A MEXICAN WATERING PLACE.

Pictures of the Life and Business of a Mexican Resort.

SCENES ABOUT AQUA CALIENTES.

A Place Where Men and Women Bathe Together—What it Costs to Dress a Mexican Dude.

[Copyrighted by Frank G. Carpenter.]

AGUAS CALIENTES, June 10.—[Special Correspondence of THE BEE.]—I am at Aguas Calientes, the famous hot springs of Mexico. It is altogether different from an American health or summer resort and it might be bodily transplanted to the soil of western India and not seem out of place. I am sitting in my long, high-ceilinged room in the Hotel del Plaza. It is like all the rest of the rooms of the hotel, on the ground floor, and I call my boy chamberman to make up my bed by clapping my hands. It has no windows and it looks out on a little garden full of most beautiful flowers. The hotel is built around this garden. It is of one story and it makes me think of a hotel at which I stopped in one of the native states of Hindoostan, Jeypore, save that there I had my own servant and he slept all night in front of my door.

Aguas Calientes contains about forty thousand people and nine-tenths of the houses are of one story. They all have flat roofs and the water is drained off through pipes of clay which jut out about a foot from the edge of the walls. These walls are very thick. They are built of stone or sun-dried brick and are stuccoed where they face the street, and this plastering-like stucco has been painted in delicate blues or pinks or yellows, making the whole town one mass of rainbow colors which, strange to say, does not look out of place under this bright Mexican sun. None of these houses have gardens in front of them. They are built close up to the cobble stone sidewalks, so that in going through the town you seem to be passing between walls of gaily colored bill boards ready for the posters, each of which has a hole in its center for a door.

The poorer houses have doors very roughly made, and in the galloping mule street car that takes you from the depot to the center of the town, you see few houses with windows, and many of these doors are filled with queer looking dark-faced people. The men in their red and gayly colored blankets look picturesque, and the women, with their dark mahogony faces, their long black hair streaming down their backs freshly wet from their last bath in the hot waters, are in some cases very pretty and in others as ugly as the Witch of Endor after an attack of the smallpox.

Small Investments Noticeable.

As you leave the station you pass the public bath houses—low Spanish buildings, where you can get for from 20 to 30 cents a bath of any kind you want, and go up a long dusty thoroughfare under wide-spreading green trees into the business part of the city. The business of this city of 40,000 people is a fair sample of that of the interior Mexican town. It is big only in the prices asked for the articles sold. Mexico is not a great business country. The most of the firms are run on small capital and there are hundreds of stores which have not more than $200 worth of stock. Many of these here have even less, and the storekeeper, in the majority of instances, has a little cave of a store without any windows opening out on the street, and he stands behind a counter which runs right across the store in front of the door and offers his goods for sale for three times what he expects to get.

In the case of the smaller businesses the trader is generally a Mexican and there are more peddlers in one city in this country than you will find in ten cities of the same size in the United States. I have just come from the market. Imagine a long tier of stalls around two hollow squares which cover the area of a city block. These stalls are occupied by the butchers and bakers and candlestick makers, who have the biggest stocks, and the squares are filled with big hatted men in white cotton clothes and by red-skirted, women in white waists and red skirts, who sit under white umbrellas as big as the top of a small camping tent, with little piles of vegetable and fruit around them.

I asked as to prices and found that

Things Were Sold in Piles

and not by measures. So many little potatoes make up a pile, and I was asked 2 cents for four potatoes, each of which was as big as a buckeye. A pile of eggs cost here 3 cents, and a little pile of tomatoes and peppers were among the things sold. Peppers both green and red were sold everywhere, and I saw that some of the bigger market men had great bins of them. They form a part of every Mexican dish and are eaten in great quantities.

The average Mexican, however, eats very little in comparison with us. His market bills are not half as heavy as those of his American brother, and a sewing basket would contain the daily supply for a large family. The cheapest thing sold seems to be fruit which grows in the shape of oranges, bananas and lemons very abundantly about here, and I got splendid oranges for 1 cent apiece.

