# MEXICO'S BACKWOODS

## The Unknown Regions of Our Sister Republic.

### WHERE MILLIONS OF SILVER ARE

A Land Full of Tin, Iron, Coal, Copper and Hemp Fields—Ruins and Pyramids.

TAMPICO, AUG. 20, 1891.—[Special correspondence to THE HERALD.]—"Unknown Mexico." This title might be given to the whole of the Mexican republic. The country contains states which have never been explored. It has vast regions which have not been trodden by the foot of the white man. The Mexicans themselves do not know it, and we Americans have not the slightest conception of it. Look at the size of the country. If you will take all the Atlantic states from Maine to Florida and sew them into a crazy quilt your patch work will not cover much more than half of Mexico. It is one-fifth of the size of the United States, including Alaska, and some of its great states, whose inhabitants are Indians, are as big as our best territories. Take the vast mineral region of Sonora. It is as big as Kansas, and it has a climate and soil very much like that of lower California. It adjoins Arizona, and it is said to be full of gold and silver. I met an American miner who had made something like a million dollars in mines in the central part of Mexico, and he told me that the great mining region of the future was Sonora, and that the greater part of it had never been prospected. Such mines as have been worked are not far from the sea, and these have produced fortunes in the past. The Carmen mine was worked during the years between 1820 and 1830, and it produced during this time $25,000,000. The Babicanora mine has already produced $31,000,000, and there are other mines which are turning out great quantities of ore. Sonora has but one railroad, a branch of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe system, which runs from the Southern Pacific to Guaymas, on the Gulf of California. This territory has other minerals besides gold and silver and is one of the favorite prospecting fields along the west coast. Just below it is the state of Sinaloa, not quite as big as Ohio, which is also full of minerals. It has one mine which has produced $85,000,000, and which still turns out ore, yielding from $85 to $115 a ton. Any ore that yields over $30 a ton will pay by the rudest of mining methods, even in Mexico, and we mine a great deal of ore, which runs less than $5 per ton. There is another mine in Sinaloa that has turned out 200,000 tons of ore and this ore has averaged at least $60 a ton. This is the Tejo mine. Its present output is about twenty-four tons a day and its ore will average at the present $125 a ton. There are a great many Ameridans now going to Sinaloa and I understand that they are engaged in lumber as well as mining. The state is full of dye-woods and hundreds of tons are being cut monthly. It has some of the finest of furniture woods, and mahogany and ebony are used by the poorest classes in buliding their huts. The capital of the state is Culiacon and there is little railroad running from the coast to it. There are a number of American residents at the capital and they have, I understand, given the place quite a boom.

UNKNOWN EL DORADOS.

How many Americans have heard of the state of Guerrero? It is one of the richest mining regions of Mexico, and it is said that its soil is a crust of silver and gold. Here the first mines were worked by the Spaniards, and the country contains hundreds of abandoned mines to-day. It lies on the Pacific and it is only partially known. It had one mine which produced 565,000 ounces of silver in a few months, and it is surrounded by great states which are now being for the first time carefully investigated. Oaxaca, just below it, is now being penetrated by the Mexican Southern railroad, and this will bring a vast gold-bearing region into the market. The state is the one in which President Diaz was born, and it is the one which will be on the Tehuatuepic ship railway, if it is ever completed. It has vast areas of good land, and I know half a dozen American capitalists who expect to make fortunes out of the coal fields, which they say they have discovered in it. Coal brings about $30 a ton in Mexico city, and there are said to be fine iron deposits in near proximity to these coal fields. The climate of all this part of Mexico is very fine, and the capitalist who would buy some of the agricultural lands along this route would make a fortune. The public lands are worth from 20 to 45 cents an acre, and they will raise coffee and sugar and all kinds of grain. This new railroad will, and does already, tap the mining regions of the state of Pueblo, which contain both silver and gold, and one of the finest specimens of gold ever brought into Mexico city was shown to an American business man there by an Indian from this state about a month ago. It was a nugget of solid gold as big as your fist. The American entered into a contract with the man for the development of the region where it was found, and he traveled with him on horseback for several days, when the Indian told him that he had forgotten the place. This was of course a lie.

