furbished up during the administration of Lázaro Cárdenas, whose birthplace it is, it was he they called in to give the place tone. A few miles after Jiquilpan you pick up Lake Chapala and travel along the south shore of the lake for about 50 miles. To get out on the water, you have to go around to the town of Chapala, 35 miles out of Guadalajara.

There are scores of hotels in Guadalajara with tariffs to suit, as they say, any pocketbook, and even the best of them is surprisingly cheap. My favorite hotel in the country is the Virreinal at Avenida Corona 229. It is one of the several viceregal palaces which one encounters among provincial hotels; but it has this advantage over most of the reconstructed colonial houses, namely, that it has been thoroughly modernized and appointed in impeccable taste. If you ask for rooms on the top floor at the back,

you can have complete privacy and your own sunny terrace. But if you want to occupy beds slept in by royalty, take the rooms on the avenue where ex-King Carol and Madame Lupescu once stayed. The desk clerk



Sight-seeing in Guadalajara

can show you a testimonial in elegant Spanish from Henry A. Wallace, but I don't know what room he slept in.

Another inn in a palace is the Hotel Guadalajara on Avenida Colon 180. More conventional hostelries are the Fenix, López Cotilla 285; Hotel Roma, Pedro Moreno 219; and Hotel del Parque, Juárez 845. You will want to take lunch one day in the Fenix roof garden for the view of the town.

The altitude of Guadalajara is 5249 feet and the climate is warm the year round. It is the second city in Mexico, the commercial center for rich farms and cattle ranges. Founded in 1530 as a private presidio and removed to its present site in the Valley of Atemajac in 1542, Guadalajara was named for the city of the same name in Spain,

the birthplace of that Nuño de Guzmán who robbed Mexico for a time when Cortés was in Europe.

The State of Jalisco, of which Guadalajara is the capital city, was a part of a province which Nuño de Guzmán conquered and plundered and called Greater Spain. The man was a rascal without mitigation. He had conducted a notorious traffic in slaves in Havana, and when he secured the presidency of the *Audiencia*, the Emperor Charles V's governing council for Mexico, he set out to take over the country. He enlisted an army, stole funds from the treasury, and started out for the West. He proceeded from Valladolid to Tepic, burning and looting the Indian villages and enslaving the people until at last his peers captured him and jailed him in Mexico City. Meanwhile, however, he had founded Compostella and Guadalajara and made his friends presents of ranches which remained in the hands of the same Creole families until recent years. The great families of Guadalajara are immensely vain of their ancestors, Spanish grandees who companioned Nuño de Guzmán.

You can hire a carriage on the morning after your arrival and make a slow tour of the town. The trap costs less than a dollar an hour, so you need not feel hurried. Your driver, who will be eager to show you the sights of his city, will probably take you first to the cathedral plaza. The church has been so much rebuilt that it is more complex than refined. You go in a side door where the verger will meet you and show you around. The carved walnut wood of the choir behind the high altar is handsomely polished and mellowed with age, but you can't help won-

dering about the unpolished manners and habits of that part of the churchly hierarchy that sits there. Each stall is equipped with a tin hook for hats and a spittoon in white porcelain. After that, the Murillo "Assumption" on a wall in the sacristy seems unimportant.

The high-baroque building which runs along one end of the plaza is the state capitol. The frescoes on which Clemente Orozco's reputation as a seer has been based decorate the staircase. Orozco spent four strenuous years in Guadalajara. He painted 430 square meters in the Paraninfo, the assembly hall of the University of Guadalajara; 1200 square meters in the Hospicio; and 400 square meters in the government palace. As you walk up the capitol staircase, you are confronted by the figure of Father Hidalgo, the parish priest who launched the rebellion of the 16th of September. The Padre appears with his ears encased in white brushes of hair, his huge frame is clothed in a clerical coat, and in his thrust-out fist he clutches a torch. A battle goes on beneath him, with men killing each other in hand-to-hand combat. This fresco is more richly colored than anything Orozco had theretofore done. To the characteristic blacks, whites, greens, and hot reds of his palette, he here added poignant new yellows, rich blues, and muted blue-reds.

