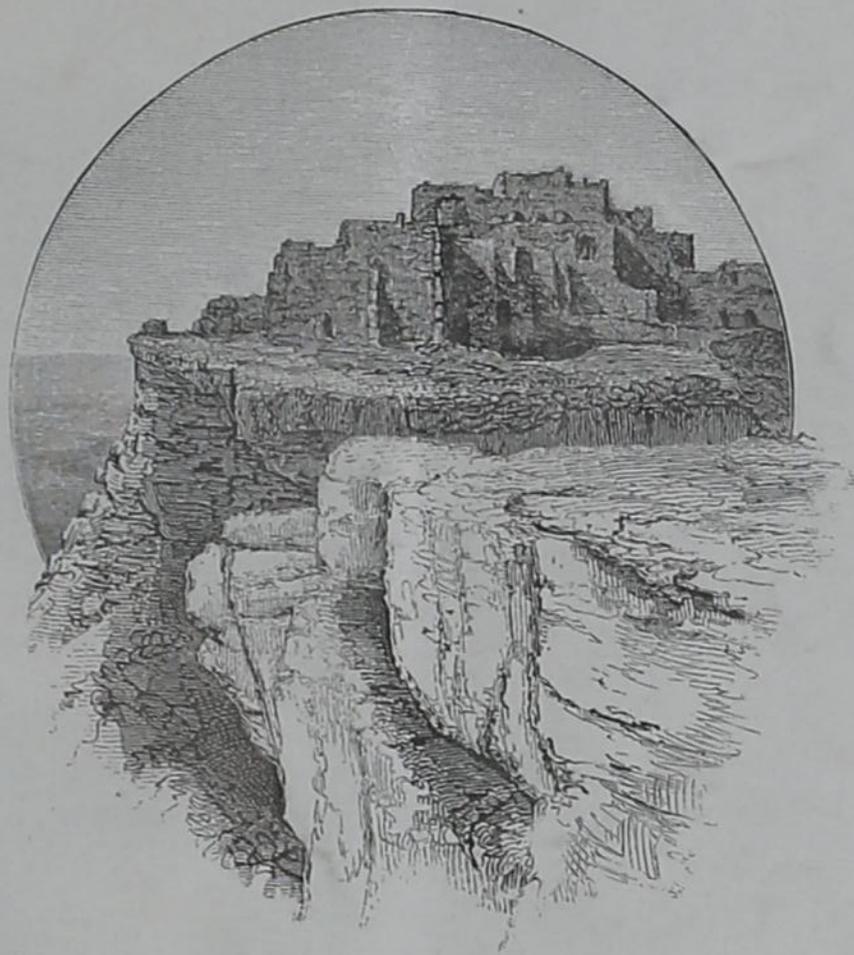


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NEW MEXICO.



BY CHARLES R. BLISS.

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The New West.

NEW MEXICO.

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NEW MEXICO.



Taos Pueblo.

THIS Territory, one of the last portions of the country to be developed, was one of the first to be discovered and occupied by Europeans. While the entire Atlantic sea-board was in the possession of the Indians, the Spaniards were ascending the Rio Grande, subverting a civilization far superior to that of the aborigines of New England, founding settlements more ancient than those of Plymouth or St. Augustine, and building churches older than the oldest in Massachusetts or Virginia. Royal officers issued, in New Mexico, decrees in the name of the king of Spain, before Bradford and Carver were born, and built on the public plaza of Santa Fe a palace, still standing, which antedates every other vestige of royalty in the land. If priority of settlement were of itself sufficient to command respect, New Mexico might challenge it from every State in the Union.

NATURAL FEATURES OF THE TERRITORY.