DURANGO AND CHIHUAHUA.

Durango and Chihuahua are among the better known of the mineral regions of the Mexican states, and they are both being worked with great profit. The mine operated by Boss Shepard is said to be turning out $70,000 a month and it has turned out $300,000,000 in the past. The same state has another district which has yielded $60,000,000 of silver, and there is a mine near the city of Chihuahua which produced more than $10,000,000 a year for thirty years. There are a number of Pittsburg men who are working the Durango mine, and capitalists from Denver and Kansas City are investing here. The Candelaria mine in Durango has yielded about $60,000,000 and there are a number of old mines which are being reclaimed in this district. The state of Cothuila which adjoins Texas on the north, and which is bounded on the east by Chihuahua and Durango, is another good mining region.

It has two mines which average more than $274 per ton, and the Santa Rosa mine has produced as high as $5,600 a ton. An American company is working the Santa Gertrudis mine and this has produced as high as $1,670 a ton. This same state has coal fields which C. P. Huntington's Mexican road now taps and a new railroad will shortly be built, I am told, by him through this state to Monte Rey. The state of Jallsco is another rich mining country, and I am told that tin mines have lately been discovered there. There is said to be a tin mountain in this state, wqich averages 55 per cent. of pure tin, and with the rudest methods they are taking out about 600 pounds a day. The mines are about 100 miles from a railroad, but the tin is so pure that they are liable to come into competition with the mines of Dakota and Cornwall.

SOUTHERN MEXICO.

The chief development of Mexico during the near future will in all probability be in the south or in the south-central part of the country. Vast areas of land are now being taken up by foreign capitalists and I find Americans buying land everywhere. The field of coffee planting is a favorite one and all along the west coast, in the states of Colima, Michoacan and Oaxaca, it is said that the finest of coffee can be raised. I passed through thousands of acres of coffee land, as yet undeveloped, in the trip I took from Mexico city down through Orizaba and Cordova, and I found coffee growing wild in my trip from San Luis Potosi to Tampico, which I took yesterday. I met at Jalapa a New Orleans coffee merchant, Mr. Westfeldt, who practically controls the coffee export of Mexico. He tells me that the best coffee in the country comes from the west coast and that there are plantations in Vera Cruz which pay a profit of from $40,000 to $50,000 a year. It takes about five years to make a coffee plantation but it is no hard matter and the plants are practically left to themselves. They are started in sprouts planted in rows nine feet apart and they grow to be bushes about ten feet high and produce at the fifth year. Bananas are planted between the rows of bushes to shade them, and there is a profit from the bannana orchard as well as from the coffee. After your plantation is in bearing each tree will produce from one to two pounds and it costs about 7 cents a pound to pick it and get it to market. It sells for 25 cents a pound and you can count on twelve or 13 cents a pound clear profit every year. Coffee orchards in bearing are hard to buy and they bring from $100 to $200 and $300 per acre. I am told that this unused land can be bought for $1 per acre and there is no doubt but that a portion would be sold in big lots for much less. The coffee export of Mexico is steadily increasing and the United States consumes the most of it. The prospect is that the American proprietors will increase, as the plantations require little attention after once well started, and by spending a month or so in Mexico each year one could attend to the gathering of his crop and draw his profits regularly.

YUCATAN AND TABASCO.

The northeast horn of Mexico is one of the least explored parts of the country. Still I have met a great many Americans in Mexico who have visited it and who have explored its outer edges. Take Yucatan. It is as big as South Carolina and it is about four times as big as Massachusetts. It contains some of the richest soil in the world, but only a small part of it is cultivated. The whole country has only 300,000 people and the most of these are pure Indians. They dress differently from the people of this part of Mexico, wear the whitest of white cottons and are notoriously clean. The whole country lives off of the hemp plant and it sells $3,000,000 worth of the dried leaves of this every year. Its capital is a place called Marida, a town of 5,000 people, lying twenty-five miles from the Gulf of Mexico and connected with the shore by railroads. The chief money used is the American dollar, and the banking of the town is done in connection with New York, and you buy drafts on New York instead of Mexico. The large part of the interior of Yucatan is jungle. This is inhabited by wild Indians, who scare the people of the capital by threatening to come down and take it, but who stick pretty well to their own campfires.

