

# In the Valley of Mexico

## EARLE R. FORREST



**M**EXICO is a land of enchantment, romance and mystery for most Americans. We, of the northern climates, are likely to look upon it as a country of bull fights, bandits and wild Indians, where the lives of foreigners are not safe, and the principal amusement is stabbing Americans in the back with long-bladed knives. During the last year or two certain magazine articles have caused these ideas to take a firm hold upon our minds, especially since the recent revolution broke out. These pieces are based upon facts, but the truth has been greatly enlarged upon in order to create a demand for such literature and make the production of the authors more salable. However, the traveler in Mexico will find that he is just as safe there as in any other part of the world, providing that he attends to his own affairs; but, on



THE GREAT CATHEDRAL OF MEXICO



hug rock that rises up out of the plain, and it has been the site of the residences of the rulers of Mexico ever since the days of the Aztecs. The Mexico City of former times was surrounded by Lake Texcoco, the waters of which were alkaline and unfit for use. Therefore the inhabitants were compelled to obtain their water from springs, and it was carried to the city by means of aqueducts. One of these ran along the road to Chapultepec and terminated at the fountain of El Salto del Agua, near Bellem prison. Portions of this famous old waterway are still standing and may be seen from the street cars. It was constructed of bricks, laid in cement and plastered with the same material. It was very substantial and would have stood a thousand years as well as one. The region of this ancient waterway is one of the most picturesque parts of the city. Out on the Chapultepec highway, which was built by Maximilian, scores of wood carriers may be seen with enormous loads of firewood, that they have cut in the hills, fastened on their backs. They can carry almost as much as a horse, and they peddle this fuel in the city, where it is used for cooking. Quite frequently burros are seen loaded down, carrying a burden larger than themselves. I have also seen in this town in New Mexico and Arizona. One of the most picturesque sights to be seen in Mexico are the queer-looking ox carts. There are great, two-wheeled affairs, drawn by two oxen, sometimes four, and are used in all parts of the republic. Generally the wheels are made out of a solid piece of wood, but sometimes they have spokes. In these vehicles the reons bring their produce to the city, and peddle it along the streets, much the same as do the American truck gardeners. Many of the plows used in Mexico, and very commonly on the haciendas about the capital, are, indeed, a revelation to Americans. The tongue is about ten feet long and is simply the limb of a tree, generally with a fork at the end. The latter part is about four feet in length and pointed with iron. The whole thing has but one handle and is drawn by a yoke of oxen. With it the natives manage to scrape out a furrow in the ground. The method is exceedingly primitive and picturesque, and is used throughout all parts of the country, modern American plows being a great rarity. In fact, I did not see one in all my travels in the republic. All of the cities and towns have a public fountain from which any one who desires may obtain water; and every hour of the day one may see the aguadores (water carriers) obtaining their daily supply from these places. Both sexes come; the women generally carry a large earthen jar upon their heads, while many of the men bring burros upon which the pack-saddles holding six or eight vessels. Others bring rudely fashioned wheelbarrows with which to haul away the precious fluid. At Popotla, a suburb of Mexico City, is La Noche Triste (the Mournful Night Tree), one of the most historic trees in North America, for it is said that the great conqueror, Hernan Cortez, sat under it and wept on the night of July 1, 1520, following the defeat of the Spaniards by the Aztecs and their retreat from the City of Mexico. This ancient tree is well cared for, and is surrounded by an iron fence, and it is doubtful if it can live many years longer. A visit to the little town of Guadalupe, about two miles north of the City of Mexico, is one of the most interesting and, probably, the saddest journey in all Mexico. This picturesque village, nestled at the foot of the hill of Tepeyacac, is the shrine of Mexico. There is an interesting legend concerning it, which is as follows: On December 12, 1531, an Indian named Juan Diego was on his way to the church of Santiago to attend mass, when the Virgin Mother descended from the clouds and appeared before the poor peon on the hill of Tepeyacac. She told Juan that she intended to become the Patron Saint of Mexico, and that she wished him to go to the bishop at the Cathedral of Mexico and tell him that she desired to have a church built at the foot of the hill and dedicated to her. Naturally the bishop did not believe the Indian's story, but when Juan went to him