A congress of totalitarian nations takes place on the right-hand wall of the staircase. Hitler had not yet marched into Poland when the frescoes were made, hence Orozco was hailed as a prophet when the world looked, a year or two later, as mad as he had portrayed it. If you find the jumble of symbols perplexing, you may take com-

fort in a story that is locally told about the governor of the State of Jalisco and his talk with the painter.

It is said that the governor descended one day from his chambers to watch Orozco climb down from the scaffold and hear him announce that he had finished the murals. The walls were unveiled and His Excellency, squinting politely and looking somewhat bewildered, inquired what the paintings might mean. Orozco himself shrugged his shoulders, ducked his head in a fountain, shook drops of cold water out of his eyes, and said to his patron, "Just let me think. I'll tell you tomorrow."

A meaningful comment which his frescoes might be taken to make is that all systematic ideologies impose hardships on people; that when their effect is not actually cruel it is at least full of pathos. Like a poet, he sees universals in particular persons. When plain people suffer, pain is caused by organized people. And on the contrary, whatever of truth, goodness, and beauty there is in the world is authored by individuals of good will and good feeling. One may feel those things when one looks at the works of Orozco because he states them with feeling — even though one may be put off by a frequently maculate disregard for finish and style.

If you do not reach the Hospicio on Calle Cabañas during visiting hours, you can at least see the chapel containing the frescoes and peer into two or three of the several patios. This asylum for orphans and women was founded by Bishop Ruiz de Cabañas y Crespo in the first years of the revival of classicism in Mexican building. Hence you will find in its chapel and cloisters a mixture

of Spanish Renaissance and classical forms. The bishop left his private estates for its permanent upkeep, and nowhere in the world can there be a more expansive home for young children. Some years ago the State took the funds out of the hands of the Church, but so much money comes in from the bishop's bequest that its beneficiaries are well clothed and well fed and provided with beds in colorful nurseries.

The chapel which Orozco was commissioned to paint is of classical cruciform shape with a cupola over the crossing. The sixteen panels between the columns supporting the dome contain quiet symbols which set off the circular motion in the design for the dome, where three of the four personified natural elements seem to whirl in space around the foreshortened nude figure which represents Fire. The man representing the sea has a blue face of incalculable emotional power. Air is the semicircular figure which follows the line of the casing supporting the dome, the nude whose right arm is outstretched above Earth. A circle within the dome's circle is formed by the arms of Earth, Sea, and Air, and within and around this central rhythm there is a rich variety of counter motion. It is just here, I think, that Orozco reached the height of his baroque powers.

The rest of the frescoes are of uneven interest. The ceiling panels are strong, the walls generally weak. In the ceiling at the end of the south bay of the chapel you will see a portrait of Philip II carrying a cross and a crown. Orozco has painted into the face of the monarch the story of the unspeakable horrors of the Inquisition

he sponsored. In the ceiling panel nearest the crossing a Franciscan monk, Orozco's convention for goodness, blesses an Indian who kneels there in one of the most melting postures Orozco has painted. The first panel in the north bay represents Hernán Cortés, whom Orozco has always treated with sympathy. His armor looks as though it had come from Detroit, but it is good decoration. The mechanical horse in the third panel in the north ceiling became Orozco's symbol for Fascism.

It is doubtful whether your coachman can arrange your reception at the Paraninfo if it is not already open in the course of academic events; but if you want much to see it, as a matter of record, your hotel clerk can help you. One of Orozco's themes in the auditorium is a criticism of the Marxist errors of the Mexican revolutionaries. Scores of gaunt nudes, hungry and desperate, shake their fists at fat politicians whose only reply is to point to chapter and verse in the Marxist bibles. The Mexican Revolution was too individualistic in quality ever to have had much to do with Karl Marx, but the historical fallacy does not weaken the fresco's emotional impact. Emotional interest is centered in a group of nude torsos on which the flesh hangs like draperies. This is the ultimate Orozco pattern of ill-nourished man. The effect is most moving.

You might top off the morning by a trip through one of the markets, say Mercado San Juan de Dios, three blocks from the orphanage, and then drive out the length of Avenida Vallarta where the great families lived in the

time of Porfirio Díaz. You can get a view of the city from the roof of the Fenix.

