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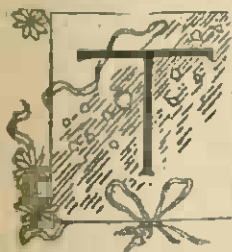
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## MEXICO'S MONTE CRISTO.

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WASHINGTON, February 26, 1896.



THE MAN WHO made Washington the most beautiful capital of the world is spending the winter here. He took the city when it was a

mud hole. When he left it it had more than one hundred miles of beautiful streets, shaded by more than ten thousand trees, and over \$25,000,000 had been spent upon its improvements. I refer to Governor Alexander R. Shepherd.

When he first took charge of the public works here he was worth \$250,000. He had begun life without a cent, but at thirty five he had made a quarter of a million, and he then had an income of from \$25,000 to \$50,000 a year. He remained in public life seven years. When he left he found himself more than a million dollars in debt, and with assets hardly equal to his liabilities. His creditors did not press him, but he saw that it would be uphill work making money in Washington, and left and went to Mexico to retrieve his fortunes. For the past fifteen years he has been living in the mountains of the northern part of our sister republic. He has found in the Chihuahua mines a treasure equal to that of the famed cave of Monte Cristo, and he now comes back prospectively, one of the richest men of the world.

The story of Governor Shepherd's career is most interesting. I chatted with him about it last night. He says:

"I was born here in Washington. My father died when I was eleven years old. He left some property, but owing to bad administration, my mother got none of it, and she had to open a boarding house to pay her expenses. When I was twelve I began my life work as a carpenter's apprentice, and I learned two trades within the next six years. I did not like carpenter work, and I gave it up because one of my employers could not appreciate my ability. At least I thought he did not. You see, I got up early every morning to make the fires for mother. One morning she was not well, and I also had to get the breakfast. The result was that I did not get started to work until about 7:30 o'clock. It was nearly a mile from the lumber yard to the house which we were

building. I had to carry a lot of boards on my back from the yard to the house. This took me some time, and it was 8 o'clock before I got there. I went to work at once nailing on clapboards. I remember I was on the ladder pounding away when my employer, a squeaky-voiced Jew, screeched out a scolding at me for being late. He said that I was lazy, and would never amount to anything. He said it, too, in such a way that it made me angry, and I threw the hatchet at him, and told him I would have nothing more to do with his work."

"Did you hit him?" I asked.

"No," replied Governor Shepherd, "but I stopped work. The hatchet came very near him, and I don't think he wanted to hold me. The result was that I left carpenter work. The next thing I got into was a plumbing establishment. I learned the trade and soon became a partner in the business. I afterward bought out my other partner. I then turned my attention to building houses and investing in real estate. It was not hard to make money then, it seemed to me, and the day I was thirty-five I had made about \$250,000 and had an income of about \$50,000 a year."

"How did you happen to take charge of the improvement of Washington?" I asked.

"It came from the talk of moving the capital west to St. Louis. I was interested in Washington city and I wanted the capital kept here. You can hardly appreciate the condition of this city at that time. It had a bad reputation in many parts of the north. The people were disgusted with the disloyalty that existed here during the war. After the war ended we had a carpet bag government, and negroes were employed in cleaning the gutters with knives, ten men not doing the work of one man, and each getting \$2 a day. The streets were mud holes and all sorts of dirt was thrown out into them. The government was paying no taxes to speak of, and in seventy years out of about sixteen million dollars which was spent for the improvement of the capital, Uncle Sam had paid less than three millions. This was the case, notwithstanding that the government had agreed at the time they made Washington the capital city to pay its share of the taxes. It had received the fee simple to all the streets for nothing, and it had gotten every alternate lot, receiving all told about 60 per cent of the property of Washington. I thought that the government ought to pay at least half the taxes, and that it ought to aid in the improvement of the city. I did not think the capital ought to be moved and I devoted myself to keeping it here and to its improvement. In order to do

this a resolution for a new government had to be pushed through Congress. We organized a committee for that purpose, and we spent a great deal of money. We finally succeeded, and Washington, for a time, had a territorial government with a board of public works appointed by the President. General Grant was then in the White House. He made me the chief of this board and we began our work of improving the streets. We kept it up several years, spending all told more than \$25,000,000, and making Washington the beautiful city it is.

"In the meantime my business went to pieces, and I awoke to find that I had less than \$2,000,000 of assets and \$1,500,000 of indebtedness. My creditors allowed me to work my way out, but I saw it would be an awful job for me to make a second fortune in Washington. I had failed, and a man who is down cannot easily command the hearty support of his friends. I had good friends, but I concluded that I would go elsewhere and strike out anew."

"How old were you then, governor?" I asked.

"I was then forty-three years of age," was the reply.

"Just about this time I was in New York city, and I heard there of the Batopilas mines of Mexico. They belonged to Wells, Fargo & Co., and were offered for sale. I was given an option on them at \$1,000,000. I knew nothing about mining, but I took a mining engineer and others and went to Mexico. The engineers reported the mines very valuable, and the result was that I organized a company and bought them for \$1,000,000. I then took \$150,000 and went to Mexico to work them. I thought that the remainder of the money I could get out of the mines. I had not been at work very long before I found that I had been deceived by the engineer. The mines had been only partially opened. He had estimated that there was at least \$300,000 worth of silver in the pillars of the mine. I expected this to supply the funds for carrying on the work. I took out the pillars. They netted just \$30,000."

"I then had to go on with my mining as best I could," the governor continued. "I had to use all sorts of shifts, getting the money out of the mine as I went along. I kept this up for years, greatly improving the property, until I have now taken out about \$10,500,000 worth of silver, almost all of which has gone back into the mines. We have bought more territory, and we have now sixty-one square miles of land surrounding these mines, including some of the best silver-bearing leads of the world. We have built aqueducts and tunnels, and