THE RUINS OF SOUTH AMERICA.

The ruins of Yucatan and the southern part of Mexico are among the most wonderful in the world. Yucatan was at the time of the contest about the most thickly populated part of the North American continent, and there are now sixty ruined cities, which date back to the days of the Aztecs. There are undoubtedly other vast cities in the jungles of Yucatan, Tabasco and Campeachy which are awaiting discovery, and there is a ruined palace in Tabasco which covers more than an acre, and which stands upon a platform of stone forty feet high. This palace is the ruined city of Palenque, and near this is another ruined city, which was named after Pierre Lorillard, of New York, who furnished the funds which brought about its discovery. Within one hundred miles of Merida there are hundreds of ruins containing magnificent carvings, the remains of great temples, of palaces and of sculptures showing that the Toltecs had a high state of civilization. And about the City of Mexico itself you find many ruins, which show you how little we know about these cultured Indians of the past. I visited near Puebla the ruins of the pyramid of Cholula. This pyramid has a base more than three times as big as that of the great pyramid which stands in the desert near Cairo to-day. Each of its sides was over a thousand feet in length and it was 177 feet high. Its top had an area of more than an acre and it was undoubtedly the biggest thing of the kind ever built by man. It was an old structure when Cortez came into the country and it is now merely a vast mound with the brick walls here and there showing out to mark its terraces. There is a dirty little church on its top, where it is said that Cortes built one, and a little Mexican city lies at its base. A street car ploughs its way through one side of it, and a big part of it has been torn down and the space covered by it turned into a corn field. In going into Mexico City from Puebla, you pass the pyarmide of the Sun and the Moon, which were places of worship when Montezuma lived and which to-day are great mounds of earth, one 150 and the other more than 200 feet high. About these pyramids in olden time there were other pyramids, and it is said that a holy city existed about them in times past. There was a city of 150,000 about the city of Cholula, and it was a sort of Mecca for the Aztecs. Within a few miles of Zacatecas there is another famous ruin, and in every part of this country there are unknown fields to be discovered for the ethnologist and student, as well as for the business man and the capitalist.

THE FUTURE SEAPORT OF MEXICO.

I write this letter at Tampico, which is bound to be the great seaport of the Mexico of the future. This place has one of the finest harbors of the world, and were it not for the bar in the front of it you could anchor all the navies of Europe in the mouth of the Panuco river. This bar is to be removed by means of jetties, and Colonel Cortheil, the man who was the first lieutenant of James B. Eads in making the jetties of the Mississippi, is in charge of this work. It is a greater work than was the making of the Mississippi jetties, and it is to cost millions of dollars. The jetties begin at the mouth of the Panuco river and run for 7,200 feet right out into the sea. They are 1,000 feet wide at the top and are walls of stone and wicker mats, which will become, by the drifting in of the sand, solid and permanent. When they have become consolidated they will be enclosed in a mass of heavy concrete, and they will be as strong as science can make them. The Panuco river is one of the biggest rivers in Mexico. It is about 1,300 feet wide, and has for miles from this point an average depth of thirty-three feet. Its waters flow into the sea at the rate of 280,000 cubic feet a second, and they go at such a rate that when confined in such a narrow channel they will carry the sand bar far out into the sea, and vessels of the largest tonnage will have a safe land-locked harbor here at Tampico.

The harbor at Vera Cruz is not a good one. The city is very unhealthy and it is out of the way to get to it. Tampico taps the center of the country. It has a new railroad now being built from Monterey through the rich state of Tamulipas to it, and another road will be projected south through one of the richest parts of Mexico to Mexico City. Within a few months the Mexican Central have opened their line from San Luis Potosi to it, and this harbor will make San Luis Potosi the commercial center of Mexico. It will open up the agricultural interior of the Panuco river, which is said to comprise the finest lands of the country, and will materially change all parts of Mexico.

DOWN THE MOUNTAINS TO TAMPICO.