6. *Tequila*

If you want a little quiet afternoon's drinking at no cost to yourself, you can take the 40-mile drive to the town of Tequila some day after lunch. You go out Avenida Vallarta and where you come to three forks in the highway you go straight ahead. (The left-hand road goes back to Mexico City and the right turn leads to Zapopan, a small pueblo with a large seventeenth-century baroque convent with a Virgin whose speciality is warding off lightning.) The countryside on the way to Tequila is the cowboy country of Hollywood movies, except that it is planted with the spiny maguey from which the national liquor, tequila, is made. Near the town you will see dozens of peons driving burros loaded with cuttings of cactus. Urchins will meet your car at the edge of the town and direct you to the offices of the tequila distilleries. You will be treated with ceremony at any distillery, shown through the works, introduced to various types of bottled tequila, and offered as many cow's-horn *copitas* of the fiery liquor as you can absorb.

There is a technique in drinking tequila which you ought to acquire. You sprinkle salt at the base of your thumb, drink a small glass of the spirit, suck a quarter of lemon, and tip the salt on your tongue. The more pro-

ficiently you are observed to perform this old ritual, the more free drinks you are likely to get.

There is a misconception among the unknowing about the source of the liquor. You may have heard that it comes from pulque, the milky fermentable essence

Tequila

sucked from the heart of the plant. Actually, it is distilled from the juice of the leaves. The thick ends of the leaves are baked in an oven and ground into mash in mills run by burros. Then the mash is distilled in large vats. The new distillation, which you are invited to taste in its various stages, comes out colorless. Some of the best brands of tequila take on the color of our lighter American whiskies after aging in wood. You ought to be comfortably high by this time, but you may want to buy some small wooden casks of *añejo* — aged tequila — to take to your friends.

If you feel pleasantly rosy when you get back to town and want to do something with atmosphere, take a cab to the Alcalde market and dine with Doña Valentina outdoors. The place is not stylish. You sit at a bare wooden table out on the sidewalk and eat with your fingers. If you feel greedy and want six breasts of chicken, you have only to say so; and each one will be just as good as the last.

7. *A Morning in Town*

The drive to the pottery factories of Tlaquepaque, which every visitor takes, occupies an afternoon pleasantly. Meanwhile, in the morning, you can take in the museum, in the second block down Avenida Corona from the government palace. That is one of the best small museums in Mexico, for its material is arranged with science and skill and its installations are surprisingly modern. The artistic history of the State of Jalisco begins with the Tarascan gallery to the left of the entrance. A first-rate archaeologist has arranged the display to make a historical résumé of the greatest of the western Mexican cultures. You enter the colonial epoch upstairs; and there is one picture gallery where you can see early works by six or eight modern painters who spent their youth in Jalisco. Other chambers show how the great landowners lived in their fabulous houses.

Guadalajara has its full share of churches, but there are only two or three that can add to your over-all view, by this time, of Mexican architecture. Santa Monica

(1722), on Calle Santa Monica, two blocks beyond the museum and four blocks to the left, is decorated outside with a continuous "wallpaper" design in stone and stucco. The monumental Saint Christopher in the niche at the corner, which fell down one day and killed a policeman, is its chief attraction. There was a good deal of discussion in town about how the saint should be punished, but instead he was repaired and set up again. The Church of San Francisco near the railway station is the oldest building in town. It was built by Fray Gabriel de Alburquerque, of the noble family of the Mexican viceroy, the Duke of Alburquerque, for whose domain Albuquerque, New Mexico, was named. The people of Guadalajara are proud of the frequently photographed late baroque (1802) tower of San Felipe and of the early, precocious baroque style of Merced Convent (1665). These churches mark the beginning and end of an age.

8. Tlaquepaque

The road to Tlaquepaque, where most of the Jaliscan pottery comes from, is reached over Calle Cuitlahua, which you meet at the junction of Avenida Corona and Calzada Independencia. The way is not posted, so you will have to depend on frequent inquiries. Remember that nobody knows the way more than two or three blocks from home, so be patient.

Tlaquepaque has an unusual plaza. It is enclosed by arcades which face away from the open quadrangle rather than on it. The pottery shops line the streets on two sides

of the plaza. When I last went there, I was shocked to see how the ceramic designs had been vulgarized. You have to look through acres of junk now to find really nice pieces. If you want to buy more than you can easily carry, you can trust the shopkeepers to send it to your home in the States. They pack with great care and ship through reliable brokers. You then have only to enter the amount you have bought on your Customs declaration in the place provided for imports which are to follow you over the border.