The Market in Aguas Calientes.

About this market, the Mexican peddlers had collected themselves by the dozens. Here was a woman with two great jars of what looked like very thin buttermilk before her. She was selling it in glasses which held from a half pint to a pint, to the passers by, at 1 and 2 cents a glass. I asked what it was, and was told it was pulque, the Mexican beer, which comes from a species of cactus, and which is drunk by the barrel every day throughout Mexico. At the corner beside her, before a case which looked like a bookcase, stood a shoe peddler. His stock was made up of sharp toed gaiters, and by actual count he had only twenty pairs to sell. A little further on, a yellow-faced woman in her bare feet, sat with ten pairs of baby shoes beside her.

This made up her whole establishment, and around the corner I found a very pretty Aztec maiden sitting on a stool and rolling black tobacco into cigarettes. The paper she used was thicker than the newspaper in which this letter will be printed, and she doubled the paper over the cigarettes at both ends to make it stay together. Before she did so, however, she moistened the paper with her cherry lips, and when I smoked a package of her wares at the cost of 2 cents, it seemed to me that scent of the cherries lingered there still. It was about 10 o'clock at the time I visited the market, and found but few buying. The well-to-do Mexican ladies dressed in black, passed through giving directions to their servants as to what to buy. But I am told that this was contrary to etiquette, and that the ladies of Mexico seldom do their own marketing, but leave it entirely to the servants.

The Stores Very Ordinary.

Near the market I found a few very fair stores, but they would be small affairs in a town of 40,000 in New York or Ohio, and a western city of 10,000 could show many finer. The counters here ran across the whole front of the store, and only the biggest of them had show windows. The dry goods stores contained chiefly French goods, and the merchants were in most cases French or German, though I found some of them Mexicans. I stopped in front of a hat store which had a most gorgeous display in its windows and priced some sombreros. They ranged from $1 up to $75 apiece, and I am told that some of these Mexican dudes wear hats that cost more than $100.

Some of the hats were trimmed with gold and silver cord, and I looked at a $50 one which weighed about ten pounds, and which measured eighteen inches from one side of the brim to the other. It had a crown a foot high, and there was a cord of gold rope as big around as my wrist about it. Many of the hats had gold and silver letters upon them and I see many worn which have the monograms of their owners cut out of silver and sewed on to the sides. They are of many colors—a delicate cream, a drab and a black being very common, and they are beautifully made and are said to be just the thing for this hot sun and the high winds. The same firm sold ladies' hats. Most of these came from Paris. They were very high-priced and not at all pretty.

What it Costs to Dress a Dude.

Near by I stopped at a Mexican clothing store and looked at some Mexican pantaloons. I here again found that the dude of our sister republic has to pay for his style. Many of the pantaloons were made of buckskin, and the nicest pairs which were lined with solid silver buttons down the sides cost as high as $50 and $75, and coats were likewise high. It is not hard for a Mexican country gentleman to spend from $300 to $400 on his clothes, and when you take into consideration that he has to sport a saddle, spurs and revolver of like gorgeous character, you see that if one of these big farmers has a crowd of grown up boys, his clothing bills amount to something. This, however, is the case of only the rich.

The Poor Are Very Poor Indeed.

The poor here are so poor that they don't know how poor they are, and their clothes cost practically nothing. A pair of these cast-off buckskin pantaloons will last a long time, and the ordinary cotton suits worn by the poor, though high considering their character, cost but little. A blanket costs from a dollar or two up, and the leather sandals which are worn almost universally by the Indians, are nothing more than two pieces of sole leather as big as your hand tied to the top and bottom of the feet with leather strings. These cost 25 cents apiece and last a long time. The dress of the poorer women is even cheaper than that of the men, and Mexico's 9,000,000 of peasants will have to make more money and have greater needs before the land can become a great consumer of the goods of any nation. Their houses are hovels of mud, and their diet is simpler than their clothes, consisting of little more than corn cakes and red peppers.