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the other hand, if he is looking for trouble, he will be accommodated there just as quickly as at home, for the Mexicans are a courteous race and nothing pleases them better than to be obliging to strangers. One morning in June, several years ago, I arrived in Vera Cruz. This is one of the most ancient cities of the New World, as it was founded by Cortez in 1519. It is historic to the last degree; and it was there that Maximilian first set foot on Mexican soil, while the flags of four great nations—Spain, Mexico, France and the United States—have floated over its ramparts. Mexico City is full of interesting places. Relics of the conquistadores and of the days of Spanish rule may be seen on every side. History says that about 1325 a band of Aztecs was traveling through the Valley of Mexico. For nearly six hundred years these people had been wanderers on the face of the earth, and during all those centuries they had been searching for the promised land—a place to build a new home. Their priests had taught them that when they saw a royal eagle with a snake in its talons alight upon a prickly pear cactus, that would be a sign that there was the place for them to build a city. And as they were wandering through this valley they beheld a royal eagle, perched upon a cactus, holding a serpent. This is the origin of the Mexican national emblem of today. Accordingly they stopped, for they firmly believed that their long journey was ended. On an island in Lake Texcoco they built a city which they called Tenochtitlan, and this is where the City of Mexico now stands. Considering the centuries that they had been homeless, the reign of the Aztecs over this fair land was short, for in 1519 Cortez landed in Mexico. Then began one of the most remarkable campaigns in all history. The great conqueror commenced his famous march to the Aztec capital, fighting battle after battle, and defeating hordes of savages. On November 8, 1519, Cortez entered Tenochtitlan with his little army and was welcomed by Montezuma II. The Spaniards collected a great amount of gold and other valuables which they were compelled to leave, for on July 1, 1520, they were driven from the city. However, in August, 1521, they returned, besieged the place, and on the 13th they were again victorious; and the reign of the Aztecs came to an end forever. But the great treasures that had been left behind by the conquerors had disappeared. Cuzcohuemoc, the last of the Montezumas, was tortured with fire in an effort to make him disclose the hiding place of the gold; but in his Cortez failed, for the lips of the Aztec remained sealed, and the location of the treasure is a mystery unto this day. One of the principal points of interest is the Iturbide hotel, located on First San Francisco street, and not far from the Plaza Mayor. This building was erected by the Marquesa de San Mateo Valparaiso, in the eighteenth century, and later became famous as the palace of

modern Mexico's first emperor, Augustine de Iturbide. This man was the commander of the viceroys' forces; but he was ambitious, and so he joined the revolutionists, helping them to throw off the yoke of Spain. For this he was crowned emperor of Mexico on July 25, 1822. His reign was short, for he soon became unpopular, and on March 20, 1823, he abdicated and sailed for Europe. Mexico is a land of churches; and over the ruins of one of the greatest pagan temples of the New World stands a magnificent place of worship of the Christian religion. There, where the great Aztec temple that was destroyed by Cortez once stood, is now the beautiful Cathedral of Mexico. The cost of its construction was about \$2,000,000. The front is surmounted by two beautiful towers, about two hundred feet high, from which an excellent view of the city, with its picturesque domes and great buildings, may be had; while the Valley of Mexico, famed like a great panorama. The famous Lake Texcoco, the great castle of Chapultepec and the sacred town of Guadalupe seem just beneath your feet. Far away on the rim of the valley the great Popocatepetl and Ixtacchuatli ("the Woman in White"), on the summits of which is the land of eternal snow, rise up above the surrounding country. The cathedral is never closed. Night and day, summer and winter, its doors are always open, and every one, from the poorest beggar in the land to the richest man, is welcome. There, within the walls of this beautiful palace of religion, they all gather, rich and poor, aristocrat and peon, to receive the bishop's blessing. On the east side of the Plaza Mayor is the National palace, which was started in 1692. This is the seat of the national government, and within its walls the laws which govern the people of Mexico are made. It is on the grounds where once stood the palace of Axayacatl, an emperor of the Aztecs. Just beyond the palace, on the Calle de Meneda, is the National museum. This place is a wonderful treasure house of Aztec relics, and nowhere else in the world will such a collection of implements and other remains of this extinct race be found. Within a few minutes' ride of the Plaza Mayor is the castle of Chapultepec, the White House of Mexico. This building stands upon a