The arcades surrounding the plaza are occupied by open-air cafés and cantinas, and it is fun to sit out in the late afternoon drinking beer and listening to native music. If you engage *mariaches*, the strolling musicians, be sure to inquire their charges beforehand. Then you'd better go back to Guadalajara for dinner. You can try sea food from the Pacific at Copa de Leche or El Marino in the *portales* of Calle Juárez.

9. *Chapala and Ajijic*

You will probably want to take a whole day for your trip to Chapala, although the lake is only 34 miles away, at the end of a road beginning just beyond the intersection of Avenida Corona and Calzada Independencia. The old families of Guadalajara used to build foreign villas on the lake shore, so that if they were sometimes obliged to come back from Europe to look after their properties they could feel quite at home. The villas are falling to

pieces, the terraced gardens have reverted to jungle, and a new set of people has taken over the lake. Week ends are like Coney Island on Sunday, so if you want to go there to see what it's like, you should plan to be there for lunch at the Nido some week day and hire a launch for an afternoon spin on the water.

The small town of Ajijic, five miles up the lake, is the town described in *Village in the Sun,* a book by two English writers who wrote under the name of Dane Chandos. Life there is cheap and correspondingly rough; but it's heavenly quiet to loaf by the side of the lake, watch the fishing, take a dip on a warm afternoon, or paddle out in the twilight. You walk up and down the lake shore through the Indian pueblos, exchanging greetings with the friendly inhabitants. "*Adiós!*" they say for both salutation and parting, and "*Vaya bien!*" to wish you Godspeed. If you don't mind the dust, the place is quite charming.

10. *Manzanillo*

In tropical Manzanillo, for a few days of loafing, there is rather more going on. A plane leaves Guadalajara every day except Sunday at 8:30 A.M. and reaches Manzanillo in a little more than an hour. The train takes all day, from 9:20 A.M. to 6:35 P.M. (or much later), but people say that it goes through fine country. The town looks at night like a *nacimiento,* the Bethlehem scene that every Mexican family lays out for Christmas. From the broad

mirador of the Hotel Colonial, where you can live well on $4 a day, all included, you can look down upon Avenida Mexico, the principal street in the town, and watch it join the sea at both ends. The sea here is calm and you

Wild Orchids at Manzanillo

can bathe without danger, especially at Playa de Santiago, 12 kilometers from the center. The climate is like Acapulco's, which means that the season runs from November through March.

If you stay in the town, you can drive out to the beach, in your hotel bus, for 20 centavos. If you stay at the beach, you have the problem of getting into town

to have fun in the evening. There are, however, three pleasant hotels on the beach — all of them plainer, perhaps, than the Hotel Colonial, but with cool and comfortable rooms and all very cheap. The Playa de Santiago serves good Mexican food.

There is rougher surf, if you want it, at Las Ventanas, the beach to which people drive out to watch the sun set over the ocean; but most bathers prefer the smooth waters of Playa de Santiago, where the well-to-do people from town belong to fishing and bathing clubs. Commercial fishing is one of Manzanillo's principal industries, and a big business is done with the States in the exportation of liver. Sport fishing however is not so well organized as in Acapulco, although North Americans do fish there for tuna. When the native fishermen sail from the harbor they sing an old song in which they promise their sweethearts presents of sharkskins and swear that love devours their hearts as fiercely as sharks eat men's flesh.

11. San Luis Potosí

The distance from Guadalajara to Laredo by way of San Luis Potosí and Antiguo Morelos, K. 542 on the Pan-American Highway, is a little more than 800 miles. If you want to drive through in two days, you stop at Ciudad Mante, 30 kilometers north of Antiguo Morelos and a little more than halfway to the border from Guadalajara. Perhaps you remember the hotels Mante and Monterrey from your drive up to Mexico City? But if you

don't want to travel at a daily rate of 400 miles, you can plan to stop the first night at San Luis Potosí, about 215 miles from Guadalajara, and the second night at Ciudad Victoria, which is just short of being halfway from San Luis Potosí to Laredo.