With an area nearly large enough to absorb the whole of New England, New York and New Jersey, it has ample room for a vast population. The eastern third of this area is an elevated plateau, varying from four thousand to six thousand feet above the sea, slightly descending eastward, intersected by rivers, and, in many places, covered with grasses which are adequate to support innumerable herds and flocks. This plateau at length rises into mountains, which are sometimes called the Eastern range of the Rocky Mountains, less elevated than in regions farther north, yet not wanting in grandeur. Westward from this range is the valley of the Rio Grande—a river of not very great magnitude, but of vast practical utility. Through the first hundred miles of its course, from the boundary of Colorado on the north, it dashes swiftly along the bed of a canon from one hundred to four hundred feet deep, on each side of which are high and arid table-lands of wide extent; but, emerging from these, it irrigates broad meadows, and is carried far out over low plains, which produce immense harvests of wheat, barley, grapes, peaches and apricots. Rising from the valley, westward, the country becomes broken. The central portion of the Territory, to the boundary of Arizona, is, to a considerable extent, barren and desolate; while the San Juan River, in the north, and the Gila, in the south, — both flowing westward into the Colorado, — furnish facilities for irrigation to regions large in extent, and possessed of great fertility. Contiguous farms, covering the whole country, will never exist in New Mexico, — as is true throughout the whole Rocky Mountain region, — yet the acres fitted to the purposes of agriculture are numbered by millions.

The latitude of the Territory, — corresponding to that of

South Carolina, — and its altitude, ranging from four thousand to eight thousand feet above the sea, with many peaks rising much higher, combine to give it a peculiar climate. While in summer the heat of some of its valleys is almost tropical, and in winter the cold of the more elevated localities is almost frigid, the general influences of the climate are most agreeable and healthful. The atmosphere is dry; the heat of the sun is tempered by mountain breezes; the storms, though sometimes fierce, are short; and, when better methods of living are introduced, it will become one of the most favored localities in the country for invalids.

The mineral wealth of the Territory is believed to be inexhaustible. The Spaniards, from the time they entered the country, in 1542, to the time when the Indians rose against them, in 1680, were absorbed in mining. They forced the native population into a kind of bondage, and kept thousands of them under vigilant task-masters in mining-shafts, traces of which are now found in various parts of the Territory. They obtained immense amounts of silver and gold and turquoise. At length their oppressions became so galling that the Indians rebelled, and, after a severe struggle, the Spaniards were driven out of the country; and, at the end of fourteen years, were permitted to return only under a solemn compact that mining should not be resumed. The natives had, meantime, filled up a great many of the mining-shafts, so that the locality of some of the richest of them is now unknown. The Spaniards had no power, in face of the watchful Indians, to reopen the mines, and turned their attention to farming and grazing. These mines remain as they were left two hundred years ago; and if rich when methods of reduction were rude, they must be much richer under the improved methods of the present day. Two or three colonies

of Americans have located themselves, at different points, both in the northern and the southern parts of the Territory, and have already developed valuable mines.

THE PEOPLE.

These are of several races — the Americans, the Indians and the Mexicans. Of Americans there are about ten thousand, engaged in grazing and mining, and in conducting the general business of the Territory.

The Indians number about twenty thousand; half of them are nomadic. A few years ago they were restless and fierce; but of late they have become satisfied with their reservations, and occasion no trouble. The most advanced of these nomadic Indians are the Navajoes,— numbering about eight thousand,— who possess the art of dyeing wool and weaving fine blankets. They have large flocks, and are pursuing the business of grazing with much skill and success.

The Pueblo Indians are considerably higher in the scale of civilization than the nomadic tribes. They are descendants of the old Aztecs, though some of them are supposed to be descended from the Toltecs — a still older race. They retain many of the characteristics of the people whom Cortez conquered. They live in large structures, four or five stories high, made of sun-dried bricks, and capable, sometimes, of sheltering more than two hundred people. Acoma — a cut of which is given on the cover of this pamphlet — is one of the most interesting of their towns. It is built on a plain sixty acres in extent, upon the top of a sandstone rock two hundred feet high, and is approached by a winding stairway cut in the rock. It was founded before the Spanish occupation, and, if captured, was left to itself, and is to-day inhabited by the race that have possessed it at least three hundred years.

