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AN APOSTOLIC FORTNIGHT.

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Text: "I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days."—Galatians 1: 8.

The verse records a memorable visit made by one good man to another, more than eighteen centuries ago. The visit lasted but fifteen days, but it left an impression on both men that lasted for a lifetime, and on their cause that lasted for all time. It was a noteworthy event for many reasons.

The visit was notable because of the men. They belonged to that limited and elect class known as "the world's great men." Their names are catalogued in that list, whose numbers are few, but who live at the top of humanity and are recognized as its leaders. They were prophetic souls, men with the vision of seers. A visit from John Milton to Oliver Cromwell would interest us, or from George Washington to Frederick the Great, or from Homer to Shakespeare. In some respects of deeper interest, for of greater moment, was Paul's visit to Peter.

The visit was notable also because of the cause these men represented. They stood near the natal hour of the world's greatest religious movement. Christianity was as yet an unknown force in the world. Next to Christ, these two men were to do more than any others in establishing the church.

MEXICO

MRS. A. T. GRAYBILL.

A young schoolboy spent a year in Mexico. After he had been back in the homeland some time he wrote, "While one is there he thinks he wants to get back to the States, but when he gets back he forgets the dirt and all the disagreeable features and remembers only the beauty of the nights, the color of the mountains, the smell of the Chaparral in the early morning, and the good qualities of the people instead of the bad. He wants to hear the sound of their language, and the 'Land of To-morrow' calls him back". There is a strange, almost inexplicable charm about the land, a charm which takes hold upon all who spend any considerable length of time there, in reasonably favorable conditions.

When one crosses the Rio Grande, he at once realizes that he is in a foreign land. The railroads and free interchange of communication have made changes in the conditions along the border States, perhaps increasing the comforts of the people, but certainly not increasing the picturesqueness of the scene. It is still, however, very easy to get into the "unbeaten paths" and find one's self in a land so strange and foreign, as to seem almost like the Orient. The people of all classes, high and low, are kind, friendly, and hospitable to a degree that even "Southern hospitality" does not dream of.

There is magnificent scenery. Nothing could surpass the view which spreads out before the traveler as he goes down into the Valley of Mexico, after crossing the summit of the mountains, near Toluca, on the National Railroad. There are the gardens of vegetables and flowers, the fields of waving corn, the stately Naguey, or Century Plant, in regular rows stretching off into the distance as far as the eye can see, the villages and shrines dotting every hillside and valley,

Mexico City coming into view with its magnificent Cathedral and churches with their domes and towers, and off in the distance snow-clad Popocatepetl rearing its summit nearly 18,000 feet into the clouds, while the "White Lady" or Iztaccihuatl nearby, glimmering in the clear light, is no less beautiful. In the highly rarified atmosphere of these altitudes, distant objects seem near. Outline and color are wonderfully distinct, and a peculiar charm is about every scene whether in the dawn, at midday, or at the twilight hour.

If one is interested in antiquities he may visit the ruins of Tula, Mitla, or Palenque which attest the existence of a wonderful civilization long before the Spanish conquest. These Mexican Indians were living in well-built houses and using woven fabrics while our American Indians were crude savages, living in wigwams.

If one is practical and does not care for antiquities and scenery there are the wonderful mineral, manufacturing and agricultural resources. The rich mines which aroused the cupidity of the Spaniards, from the king to the adventurer, are still yielding untold wealth. There is need of all kinds of manufacture, along which lines there is very little development as yet, while the poorly cultivated but fertile lands continue to produce from two to three enormous crops of corn each year, when there is rain.

The religious condition of Mexico after three centuries under the absolute control of Spain may naturally awaken interest. There are always those who do not believe in Missions to Mexico. They say it is already a Christian country. Let us send our men and our money to the heathen. To answer this, let us turn a moment to the Spanish conquest, and the conversion of these Mexican Indians. Let us get our information from the Spanish priests themselves. Their records show the Indians to have been a very religious people, their life made up largely of religious processions and festivals. Every week and every month had a feast for some

god or idol, to which sacrifices of flowers, fruits, and even human life were made. When the conquering Spaniard first appeared, the people in religious processions went out to meet him and we are told "an immense number of priests mingled with the crowd, swinging their aromatic censers". At first the Spaniards, with only the poorest kind of interpreter, asked the devout Indian to destroy his idol and to become Christian. He naturally refused and declared these were the gods who cared for him. Cortes, finding them slow to yield, ordered his men to throw down the idol and roll it down the stairs of the Temple. "An altar was hastily constructed, an image of the Virgin and Child placed over it and Mass was said for the first time in the New World". The whole crowd of Indians was baptized. Thus the conversion of the Indian was carried on. Las Casas, one of the most active priests, made protest at this method. He wrote, "the only way of doing this is by long, assiduous and faithful preaching until the heathen shall gather some idea of the true nature of the Deity and of the doctrine they are to embrace."

