

A MEXICAN MINING TOWN.

Mr. A. D. Temple, writes the following interesting letter to the New York *Sunday Courier*:

To the mining man acquainted with the sagebrush covered sand deserts, and bleak, snow-capped peaks characteristic of the silver-producing regions of Nevada and Utah, the verdure-covered mountains and shady *quetradas* of San Dimas are a most agreeable change.

Along the banks of the rushing, noisy stream that gives motive power to the *haciendas* in which the rich ores of the district are worked, are numerous orange and banana plantations, where the light green of the broad-leaved banana plants and the deep green of the orange show in enticing contrast to the ripe golden fruit. Nestling in the shade of their taller companions may be seen the bright scarlet blossoms of the pomegranate and the ripe fruit as well, looking almost like waxen imitations. White limes and guavas abound on every side in such profusion as to almost destroy their market value. Here and there are to be seen trees bearing the alligator pear, with a pulp reminding one in taste and appearance of beef marrow. Farther up, just below the extreme lower limit of frost, the far-famed *cheimoyas* attains its greatest perfection.

Up the mountain side above the stream are scattered at short intervals numbers of small corn fields usually cultivated by some independent proprietor who, secure in having abundant rains to bring his crops to maturity, lies lazily under the grass-thatched roof, smokes his corn-shuck cigarette, chews a huge piece of the roasted stalk of the maguay, or dozes away the day supremely and serenely indifferent to the latest quotations of Mexican bonds, the next candidate for President, or the highest ruling rates for Mexican dollars in San Francisco, while his wife grinds corn of last year's crop into *torillas* (the Mexican staff of life), and the brown-skinned babies, naked and unheeded, play and tumble about with the dogs on the floor.

Flocks of green parrots wheel and circle overhead with ceaseless chattering, while occasionally a squad of harsh-voiced macaws, gorgeous in red heads, yellow bills, blue wings and green tails add their discordancy to the general din. A species of black pheasant apparently, known as "chichalaka," calls to its mate from the heavy shade of a wild fig tree with a voice forcibly reminding one of the grating of an ungreased windlass. The black vultures flap lazily around searching for carrion, and when found, light on the trees around with the business-like gravity of undertakers and the judicial solemnity of a coroner's jury.

A "kelela," that curious link between the eagles and vultures, first described, I believe, by Audobon, is perched in a tree by the side of the trail, waiting Micawber-like for something to turn up. His yellow beak and white head causes him at first sight to be mistaken for our representative bird. Frightened by the clatter of horses' hoofs, a doe with her two fawns darts from the edge of the creek across the narrow trail and disappears in the heavy brush on the other side.

Wild life is abundant, and it is with surprise that rounding a sharp turn we see San Dimas but a few hundred yards ahead. Built on a steep declivity with its lower buildings abutting on the creek, and its upper ones extending up towards the top of the spur of the Sierra Madre that towers 4,000 feet above, San Dimas has the appearance of having slid from some more lofty altitude to its present position, and being only prevented from going lower by the abrupt cliffs that bound the west side of the creek, on the summits of which the wild goats and deer show themselves feeding undisturbed, and apparently within easy rifle shot.

A mule train is slowly passing through the main street as we ride up, loaded with silver ore for some of the several *haciendas*, that we can see below us; on ahead rides a dark-skinned *muchacho* astride of the old bell mare, and behind straggle along the pack animals, stopping as occasion offers to pick up a banana peeling or

an old straw hat that they munch with the keenest appreciation as they again start along, oblivious to the objurgations of the *arrieras*, whose epithets if translated would excel in searching and earnest eloquence the most impassioned accents of a fishwoman.

Each mule is carrying at least a *carga* (300 lbs. Spanish), and to every five mules there is an *arriero* to attend them, and refasten the sacks in case they get loose from the network of rawhide ropes that fastens them to the pack saddle.

On either side of the cobble paved street we have a view of the mixed assortment that forms the stock of a Mexican storekeeper. A sack of dried red pepper and a bale of sun-dried beef lie on the floor under a roll of French calicoes, and some unbleached sheetings that are manufactured in this country. Cans of Blue Point oysters and Columbia river salmon jostle against Bordeaux sardines and English sweet biscuits. Spanish wines, French brandies and cordials, English "Old Tom," gin and Mexican "mescal" (a fiery but pure liquor distilled from the juice of the century plant), and American bitters stand side by side on the shelves.

The dry goods are all of European make save the coarsest cotton goods. With the exception of black, which is the chief favorite, the colors are of the brightest, red being very popular. American fabrics are conspicuous by their absence, which is certainly strange taking into consideration the geographical position of the two countries, and the reputed enterprise of the Yankee manufacturer.

American firearms, however, and ammunition are fully appreciated to the almost total exclusion of all other makes. Winchester repeaters and Colt's six shooters are more familiar to the Mexican ranchero or miner than to the average New Yorker.