Garden Spot of Mexico.

The only poor thing, however, about this part of Mexico is the people. The land here is as black as your hat, and in coming to Aguas Calientes on the Mexican Central railroad, you ride for miles through fields which will vie with their crops with the valleys of the Nile or the Ganges, and I am told it is called the garden of Mexico. It certainly is a wonderfully rich garden, and crops of all kinds grow here in all the luxuriance of the guano beds along the coast. It is more than a mile above the sea, and the air seems to revivify the land so that it produces two crops a year without manure.

From here almost to the City of Mexico, a full day's ride on the cars, you go through a farmer's paradise, and plains of rich crops stretch away from each side of the road until their green fades out into the hazy blue of the mountains in the distance. This region of Mexico has a good rainfall during the wet season, but this is also aided by irrigation, and I see the method of raising the water from one level to another is the same as that used about Osaka in western Japan. It is by a long pole with a weight on one end and with a bucket attached to a rope on the other which works on a second pole fastened upright into the grounds. You see peons working this crude well everywhere, and the sparkling water flows like bands of silver through the green.

A Great Wheat Region.

This is a great wheat region and I see cornstalks in many of the fields. Maize is one of the great crops of Mexico. It can be raised in every part of the country, and it constitutes 80 per cent of the entire agricultural product of the land. More than $100,000,000 worth of it is raised every year, and it forms the food of the common people who pound or grind it up and make it into the thin flat griddle-like cakes known as tortillas. The corn is always sold in a shelled state and such as I have seen has been white in color and large in grain.

Great Lack of Water.

Up to the present time every Mexican city I have visited has been suffering from lack of water. The greater part of the country noth of here on the line of the Mexican Central road is a desert and the big mining towns of Zacatecas and Guanahuato have hundreds of men who make water-peddling their profession. In Zacatecas the water, with the exception of a little stream that flows into a big fountain in the plaza, comes from a spring away up on the side of the mountain and it is brought down on the backs of little donkeys in red clay jars. These jars are tied on by ropes and the water man peddles them from house to house as our dairymen do their milk.

In Guanahuato the people are more enterprising and they have a system of waterworks which, however, by no means supplies the demands of the city. The water peddlers here carry the water about on their backs in immense jars of red pottery about four feet long and a foot in diameter, and they tilt these over when they want to serve a customer. In Zacatecas I saw soldiers guarding the only working fountain of the city and allowing only so many men and women to dip up water out of it at a time, and back of these, under the blaze of the hot sun, other men and women squatted with gourds and crocks or oil cans waiting their turn. The water from the fountain was scooped up by these people as fast as it flowed out of the half dozen mouths of the fountain, and men and women bent themselves double in reaching over and catching drops in their gourds as it came or in scooping it up from the edge of the fountain.

Where Humanity Meets on a Level

Aguas Calientes means "hot water," and the hot springs here are among the finest in the world. There are a number of them, and the people come here by the thousands to bathe in their health-giving waters. There is a big bath house kept up, I was told, by the town which has excellent bathing arrangements and in which there is a vat of hot water about fifty feet square which is used as a swimming bath. This is near the depot on the edge of the town, but I preferred to go to the old baths at the springs about a mile out in the country. The road to these baths is one of the finest in Mexico, and the sights along it you will see no where else in the world.

Picture to yourself a long avenue of great cypress trees which almost meet far above your head and shut out the glare of the Mexican sun and the silver of the clear sky. Let these trees be very near together, and let them go on and on until they seem to almost come together in the distance. Along the sides of the road let there be the greenest of grass, and on the right of you as you walk towards the bath, place a stream of steel blue water from which the steam rises as it flows on towards you. Let this steel blue stream flow through a little aqueduct of white stone and let this be about three feet wide and about four feet deep. Here you have the background of the picture. Now for the show itself.

