

CUSTER COUNTY REPUBLICAN.



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Through the Sunny South.

Continued from Last Week

I tell you its a serious thing for a Nebraska man to be alone in time of trouble. But for a fact, I could not have been more glad that Mr. Scott and Mr. Frary were not in sight-seeing distance, for I never met two Kansas fellows before, neither have I since, that could come as near laughing a man into hysterics, or a mule out of his dumps, as these two fellows can when the thermometer is just right.

Well, what has become of the automobile. Here it is gliding along just as nice as one could wish. We are now coming in sight of the place where we started just three hours ago. After all, we will have to repeat what Dr. Gibson said, it was a delightful trip, this our first automobile ride away down here in this far off south land within 27 miles of the southern extremity of the United States of America.

Dismounting this great machine and leaving it apparently asleep, this crowd of twelve persons almost total strangers to each other, disperse and scatter in different directions, perhaps never to meet again as we have been today on this pleasant trip. Thus it is in life. We meet today and part tomorrow, to be separated, perhaps forever, but let us try to leave sweet and lasting impressions with those we meet and those we greet in this busy, bustling world.

That will tell the true story that:
"Life is real, life is earnest,
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust Thou art to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul."

5:30. With two of our traveling associates we start for the old Mexican town of Matamoris, across the Rio Grande river. We cross in ferry boats, toll three cents in American, six cents in Mexican money. After we get across the river on the Mexican side we board a small street car large enough to carry about sixteen persons of average size. This street car is drawn by a small mule about the size of the one I encountered this morning, but not the same one, as I think that one did belong to the water works.

I almost forgot to tell you when we approached the river, as we went over, we met the rest of our delegation who had made the trip to old Matamoris and was just returning. Dr. Gibson volunteered to go back with us to Matamoris, and after we were safely seated in the street car. We must pay for this good service two and one half cents American or five cents Mexican money. We had to travel in this little old street car for over a mile, but after so long we landed in the quaint old city on schedule time. I did not time this ride, but I soon found out it was no Katy flyer, but really it was a little novel and will be remembered as being very interesting, something to jot down in life history.

The first place we visited here in this old town was one of the cemeteries, which was a pretty place, though very odd and so different from our cemeteries in America. There are large vaults built on top of the ground large enough to hold a number of dead bodies. There had been a number of openings in these tombs, where I suppose the bodies were passed through in the vaults or receptacles of the tombs and then sealed up air tight. These places of deposit for the dead, we are told, are leased for five years at the time of burial and at the expiration of these five years if not leased and paid for again for five years more, the bones are taken out of the tomb and thrown in a receptacle in one corner of the cemetery. Those of our crowd that went early in the afternoon were permitted to see these ghostly, bleaching bones as they were piled up in this place. We were late getting in here, and, for some cause not explained to us, we were not permitted to see this bleaching pile of human bones.

We were continually and everlastingly vexed and tormented, as well as entertained, by the little children from two to twelve

years old, begging for nicks. While this was annoying and ridiculous, yet it was amusing to see these little waifs perform their many tricks standing on their heads, turning summersaults, and many other tricks to induce us to part with as many nicks as possible, and it was evident the mothers of these little tots had taught this trick of graft. This was evident for they stood by the windows watching and enjoying the performance with delight.

Next place we visited was the prison. I will not try to describe this prison in detail, for I could not as our time at this place was limited and we only spent a few minutes here. But if a fellow don't carry himself pretty orderly he is liable to get quite familiar with conditions and a little personal knowledge from actual experience. After we passed inside the inclosure we go up a flight of steps on top of a roof over the cells. This roof was some kind of stone and was like a shred roof up against the outer walls which were of stone and built, I would judge, about eight feet above the roof, and on top of this wall was broken bottles and glass just as close together as could be placed to keep the prisoners from making a high jump and scaling the walls and escaping.