The stores are variety stores in the most liberal sense of the word, and it is impossible in a short article to give more than the merest hint of the various wares that make up their assortment.

At the lower end of the street is the plaza, the only piece of level ground in the town, and containing perhaps one-sixth of an acre. Around it are built the court-house, jail and church. I write them in their order of merit, for the Mexican priests are, as a rule, to put it mildly, "a hard lot."

Back of the plaza on the mountain side beneath a dilapidated shed, is a crude attempt at a refining furnace known as a *vaso*. In appearance it is half way between a blacksmith's forge and an old-fashioned bake oven, such as they have in "Ole Virginny." Here the concentrated tailings are brought from the various *haciendas* and the gold and silver extracted by a process which, though thorough, is rather expensive.

A crowd of Mexicans are usually gathered around it, watching the operation which is carried on by two men, one in lieu of an engine acting as motive power of the bellows, and the other being expert and general manager of the business.

The airy costume of the loungers, if introduced in New York during the dog days, would undoubtedly become popular could some members of the Knickerbocker club be induced to set the fashion. Its intrinsic merits are cheapness, coolness and simplicity. The items are leather sandals, wide cotton drawers cut "sailor fashion," supported at the waist by a red or scarlet sash, calico shirt with very abbreviated tails worn outside of the drawers, allowing a free passage of air, a broad-brimmed palm leaf hat; and a breech cloth called a "cotensie" completes the outfit. Total value, about \$3.50.

Up the *cordon* behind the *vaso* winds a serpentine trail fit only to be traveled by mountain-bred animals. Far above us a cloud of dust shows that another pack-train is coming, probably loaded like the first with silver ore, as most of the mines, with the prominent exceptions of the Soledad and Candelaria, are situated on the other side of the mountain.

The sun is beating down vigorously, and we will take shelter beneath the cool portal of our friend Don Antonio, smoke cigars equal to the

best Havanas, drink cool lemonade and, while our horses are resting and feeding, make our plans for starting to visit the celebrated mines of Tecolote and Promontorio, that are now lying idle, in the early morning before the sun shines on yonder high peak to the westward. Till then, *adios*.

NEW INVENTIONS.

We publish descriptions of the following new inventions, obtained through Dewey & Co., Mining and Scientific Press Patent Agency, San Francisco:

REVOLVING FIRE-ARMS.—Alfred Swingle, No. 114 and 124 Spear street, S. F. Patented Feb. 17, 1880. No. 224,742. This invention relates to an improvement in fire-arms or guns of that class known as "revolving breech-loaders." All the movements necessary to charge and discharge the arm are positive, and none of them depend upon any spring except the hammer and trigger, which are actuated in a manner similar to those in other arms. The arm consists of very few simple and strong parts, which are easily dismounted or assembled. Each cartridge in the magazine, as it reaches a position in line with the barrel, is forced into the chamber of the barrel by a plunger which is caused to reciprocate in line with the barrel by mechanism. The plunger has two steel hooks attached to its front end, top and bottom to serve as an extractor, and when the plunger is drawn back it will be seen that the rotation of the magazine will carry the flange of each shell into a position between these hooks and the head of the plunger. When this plunger is forced forward it carries the cartridge into the chamber of the barrel, and when it is drawn back it brings the shell with it, so that it again lies in the magazine ready to be carried around to the point of discharge by the rotation of the magazine. The advantages claimed for this invention are as follows: It is strong and yet simple, capable of standing hard service with little liability of getting out of order. It can be loaded and fired with great facility, and for durability and penetration is equal to the best arm in use. The magazine being so constructed that the cartridges are side by side instead of being in line with each other, with the primer of one resting on the point of the preceding one, there is no danger of premature explosion. The machinery working with positive movements, there is no liability of its failing to perform service. It can be used as a single breech-loader or repeater. The principle can also be applied to pistols, shot-guns, rifles or machine guns.

PAVING TILE.—Wm. J. Mitchell, S. F. Patented Feb. 24, 1880. No. 224,938. This invention relates to certain improvements in tiles and blocks which are employed for paving purposes, and it consists in the formation of a block, so that its upper half will project beyond the lower half upon two adjacent sides, said projecting portions being provided with dovetail depressions and interlocking projections. By this construction the projecting upper half of each block will rest upon the corresponding projections of the lower halves of the two blocks lying next to it upon these two sides, and each block thus supports two others, and is, in turn, supported by two others. It is usually preferable to lay the tiles with cement, so that when it has set the whole bed will be solid.

MEASURING FAUCET.—Wm. M. Sack, Oakland, Cal. Patent No. 224,108. Dated Feb. 3, 1880. This device relates to certain improvements in faucets for automatically measuring liquids; and it consists in certain details of construction, especially a connecting air-pipe between the two measures, by which the air expelled by the liquid entering one is transmitted to fill the space in the one being emptied.