This stream is the waste of the hot springs. It is also the bathing place and the washing place of the common people of the Aztecs of Aguas Calientes. They are here by the hundreds—men and women, girls and boys, lovers and sweethearts—all bathing together in the warm, refreshing and health-giving waters. Many of them have washed their clothes while in the water and these they have spread out on the green banks to dry. Under these great trees as far as your eye can see, there are white waists, red skirts and the other bright bits of color made by many colored serapes and the gay rebosas which lie on the green banks while their owners are splashing and playing and scrubbing themselves in the little trench below.

Here is a man bathing, while his wife sits on the bank and watches him, and the sun creeps through the trees and paints his dark skin a rich mahogany. Here there is a half-nude Venus, naked almost to the waist, scrubbing away washing some clothes by rubbing them on a rough stone, and there under a tree lies an Indian half dressed but sound asleep. I point my camera at him and his wife springs up from the stone where she is washing and stands over him as though she feared the camera was some new fangled gun. I press the button, however, and the lens and the shutter do the rest.

Modesty a Matter of Custom.

I walk along the stream and amuse myself by taking note of the bathers. They see nothing wrong in their actions, and I note that there is nothing really immodest, bold or indecent about them. They think nothing wrong in families and friends bathing together, and after all I have again forced upon me the feeling that modesty and immodesty are matters of custom and fashion, and am reminded of a little maiden in Egypt who, upon seeing me approach, covered her face with her skirt that she might modestly hide it from the eyes of a man.

The Japanese are in many ways more modest than we are. They are in most things more polite and refined. Still, until lately, the sexes bath together in the very capital itself, and virtue was not injured, nor did prudery raise her voice until the western world taught her to do so. It is simply a matter of opinion, and the old French saw fits the case well: "Honi soit qui maly pense."

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

To the admirer of an extra dry wine, Cook's Sparkling Imperial recommends itself. Its boquet is fine; it's naturally fermented.

FROM THE VALLEY OF DEATH

Our Boys Charged to Victory up the Sides of Missionary Ridge.

THIRTY-SIX BRIGADES IN CONFLICT.

How the Federal Centre Broke Through the Rebel Line and Swept Its Opponent From the Field.

PART II.

Written for The Bee.

Before looking at Missionary Ridge as it appears today, let us first look at it through battle smoke on that day when it was the scene of the grandest military spectacle ever spread before the eyes of man.

Our point of view will be the summit of Lookout mountain, and the date November 25, 1863.

Following the battle of Lookout Mountain, our troops bivouacked on the rocky slope under the palisades, the top of the mountain and part of the eastern slope still being in the hands of the enemy. On the morning of the 25th those of us who lay under Lookout Point were up by break of day, or even earlier. Our beds were not so soft or warm as to invite lengthened repose; and, if the enemy still held possession of the rocks above us, our situation was decidedly precarious. The timber on that part of the mountain had been entirely cut away, and there was now no friendly fog to shelter us from hostile visitation of lead and iron. We were right under the eaves of Lookout, and we were apprehensive that the hail of battle would soon begin to drop from them into our ranks. Why even a small force of slingers could stone us out of our camp from those rocks of vantage.

But as the light increases and we see no signs of attack, and hear not so much as the snap of a cap on the near summit from which Mars had sent his loudest shouts rolling down the surrounding valleys only a few hours before, it began to dawn on us that the mountain was wholly ours, and all that we had to do was to climb to the crest and claim it under the flag.

And it was soon accomplished. Fifteen men of the Eighth Kentucky climbed up to Lookout Point through clefts in the rocks and waved the stars and the stripes over the mountain which we had so gallantly won.