We saw a number of prisoners in the open place below in the enclosure and some of the guards looking after their welfare. It was amusing how these prisoners would beg for pennies, nicks or dimes, whichever the giver might care to throw down to them, as nearly every one responded to their entreaties with a penny, nick, or dime and 'tis a fright to see how the old and the young alike will scramble and almost break their neck to get a share of this. The world calls it money and is designated as being the root of all evil.

Our next place to visit was an old Catholic church built over a half century ago. This was a very solemn and sacred place. The interior was very beautiful and nicely finished, having many statues and pictures that are kept sacred by these people and figure much with them in their worship. There came to our consciousness a solemnity of feeling and a profound respect for this sacred place where the Great Infinite God is supposed to answer their petitions, and bring to this peculiar people a peaceful reconciliation with the Father of Mercies in that great and notable day when all the nations of the earth shall stand in the presence of Him who rules Heaven and earth, the loving Father of us all.

After we left this old church we passed through a public park or plaza filled with ornamental trees, flowers, magnolia, palms and many varieties of flowering shrubs. This is a beautiful oasis in this dry and desert looking country. I wished for more time here to enjoy the the beauty and loveliness of this place.

From this place we went to a store where curios of all kinds and description and picture postal cards are kept. We selected a number of postal cards showing various scenes. Among these was a picture of a bull fight, not because we enjoy this wicked and inhuman scene, but for the sake of having a variety of these picture cards from this quaint old Mexican town. There were a number of these cards mailed at this place having on the Mexican stamp. These will be a relic and a reminder of this visit to this place in the years to come.

It being supper time Dr. Gibson suggested that we take supper here and test the quality of a beefstake cooked and served at the pleasure of a chinaman in a chinese restaurant. Our supper consisted of eggs, beefsteak, coffee and other dishes sufficient for a fairly good meal, not quite as well relished as the meals we had been accustomed to as served from the dining car "Lura." This was our first and only supper we ever ate where the projecting folds of the stars and stripes did not wave from the sun kissed hills of free America. After supper we strolled around for awhile, I know not where, for this old town looked very much alike wherever we might go. Dr. Gibson was anxious to get a

relic of some drawn work from this old city as a memento, but had not yet succeeded when we two left he and the man with him.

The houses here are all flat roofs and not many over two stories high, built very compact and close together. The streets are very narrow and none to clean and in need of many repairs. We are told, and history confirms the message, that during the civil war this was a city of 70,000 population. Now it has about 7,000. Where are the missing ages? History will tell.

As the evening shades of twilight is given away to the glimmer and gloom of darkness, and no electric lights to guide our footsteps, and the pall of night in this dismal and forlorn place to a stranger is anything but restful to the mind or pleasant to the imagination, we decided at once to return to the American side of the Rio Grande and sleep under the protection of the Stars and Stripes of Old Glory, which every American citizen holds sacred to the memory of those who have never allowed its folds to trail in the dust of earth, but keeping its flagstaff pointing toward the stars of Heaven and its folds waving to the gentle breezes, telling to the world this emblem of American liberty and freedom will protect its citizens from injustice and oppression in the land of the free and home of the brave.

I will give my readers a little history before I say farewell, perhaps forever, to this old town. I have told you this was a city of 70,000 people during the civil war. Down the river where the Rio Grande enters in the gulf, on a piece of land between the gulf and the river, the city of Bagdad was built. It began its existence when the Federal government commenced the blockade of the southern ports in the early sixties and from a town of a few thousand it grew in leaps and bounds to a city of 62,000. Today Bagdad is but a memory. A tropical sun now beats down on a

glaring stretch of white, hot sand, where once stood the greatest cotton shipping port in the world. No ruins of buildings break the monotonous view. The long wharves are gone, the hotels and gambling dens have disappeared, the steamboats on the Rio Grande are no more, and no ocean going steam ships have hidden in the old harbor for over forty years. Bagdad sprang up in a day and died in an hour. It disappeared for all time when

Continued on Last Page.

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