The Taos Pueblo is of almost equal interest. A building not wanting in symmetry, five stories high, and perhaps two centuries old, serves as their principal dwelling. The Pueblo Indians cultivate the soil, sustain themselves without the aid of Government, and have been declared, by judicial authority, to be citizens. They speak the Spanish language, and also an Indian tongue, which they are not willing to impart to others. They are, apparently, fervent Catholics; but, beneath their Catholic faith, they retain the old beliefs of sun-worshippers. When they yielded to the invader, they took the religion that was imposed upon them, but retained their own. Romish missionaries in New Mexico, as in many other places, did not deem it necessary to eradicate errors, provided their converts adopted Romish forms. Humboldt says: "I have seen them masked, and, adorned with tinkling bells, perform savage dances around the altar, while a monk of St. Francis elevated the host." The emblems of heathen idolatry are seen in the homes of these fellow-countrymen of ours to-day, and utter as loud a call for missionary aid as reaches our churches from any other quarter.

The Mexicans are by far the most numerous portion of the population, reaching one hundred thousand souls. Varying in blood from nearly pure Castilian to nearly pure Indian, they possess qualities of great diversity. Some have all the alertness and acuteness of the Spaniard; others, all the stolidity and grossness of the Indian. A few are well educated, shrewd and successful in business, and intelligent upon current affairs; while the great mass are ignorant, superstitious, and, so far as fitness to discharge the duties of American citizenship is concerned, probably lower in the scale than any other class upon whom such duties have been imposed. They speak a foreign tongue, and are actuated by a foreign spirit.

Their arts of life belong to the sixteenth, rather than the nineteenth, century; and to mediæval Europe, rather than modern America. Their methods and implements of agriculture, the structure of their dwellings, and their means of intercommunication, are of a very rude and primitive type. Their beliefs are like those generally entertained in Christendom three centuries ago. Fables, that the rest of the world has outgrown, are current among them; and monkish practices, which ceased among civilized men long ago, are in full vigor there. The Penitentes — an order widely diffused among them — believe that the sins of the soul may be atoned for by lacerating the body; and, at a fixed time in spring, they assemble at a church, or in some desolate canon, and, armed each with a scourge, made of cactus or thorns, or whatever else is fitted to tear the flesh, they inflict the severest cruelties upon themselves. They then form a procession, headed by a man bearing a heavy cross, and, arriving at an appointed spot, they halt, bind the bearer of the cross upon it, and raise him from the ground, in imitation of the closing act in the life of Christ. The crucifixion not unfrequently ends in death. In 1877, four young men are reported to have ended life in this way in Southern Colorado.

To one familiar with Mexican history, the degraded condition of the people will not appear strange. At the time of the Spanish invasion, the civilization of the Aztecs would, in many respects, compare favorably with that of various European nations; but it rapidly disappeared under the tyranny of their conquerors. Measures of the most restrictive character were adopted. Many of the people were reduced to hopeless bondage. Trade was almost annihilated, by reason of the heavy taxes levied upon everything bought and sold. Charles II. prohibited the people of one province from hold-

ing any intercourse with those of another. Large numbers of unscrupulous Spanish officers were appointed over the people. It was declared an offence of great magnitude, to prefer a native before a Spaniard. Young declares that "the whole system of government was an unparalleled outrage upon the rights of humanity." The State found, in the Church, a willing ally in the work of subjugating the Mexicans. If the State adopted the policy of filling the higher political offices by Spaniards, so that, of fifty viceroys, only one was a native, the Church adhered to a similar policy, and almost invariably filled its higher positions with Spaniards. If the State imposed taxes to such extent as to enrich itself, by inflicting the evils of want and destitution, and even bondage, upon the people, the Church was not less active in filling its coffers. In the year 1805, she (the Church) was the possessor of forty-four million dollars in gold and silver coin; a third of the property of the city of Mexico is said to have been in her hands; and religious houses abounded in every part of the country. If the State believed that popular ignorance would afford the best conditions for the successful exercise of its tyranny, the Church not only took no pains to oppose that belief, but assented to it, and acted upon it herself. Piety, with intelligence, was the watchword of the churches in New England; piety, without intelligence, was the idea of the church of New Spain. Indeed, public schools were forbidden, under the avowed plea—"It is inexpedient for learning to become general in America."