As soon as our army saw Lookout under the proper flag they raised such a shout as those highlands and valley had never heard before. After circling for a time around the crest of the mountain it swept down to Hooker's right in Lookout valley; then it remounted and climbed the mountain with the speed of sound; down the eastern slope it sped, gathering increasing volume from thousands of yelling throats; it leaped the Tennessee at a bound, and it was as though Moccasin Point were a huge tongue, and the gorge of the "Suck" were the sonorous throat of a mighty earth giant; then the shout ran around our entire line in front of Chattanooga, and off to the extreme left where Sherman was preparing to begin the movement against the northern end of Missionary ridge, from whence it came racing back along the same line on the double quick, and played leap-frog over the back of Lookout with a boyish abandon which made yelling seem the greatest luxury imaginable. O, what a shout! It was the gallant cry of victory, and Missionary Ridge listened, and was silent.

As the Ninety-sixth Illinois, of which the writer was a member, fought on the extreme right during the battle of the 24th, passing over the highest and roughest ground, we were accorded the honor, with the Eighth Kentucky, of holding the mountain during the battle of the 25th. This gave us the privilege of viewing from the top of the mountain, that magnificent movement which carried our lines over the crest of Missionary Ridge and completely delivered Chattanooga from the presence of the enemy.

The readers of THE BEE are invited to stand on Prospect Point and view the grand spectacle with us.

Look eastward over the back of Missionary Ridge, over the Chichamauga woods, over sixty miles of lesser hills and mountains, and the horizon ends in a blue wall which rises 6,000 feet above the sea level. That is the Blue Ridge of North Carolina. In other directions the prospect is not quite so extensive, but your horizon rings in considerable portions of five states, and includes a wonderful variety of beautiful scenery. Towards the west lies Sand Mountain, inferior only to Lookout in size; towards the northwest lie the Raccoon mountains, and at your feet winds the clear Tennessee in graceful loops, the longest of which encloses Moccasin Point with bead-work of silver.

But our attention is drawn eastward by something more attractive just now than the loveliest scenery on the globe. There, two great armies face each other, ours in Chattanooga valley and that of our antagonists on Missionary Ridge.

It is about four miles from the point where we stand to Bragg's headquarters on the Ridge, but the atmosphere is so clear that we can distinctly see the entire field of battle from Rossville Gap on our right to the northern end of Missionary Ridge on Sherman's left.

Hooker with seven brigades, is on the right, preparing to strike the enemy's line at Rossville Gap; Sherman, his corps considerably strengthened by supporting divisions and brigades from other commands, is on the left, and Thomas, with his Army of the Cumberland, is in the center.

General Grant's first plan is to crush the confederate right with our left, and Sherman's men are already "up and at them." The distance is so great that we cannot distinctly see the movements of the troops: but from the sound of the battle we know that the two armies have grappled yonder among the hills north of the tunnel and are locked in a Herculo-Antaean wrestle, the issue of which is doubtful for hours.

It is noon, and, with occasional pauses, the storm of battle on our left still rages. It is 3 o'clock and the confederate line is still unbroken, except at Rossville, where General Hooker has taken the gap and is preparing to sweep Missionary Ridge lengthwise.

The army of the Cumberland in the valley below us is restless in spirit. There is "elegant fighting anywhere along the whole line," and they have not yet fired a shot. But tighten your belts, boys, and get ready, for in ten minutes your opportunity will come.

The hero of Vicksburg stands over yonder on Orchard Knob, and by his side stands Thomas, the "Rock of Chickamauga." Grant smokes his cigar and says very little; but his thoughts fall into line like battalions and Providence favors them. He is about to give an order which will crowd more stirring events into an hour than could be fully told in a volume. He is about to hurl his center against the enemy's works on Missionary Ridge.

Six guns fired from Orchard Knob at twenty minutes to four, was the sign for the beginning of the movement; and, as the guns sound at intervals of two seconds, like the the tolling of a mighty clock, we, who view the battle from Lookout, see a marvelous transformation take place in the valley below us. It gives birth to an armed force, who forsake their sheltering breastworks and form in line in the open valley, leaving no reserves behind.

What a magnificent line! Eleven brigades are in line of battle right before us and seven more are with Hooker on the right and eight divisions are with Sherman on the left.

For a few moments it seems like a grand review. Our line is so regular and their movements are so precise that they seem to be playing soldier.