You ought to decide how much time you propose to spend on the road before you leave Guadalajara so that you can telegraph for rooms in Laredo. If you are nervous about accommodations en route on the three-day schedule, you could also wire the Hotel Progreso, Calle Aldama 21, San Luis Potosí, S.L.P., and Hotel Sierra Gorda or Campo Victoria at Ciudad Victoria, Tamps. The Sierra Gorda is a well-kept hotel in the center of town, and Campo Victoria is at K. 710, just outside. A most entertaining place to stop at, especially if you felt you could spend a whole day, is the Hacienda Engracia, 25 miles northwest of C. Victoria on a gravel road which follows the course of Río Purificación. You make reservations through the Hotel Sierra Gorda, which is owned by the Martínez family from the Engracia ranch. The Mexican counterpart of a swank western dude ranch, the hacienda has everything necessary to give you a view of country life in the time of Porfirio Díaz — riding, fishing, shooting, swimming, and dining as the guest of a very nice family.

You leave Guadalajara over the road to Tlaquepaque, the pottery village. The first town on your map after Tlaquepaque is Zapotlanejo. From Zapotlanejo to Tepatitlán the pavement passes through 25 miles of bright red country. There is a lovely view of the village of Tepa-

titlán as you come upon it, and you reach the center through a lane of trees. San José de los Lagos, about 46 miles beyond Tepatitlán, is one of Mexico's meccas. Indians swarm into the place from every direction, walking as much as a hundred miles to celebrate Candlemas, the 2nd of February. Ceremonies are conducted for pilgrims in the Sanctuary of San José de los Lagos, which towers above the town to the right of the highway.

There are many small lakes around Lagos de Moreno, 45 kilometers beyond San José de los Lagos, and sportsmen congregate there to shoot duck, wild geese, blue pheasant, quail, heron, and dove.

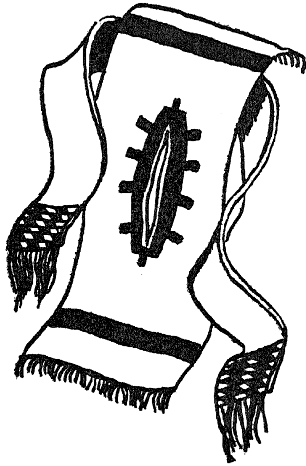
A branch road runs from Ojuelos 57 miles westward to Aguascalientes, the capital of the tiny state of that name. Aguascalientes is a colonial town in the midst of a mining region which in more recent times has been exploited by American companies. The hot baths there are patronized by people with aching joints; and the catacombs under the Church of San Francisco, like the subterranean chambers in Guanajuato and the Carmelite crypt in Villa Obregón, contain rows of mummies. The shops show regional curiosities made of horsehair and typical drawn work and embroidery. If you make this side trip — which you can easily do if your destination for the day is San Luis Potosí — you can take lunch at the Hotel Francia.

San Luis Potosí is the northernmost of the colonial cities of consequence. It has long since been inundated, however, by the swollen commerce of a mining and an agricultural region. Mine operators of the colonial era built expensive churches ornamented with tiles: the

Churches of San Francisco and Our Lady of Carmen have tiled domes that will remind you of Puebla. The technical level of the San Franciscan stone sculpture is close to perfection, for light and dark contrasts and surface finish, and the adjoining chapel is as complete as an imperial jewel-box. El Carmen will give you your last glimpse, on this journey, of Mexican high-fashioned baroque. It has everything on its front. The hand of Eduardo Tresguerras is often imagined in the churches of San Luis Potosí, but perhaps his only work there is the reservoir.

The pink stone façade of the baroque cathedral on the Alameda is adorned with twisted columns and life-size saints in niches. It adjoins the municipal palace, whose deep arcade, which covers the sidewalk, is supported by massive piers. The Alameda, where you can make your last evening promenade with the Mexicans, is paved in black and white squares.

After San Luis Potosí, the highway describes a 140-mile arc to Ciudad del Maiz. You can make good time over fairly straight road through a desert. Just before you reach Ciudad del Maiz, where you can gas up and eat, you begin to climb the first of five modest ranges through which you make the descent to Antiguo Morelos. The 50-odd miles from Maiz to the Pan-American Highway take you through mountain terrain about as fine, on its smaller scale, as anything you will have seen in the country. And after Antiguo Morelos, you are on your way home. We expect you back soon!