New Mexico shared, with the rest of the nation, the evils of Spanish misrule. More than half of her people were, at one time, peons. Popular ignorance was universal, and there was nothing to relieve it. At as late a day as the American occupation, there was but one school in the Territory. Her

isolation gave full force to all repressing influences of civil and ecclesiastical authority within her own limits, while it made all connection with the busy world so infrequent as to have very little stimulating power. Save the trading expeditions that annually crossed the plains from Independence, Mo., there were no means of communication with the United States. There are, in New Mexico, no navigable rivers. Though the construction of the first railroad is now being vigorously pressed, yet there is not, up to this date — Jan. 1, 1879 — a rail-car running in the Territory. It is required, by the spirit of fairness, to admit that a people having such a history, and surrounded by such conditions, ought not to be reproached for the prevalence of superstition, or the lack of the spirit of progress.

THE WORK TO BE DONE.

New Mexico is an integral portion of our country, soon to become a State — the political peer of the most intelligent and honorable commonwealth in the land. Our eyes should be opened to the fact that, even before the next presidential election, we may have a new State, the main characteristics of which shall be a foreign language, a foreign spirit and popular ignorance. Were this ignorant population left to themselves, there would be hope that, by that common instinct which sometimes makes the mass safe in action, they would make right decisions at the polls; but they are not left to themselves. Politicians are as eager and unscrupulous in New Mexico as in Washington; and, if they make the worse appear the better reason to intelligent men at the East, they will be likely to be quite as successful with unintelligent men at the West.

But there is a more dangerous class of men in New Mexico.

They are the avowed enemies of the public school system of America — men who, expelled from Italy for conspiracy and treason, have settled down in this Territory, and are busy diverting the funds of the State to the purposes of a church, and seeking to vest in themselves powers that will give them, and their successors, virtual control of the higher education of the Territory. Of the high-handed acts of these men; of the audacity of their leader, Gasparri, in going into the territorial legislature last winter, taking his stand by the speaker's side, and forcing through a Jesuitical bill; and of his attempts to inflame the passions of the mob against the execution of wholesome laws, — the Eastern public has heard too little. Counting upon the obedience of many who dared not disobey, those men have invaded public rights in the most flagrant manner; overawed legislators; obtained undue influence over men holding various official positions; resisted lawful authority; and sought, by violence and by craft, to divert from their proper uses public funds. Regarding public instruction, the Jesuitical policy is, so to shape matters, that, when the Territory becomes a State, a large amount of school property will fall into their hands, and public education will be mainly under their direction. Many things favor such a design. Subservient school-boards, in building school-houses, are not unwilling to place them upon lands belonging to the church; or to avail themselves of offers of buildings made by church authorities, and expend public money upon them. School-boards are themselves often ignorant, and are unable to obtain competent teachers. Why should they not pass over into the hands of their religious advisers the entire trust committed to them, and pay for the service out of the public treasury? And, if all this results in creating sectarian schools, — schools in which the children are taught to fall

upon their knees at the entrance of the priest, and an anti-American spirit is fostered, — what help is there for it?

It is already announced that in all but two counties in the Territory the public schools are under the virtual control of men with such purposes, and that the schools of one county have been broken up by their interference. It should not be understood, however, that all the more intelligent among the native and Catholic population acquiesce in such designs, or are content to be led by such leaders. There are newspapers conducted by Mexicans that are boldly demanding free discussion and free schools. There are men who have mingled more or less with the outside world, and, seeing the great inferiority of their own people, are ready to denounce the methods by which ignorance is perpetuated, and advise that all sectarian influences be banished from the schools. The bulk of the people, however, are yet keenly susceptible to priestly influence, and obey implicitly their ecclesiastical guides.