It seems evident that these simple people, to avoid bloodshed and strife, allowed their idols to be replaced by others. The same altar, the same sacrifice and worship, only a new idol. Thus from their own priests and writers it is evident that there was no real conversion of the native Mexican, and there has never been any successful effort on the part of the Roman Church to associate religion and morals in the life of the Mexican people.

Toward the end of the eighteenth century such was the cruelty of the Spanish rule, the ignorance and poverty and moral degradation of the people, that the priests once more denounced the conditions. Again the testimony of Roman Catholic priests and Mexican patriots furnishes the strongest proofs that Rome had not made Christian the noble land conquered by Cortes. Finally one of these patriot priests, Miguel Hadalgo, became the Washington of Mexico. A long

fierce struggle was begun which was not, in a certain sense, settled until in 1859, under Juarez, the separation of the Church and State was effected, the "Reform Laws" were established, and religious liberty proclaimed.

To-day Mexico calls upon the Christians of the United States for help. The prejudice of former years, because of what General Grant called "the most unjust of modern wars," is largely of the past. General intelligence has increased so that the missionary, if not always welcome, is generally safe. As soon as the Reform Laws were really established, and religious liberty was proclaimed, steps were taken to open mission work by the leading denominations. Many Bibles had found their way into the country with our soldiers and had, in some degree, prepared the way for the missionary. The country was so unsettled, and for a long time the new law proclaiming freedom of worship existed only in name, therefore it was not until 1872 to 1874 that the first missions were really opened.

The task before them was to build up a pure, self-supporting, self-propagating church. This work has gone on in the face of persecution and the strongest opposition by a corrupt Church and priesthood, and a most fanatical people held down in their ignorance and superstition by the very Church itself. To-day all the leading denominations have missions in Mexico, and the territory is so divided up that there is no city or town of any considerable size where the gospel may not be heard.

The different denominations are drawing nearer together in all lines of work. Most of them keep to an arrangement not now to enter any territory already occupied by some other denomination, unless it is sufficiently large to furnish work to both. In some cases a friendly arrangement has been made between two churches to divide up the territory occupied by both, leaving only one Christian church in a place. The noble American Bible Society helps all denominations. There is an evangelical hymn book used

by nearly all the churches. A Christian literature is being prepared, and is read by an ever-increasing number of intelligent men and women. Christian schools are a great power. Without them the youth of Mexico must be under the irreligious or atheistic teachers of Government schools, or the fanatical narrowness of the devout Roman Catholics. There are some really fine denominational schools, from which well educated men and women are going out from year to year to help in the uplift of their nation. Thus, there is to-day an intelligent, well-equipped native ministry, and good native teachers both men and women, many of whom have been called to fill high places in Government schools. There is still before us the building up of a great Christian university, and the capacity of other schools and colleges must be greatly increased to meet the present needs.

Self-support is gaining ground from year to year. In the early days, because of greater poverty among the people, the intense persecutions, and the financial exactions of the Catholic Church, every trace of which the missions wish to avoid, the work was started along lines which the natives could not support. There is still need that help should be furnished for educational work, for printing presses and many other departments of work, but there is an ever-growing desire on the part of the native Church to do its part. There are several churches now which have become entirely self-supporting and are helping to evangelize other dark places of the land.

In 1901 the two largest Presbyterian bodies united their four Presbyteries to form a Synod,—the Presbyterian Church of Mexico. There is reason to hope that further steps in this general direction by other denominations may be taken in the not distant future.

Year after year there is now held a Convention of Christian Workers, largely made up of Sunday-school workers and members of the Young People's Societies. From five to six hundred Protestants, travelling on special trains, meeting for

a week in some city, and with enthusiasm carrying out really fine programs, with especially good music, is making a great impression on the country, and it is daily becoming more evident that Protestantism is becoming a power in the life of Mexico. There are still battles to win, grave problems to solve, difficulties to overcome, but the door is open as never before. The people are awakening and broadening in their ideas. As the Aztec Indian was of a religious nature, so his descendant of to-day when won to give his allegiance to Christ, is earnest and devout, considering nothing too hard to suffer for his Saviour. The youth want education and they are going to have it at all cost. If mission schools furnish it they may be won for Christ. The present time is a time of crisis in Mexico. How shall it be met? The Southern Presbyterian Church has a splendid field, holding dominion, as Kipling puts it, "From Palm to Pine". It offers to-day one of the most wonderful opportunities for mission work to be found in this wide world. A work which calls for the best talent our Church can give to any land. There is a glorious promise for the harvest if the present opportunities are embraced. The appeal, the motto of Mexico Christians, is "MEXICO FOR CHRIST."