Appendix I

TABLE OF SOUNDS

a is always *ah*. *Alto*, stop! = ahl′-to

b is closer to English *v* than to English *b*. *Trabajando*, working = trah-vah-hahn′-do

c is English *k* before *a*, *o*, *u* or a consonant. *Camino*, road = kah-mee′-no. But before *e* and *i*, *c* is English *s*, and not lisped as in Spain. *Cine*, cinema = see′-nay

ch is always like the *ch* in church

d is softer than English *d*, but it is better not to fool with it except between certain vowels or at the end of a word, when it becomes *th*. *Cuidado*, look out! = quee-da′-tho

e is usually closer to English long *a*, as in "tame," than to short *e*, as in "pet." For *peso*, the Mexican dollar, say pay′-so. Your ear will catch on to exceptions.

f as in English

g before *a*, *o*, *u* is like English hard *g*. *Angosto*, narrow = ahn-ghost′-o. Before *e* and *i*, it has a guttural sound which foreigners can nearly reproduce with an *h*. *Legítimo*, legitimate = lay-hee′-tee-mo

h is never sounded. *Hoy*, today = oy

i is always English long *e*. *Peligro*, danger = pay-lee′-gro

j is best said like *h*. *Jabon*, soap = hah-vone′

k as in English

l as in English

ll is best said like *y*. Pancho Villa's last name = Vee′-ya

m as in English

n as in English

ñ is *ny* as in canyon. *Mañana*, tomorrow = mahn-yah′-na

o is not quite so long as English long *o*. Try to sound it as in "more" rather than "mode." But that's not important.

p as in English

q as in English

r has a funny way, between vowels, of coming out like a *d*. Thus *pero*, but, may sound like pay′-do. An initial *r* is rolled, if you can manage it, and *rr*, as in *ferrocarril*, railroad, is trilled.

s is English *ess* with an occasional buzz

t is best said as in English

u is always English *oo* as in "room," except that after *q* it is silent. *Curva*, curve = koor′-va; but *¿qué?*, what? = kay?

v is called b-minor. It is more *b* than *v*, which seems arbitrary.

x is English *sh*, *s*, or *x*. Your ear picks it up. Mexico = May′-hee-co. Oaxaca = Wah-hock′-a. Taxco = Tass′-co. Xochimilco = Soach-ee-meel′-co

y is English *y*, as a consonant, but *y*, and = ee

z is closer to English *s* than to *z*

Appendix II

CALENDAR OF FIESTAS AND NATIONAL HOLIDAYS[1]

Jan. 1	National Holiday. The Mexicans give presents on this day.
Jan. 1–7	Patronal festival at Jojutla.
Jan. 6	Fiesta of the Three Kings at Los Reyes, K. 19 on the road to Puebla from Mexico City.
Jan. 15	Fiesta of Father Jesus of Tenango, at K. 90 on the (gravel) road south from Toluca.
Jan. 15	Dance festival at Zimatlan, 15 miles by rail from Oaxaca.
Jan. 17	Fiesta at all churches dedicated to San Antonio. Blessing of flower-decked animals.
Jan. 28	Dance festival at Cuilapan, accessible by motor road from Oaxaca.
Feb. 2	Candlemas, observed in all churches. Pilgrimage of San Juan de los Lagos.
Feb. 5	National holiday in honor of the Constitution of 1857.
Feb. 26	Festival of Tzintzuntzan, ancient Tarascan capital on Lake Pátzcuäro. Dance of "The Little Old Men."

[1] Consult the weekly tourist pamphlet *Esta Semana* for special information concerning fiestas.

Pre-Lent	For three days before Ash Wednesday, a movable date, there are colorful carnivals at Guanajuato, Huejotzingo, Mazatlán, Mérida, Veracruz.
First Week in Lent	Pilgrimage to the Black Christ of Chalma, accessible by third-class bus from Tenango, at K. 90 on road from Toluca, or horseback from Tenancingo. Fiesta of Our Lord of Sacromonte, Amecameca, K. 63 on the road to Cuautla.
Mid-Lent	Fiesta of the True Cross, Taxco.
Holy Week	All churches are elaborately festooned and garlanded on Maundy Thursday, draped in mourning on Good Friday, redecorated for "Saturday of Glory." Firework Judases are set off in provincial plazas (especially San Miguel de Allende) after Mass on Holy Saturday. Many shops and places of business are closed after Wednesday in Holy Week. Hotels are crowded.
Apr. 25	Fiesta of St. Mark, the Rain Maker, in most agricultural regions, especially Aguascalientes.
May 1	Labor Day, national holiday.
May 1–4	Fiesta at Amatlan de los Reyes, accessible by bus from Córdoba.
May 1–8	Fiesta at Acapulco.
May 3	Fiesta of the Holy Cross. Carpenters set up flower-decked crosses on new roof trees and explode firecrackers.
May 5	National holiday commemorating Mexico's victory over the French army at Puebla. Religious fiesta at Huejotzingo.