Taking, therefore, into account all the facts relating to the condition of New Mexico, — the character of the population, the low state of the useful arts, the general ignorance of the people, their superstitions, and their exposure to anti-American instruction and control, — it is a question of great importance, whether there is not some method of rendering her efficient external aid, in preparing her for her political duties and relations. Such a question has, at least, this answer, namely: *The one thing practicable in its character, and pressing in its urgency, is the establishment, in this Territory, upon a permanent basis, of a school for raising up competent native teachers.* The policy, steadily pursued during more than two hundred years, of repressing popular education, has been fearfully sure in its effects. The very idea of a school, as a neces-

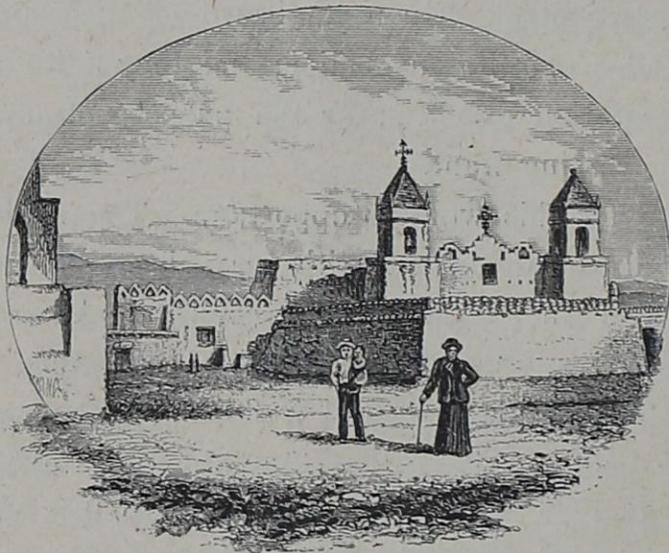
sary institution in every village, is wanting in many minds; and the want of teachers is so great as to compel the employment of persons who can themselves scarcely read and write. This, certainly, is a vulnerable point. Let a school be established at Santa Fé, with the express purpose and effort to give training to teachers; and, at least, one step in solving the question in hand will have been taken. Such an institution would have a wider effect in instructing citizens who would take American views regarding the importance of schools, and be little inclined to consent to encroachments from any sectarian quarter. It would also prepare some students for higher courses of study, and so provide persons able to be leaders in the work of social regeneration.

Such a school — SANTA FE ACADEMY — is already started, and is well and prosperously on in the first year of its history. Though designed to be Christian, it is to be forever free from ecclesiastical control. Upon its board of trust are men of various shades of religious belief; and they unite on a common non-sectarian platform, for the purpose of supplying a great and pressing want.

The time for this work is opportune. The Atchison and Topeka Railroad Company, with marvelous enterprise, are pushing their line down into the country. A new spirit of activity has already manifested itself. Immigrants are turning their steps thither. Capital is flowing in the same direction. The people believe that they are on the eve of great changes. If ever men especially need help, it is when fresh duties are laid upon them, and when the conception of better things dawns upon them.

New Mexico is upon a new line of intercommunication between the western sea-board and the central States. The rich mining territory of Arizona is on her farther border.

The population of Utah is extending itself down into her north-western counties, and it will not be many years before one of the railroad routes now entering the Territory from the north will be extended down toward the city of Mexico. The isolation of New Mexico is to cease, and it is of the first importance that a fair degree of intelligence should characterize her people. They who have known the value of the New England Academy will deem that few means are better fitted than these to aid the important work in hand; and the projectors of this movement are confident that Eastern friends of popular education, and the charitably disposed of all classes, will lend sympathy, and whatever aid may be necessary, to carry this Academy forward in a career of triumphant success.



Santa Cruz Church.