car released his hold but, as it was, the cyclist's neck was severely injured. Fortunately, he was able to pull up immediately. Even then, however, his face was purple, and, ever, his face was purple, and a trained skin of his neck torn. A trained nurse who happened to be staying in the village attended to the wound. The man injured was an entire stranger to the district. He offered to let the matter pass if the man who threw the rope apologized, but the latter declined to do so. The matter is now to be taken to court. Expert Testimony Available. A Spokane tobacconist has sued a judge for \$4.65 for campaign cigars. If the judge called upon those who smoked the cigars he could probably show that the claim is extortionate. The Proof. "Is your purse real alligator skin?" "Is it? You ought to hear it snap."

**Cyclist Near Death**  
An extraordinary tale comes from Copar, Scotland, of a strange motor-cyclist, who escaped from strangulation the other day, at Bow o' Fire, a small village three miles west of Copar. The cyclist was proceeding towards Copar. When opposite the village inn, a man who was in a spring cart threw out a rope, the end of which twined round the cyclist's neck, after a violent jerk the man in the

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for the third time the prelate told him that he must bring some sign. When he repeated this to the Virgin she told him to go to the top of the hill, which was always barren, and that he would find the ground covered with roses. He was to fill his zarape with the flowers and hasten to the bishop with them. Juan did as he was bidden, and when he spread out the roses before the bishop there, on the inside of his coarse zarape was painted a beautiful picture, another miracle, of the Virgin Mary. This was enough; and one of the finest churches in all Mexico was built at the foot of the hill of Tepeyacac. This remarkable portrait was placed in a prominent part of the edifice, where it may be seen to this day, enclosed by a beautiful frame, said to be solid gold; and it is known throughout Mexico as "Our Lady of Guadalupe." On December 12 the festival of "Our Lady of Guadalupe" occurs, and thousands make the long pilgrimage to her shrine. This has taken place since 1752, in which year the Virgin of Guadalupe was officially recognized. On the hill of Tepeyacac is a little chapel which marks the spot where Juan Diego cut the roses that he took to the bishop. Just back of it is the Guadalupe cemetery, in which some of Mexico's most famous men, among them are Santa Ana, Viceroy Bacarell and Colonel Obergon, are buried. This edifice is reached by two series of long, winding stairways, which go up the steep hill from opposite sides. About half way up one of these flights are the mast and sails of a ship, made of stone and plastered with cement. How long they have been there no man can say. There is a legend concerning their origin which is as follows: Many, many long years ago, centuries, perhaps, a ship was in a great storm on the Gulf of Mexico. The vessel was in danger of sinking, and so the sailors prayed to the Virgin, and promised her that if she would save them they would take the mast of their ship to her shrine at Guadalupe, and there set it up so that it would remain forever as a monument to her power. The vessel was saved, and true to their vow, the sailors removed the heavy mast and carried it upon their shoulders over the long, weary miles from Vera Cruz to the City of Mexico, and thence to Guadalupe, where they erected it, the sails set. It was covered with stone and cement in order that it might be preserved for the benefit of future generations; and there it remains to this day, high up on the hill where all may see. On the spot where the Virgin is supposed to have stood when she appeared to Juan Diego a spring, the waters of which are supposed to cure any ill, gushes forth. Over this fountain a little chapel, one of the most beautiful that I have ever seen, stands. Over the altar is a painting of "Our Lady of Guadalupe" and every day many go to her shrine to worship. One of the most pathetic scenes that can be imagined takes place in front of the cathedral. Among the passengers of every street car that arrives are the lame, the halt and the blind. Some have to be carried, others are led, while many who are friendless, hobble and drag themselves to this sacred spring to obtain a drink of its magic waters. No description of this interesting land would be complete without some mention of the picturesque city of Guanajuato. This famous old place was founded by the Spaniards in 1554, and the attraction which brought them there was the rich vein of silver known as Veta Madre (mother vein), which has been worked steadily for over three and a half centuries. The great Valenciana mine, located near the city, has produced about \$800,000,000. Mining is carried on in the same primitive manner as in the days of the early Spaniards. The cemetery and the catacombs are, probably, of more interest to the stranger than any other point in the city. Armed with a permit which the hotel proprietor gave me I climbed the steep hillside streets to the city of the dead, situated upon the summit of one of the mountains. This cemetery is rather small, and I wondered that there were so few graves in it, but the mystery was soon explained to me. In the walls that enclosed the place are thousands of vaults, just large enough for a coffin. These may be rented for stated periods, but when this time has expired, if the relatives of the deceased do not renew the lease, the remains are taken out and thrown on the bone pile beneath. The crypt is then ready for occupation again. The ground where the graves are located is sold outright. However, the greatest surprise of all was before me. My guide opened a small door built in some masonry on top of the ground, and a flight of narrow, winding stairs was exposed. These we descended, and they brought us into a long, underground passage, where is one of the most remarkable and gruesome sights in all Mexico. About half of this chamber is occupied by a number of corpses. In that dry climate, flesh will not decay when protected from the weather, and these bodies were so withered and dried up that they looked like leather. The expressions on the faces were horrible in the extreme. The other end of this chamber is piled full of bones. They are the remains of the poor wretches who had once been laid to rest in the vaults above, and who, after the term for which their friends had paid rent had elapsed, had been removed to this place. These catacombs are indeed horrible, and a poor place for any one inclined to nervous troubles, for if your nerves are not pretty strong you will see this terrifying place, with its grinning skulls and shriveled mummies, for many a night afterwards.