But Missionary Ridge evidently is in dead earnest, for it leaps into volcanic action along its entire crest. Fifty pieces of artillery over yonder begin to play a stern battle hymn, and it is as though Vulcan were smiting the keys with his sledge, and the vault of the sky were hollow Ætna filled with the reverberant thunder of his mighty blows.

Shells come circling across the valley, trailing after them that peculiar wabbling shriek to which the nerves never become accustomed; and the air over the heads of our advancing line is dotted with white, circular clouds, telling where exploded shells have become down-rushing streams of jagged thunderbolt, dealing death and mutilation in our ranks. But our artillery is not silent. Orchard Knob confronts its huge antagonist with miraculous audacity, and slings shells as though it were little David standing in the valley of Elah and yonder wrathful ridge were Goliath of Gath. Forts Wood and Negley smoke and flame like volcano craters in not eruption; Fort King speaks with a royal voice; Fort Palmer belies its peaceful name and becomes a pugilist whose iron-knuckled blows go straight from the shoulder with telling effect; and even Moccasin Point, almost out of the fight on account of distance, reaches the ridge along high parabolas which seem to know just where to curve to earth.

Here is a panorama of war four miles in length, a panorama where the guns paint their own smoke as it rolls in billowing clouds from their bellowing mouths; where the fire is not red streaks of pigment on canvas, but leaps and flashes like the live lightnings of heaven; where lines of men advance, and opposing lines resist, and battle-flags flutter, and the sound of the battle—ah, how could paint that?—filling the whole valley with increasing roar, and enlisting every echo lurking in surrounding hill and mountain to add their voices to the astounding tumult.

Here is heroism indeed. Our men are not sustained by the excitement of close contest, but "stormed at by shot and shell," without firing a shot in reply, they are wading breast deep through the valley of death, seeking to gain a fighting foothold at the base of the ridge. Yes, and they have reached fighting ground at last; for steadying themselves for a moment, they roll down on that first line of works at the further side of the valley as the waves of the wind swept Atlantic roll down on a low lying reef, and over it they go in a surge of victory, scattering their antagonists like flying foam far up the side of the ridge. Who can tell what followed. A breathing spell of a few minutes; then yielding to a common heroic impulse, without orders, contrary to orders in fact, our men face that flaming roof and resolve to climb it. Some of the leaders try to halt the line, knowing that they are exceeding orders, but who can halt that which is to be, for God commands the line now, not General Grant.

Up, up they struggle; not one of those trim lines of battle such as you see in pictures, but irregular, scattering, bent down here and up there, a zigzag line drawn across a very rough page, hardly a line at all in places—a confused scramble of struggling men, each man for himself, yet each man for the flag which flutters o'er him—an altogether unmilitary line except that it will go forward. They are now within easy range of musketry, and a tempest of lead is sweeping down the slope. The marvel is that any of our men dared to face it, or lived through it, for every man will have to pass scores of bullets on his way to the crest.

The sun is now balancing level rays over the back of Lookout, and what our men do to win the day they must do quickly. Yes, and they are doing it! "Fighting Phil" seems to be a little in the lead, but other commands are nearing the works at the same time.

Our men are now breasting waves of fire within a few rods of the works. Bragg and Breckenridge are striving to rally their wavering line; they are hurling rocks on the heads of our men only a few feet below them, and shouting "Chickamauga" as a term of reproach.

But they could not give our brave boys a more inspiring battle cry. The grand old Army of the Cumberland are bent on taking a look over towards Chickamauga from the crest of Missionary Ridge, and Bragg and all of his army cannot longer hold them back.

Yonder is a flag at the works—it is on them! and another there! and another there! and at almost the same moment our victorious army sweep their foes from the crest of the ridge, capturing fifty pieces of artillery and many prisoners.

We are too glad too give in detail the substantial results of that splendid victory; but as long as battles are narrated the story of Missionary Ridge will have power to stir the blood to quickened pulsations.

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