May 15	Fiesta of San Isidro, patron of farmers. Harvest festivals in most rural towns.
Corpus Christi	Thursday after Trinity Sunday, a movable date. Fiesta at Papantla, with *Voladores* (see Index). Other fiestas at Morelia, Puebla, and the Cathedral of Mexico City.
June 24	Fiesta of San Juan, celebrated in provincial towns by bathing and haircutting.
July 8	Fiesta at Teotitlán del Valle, accessible from Oaxaca by motor.
July 16	Pre-Conquest festival, now dedicated to Our Lady of Carmel at Zoachila, near Oaxaca.
July 19	Pre-Conquest harvest festival now dedicated to Saint Vincent de Paul at Juchitan, Tehuantepec (only by airplane).
July 24	Fiesta of the Moors and the Christians, Torreón.
Aug. 1–6	Fiesta of Our Lord of the Chapel, Saltillo.
Aug. 2–9	Fiesta of Our Lady of the Angels, Tulancingo, K. 150 on the Gulf highway from Pachuca.
Aug. 10–20	Fiesta of the Assumption of Amozoc, K. 151 on the Veracruz highway, 10 miles beyond Puebla.
Aug. 15	Fiesta of the Assumption at Milpa Alta, Tlaxcala, and Santa María de Tonantzintla.
Aug. 26	Fiesta of San Andrés at Chalchicomula, accessible by motor from Orizaba.
Sept. 1–8	Fiesta at Los Remedios (see Index).
Sept. 1–8	Fiesta of Our Lady of the Nativity with

	Aztec overtones, Tepoztlán. Aztec pageant performed on the 8th.
Sept. 16	Mexico's Fourth of July, a national holiday. The President recites the Proclamation of Independence from a balcony overlooking the Zócalo in Mexico City at 11 P.M. September 15th.
Sept. 27–Oct. 14	Fiesta of Our Lord of the Blisters at Mérida, Yucatán.
Sept. 29	Fiesta of San Miguel, San Miguel de Allende.
Oct. 1–8	Cholula fiesta.
Oct. 1–12	Fiesta of San Francisco, Pachuca.
Oct., First Sunday	Fiesta with Dance of the Feathers at Tlacolula, Oaxaca.
Nov. 1–2	Day of the Dead, official holiday in most places. Of especial interest in Colima (by plane from Guadalajara), Janitzio, Morelia, Puebla, and Xochimilco.
Nov. 3–12	Fiesta of San Martín Texmelucan, K. 91 on the Puebla highway.
Nov. 20	National holiday celebrating the beginning of the 1910 Revolution.
Nov. 25–Dec. 16	Fiesta of Our Lady of Health at Pátzcuaro.
Dec. 1–10	Fiesta of the Immaculate Conception at Puente de Ixtla, K. 114 on the Acapulco highway, 25 miles beyond Cuernavaca. Dec. 8 is celebrated everywhere.
Dec. 2–6	Fiestas of San Francisco Acatepec and Santa María de Tonantzintla, accessible by motor from Puebla.
Dec. 5–15	Secular festival at Iguala.
Dec. 12	Fiesta of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Villa Gustavo A. Madero, at northern en-

trance to Mexico City. This fiesta, honoring Mexico's patroness, is celebrated in Mexico City and southern Mexico during the first two weeks of December. In Monterrey and northern Mexico, the ceremonies usually follow December 12 for two weeks.

Dec. 16–24 The Posadas, religious processions commemorating the journey of the Virgin and Saint Joseph to Bethlehem. This period is of especial interest at Chilpancingo, K. 303 on the Acapulco highway.

Dec. 25 Christmas Day, a national holiday.

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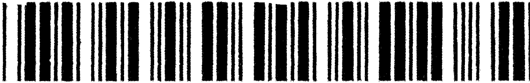
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