**Tommy Murphy,**  
The great horseman who is winning most of the big races for fast trotters with that farm horse, "E. T. C." record 2:08 1/4 says: "SPOHN'S DISTEMPER CURE is the best remedy for all forms of Distemper and coughs I have ever known. I have used it a number of years." All druggists or send to manufacturers, 35c and \$1 a bottle. Spohn Medical Co., Chemists, Goshen, Ind., U. S. A.  
Needed at Home.  
Brown—That is the worst behaved kid I ever saw. Do you know his parents?  
Jones—His father is one of those scientific management experts—Puck.  
Stop the Pain.  
The hurt of a burn or a cut stops when Cole's Carbolic is applied. It heals quickly and prevents scars. 25c and 50c by druggists. For free sample write to J. W. Cole & Co., Black River Falls, Wis.  
When we read the lives of distinguished men in any department we find them always celebrated for the amount of labor they could perform—Everett.  
The Pure Food Law stopped the sale of hundreds of fraudulent medicines. They could not stand investigation. Hamlin Wizard Oil has stood the test of investigation for nearly sixty years.  
Bean Porridge Hot.  
"Would you call soup an edible?"  
"Yes, an audible edible."  
Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup for Children teething, softens the gums, reduces inflammation, allays pain, cures wind colic, etc. a bottle.  
Sunshine is worth more than gold when it is real sunshine and not fox-fire.  
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Howell—He has all of the eccentricities of genius without the genius.  
Tell the dealer you want a Lewis' Single Binder straight 55c  
It's one kind of tough luck to strike oil when boring for water.

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If you cannot obtain W. L. Douglas shoes in your town, write for catalog. Shoes sent direct from factory to wearer, all charges prepaid. W. L. DOUGLAS, 145 Spark St., Brockton, Mass. ONE PAIR of my BOYS' \$2.50 or \$3.00 SHOES will positively outwear TWO PAIRS of ordinary boys' shoes.

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