The most picturesque ride in Mexico is on the Tampico railroad running from San Luis Potosi to Tampico. Its scenery is far grander than that found on the Mexican National from Vera Cruz to the capital, and I doubt whether there are as fine views anywhere on the American continent. I took the trip yesterday and I had the advantage of being one of the first tourists to go over the road. You will find nothing about the country in the guide books. The history of Mexico tells you nothing concerning it and the books descriptive of the country know it not. It has been unexplored save by the railroad and the ride was like blazing one's way through the wilderness at the rate of twenty miles an hour in a first-class car. I went to bed at night in the Pullman sleeper at San Luis Potosi and awoke at the little station of Cardinas, where we ate a good breakfast with about fifty Indian men and women gazing in at the windows during the meal.

There were pretty girls in all stages of dress and undress and of all varieties of color from a Jersey cream to a rich mahogany brown. There were girls with short skirts of red flannel showing out below loose, white, corsetless chemises, and there were women whose long black hair streamed down their backs, and others who had their locks put up in Greek knots. There were brigands with big hats and fierce black eyes, and there were frowsy-headed boys and girls who hung about the station and hid behind their fathers whenever we looked at them. Leaving the gardens the road climbs up into the mountains. It takes you into a rocky region interspersed with patches of cultivation. It winds about like a snake, crawls up great great hills and goes at the rate of fifty miles an hour down steep grades. The scenery is peculiarly Mexican. Here you pass a field of volcanic works. Adjoining it is another of soil as black as your hat in which two peons in dirty white are scratching the ground with wooden plows, and next to this is a road over which a team of oxen with the yoke tied to their horns is pulling a wooden-wheeled Mexican cart. Next there is a stretch of cactus, and all around you are the rocky hills, bare of earth, which make you think of the barren mountains of Judea. As you go onward the soil grows richer and you soon whirl around a horseshoe bend and enter one of the most wonderful gorges of the world.

THE TAMOSOPO CANYON.

This is the Tamosopo cañon. I rode through on the top of a box car and it is the most wonderful ride in the United States. Starting in an amphiteatre of the richest green, you shoot out over a waterfall into a great gorge and ride for thirty miles along the edge of precipices, besides rushing rivers and through the wildest of forests, with the mountains above and the earth thousands of feet below you until in an hour you find yourself out of the temperate zone and down into the tropics with your eyes dancing and your head buzzing in trying to comprehend the kaleideoscopic panorama which you have passed through. In some places the rocks were bare and great cliffs overhang the road, roofed only by the sky. Here you go into tunnels and the smoke along the top of the car makes you think you are at the entrance of Dante's Inferno. And so you pass on until you find yourself in forests of orchids and your ears are saluted with the rough voices of the birds of the tropics. You are now in the low lands of the coast, and the air is growing hot. This branch of the railroad cost $10,000,000 to build, and the line from Tampico to San Luis Potosi is perhaps the most expensive railroad in Mexico.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.


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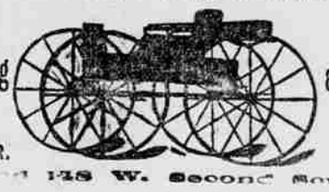

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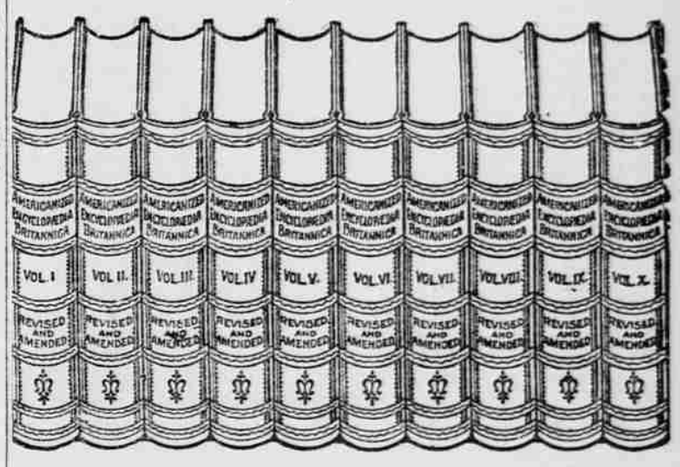

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