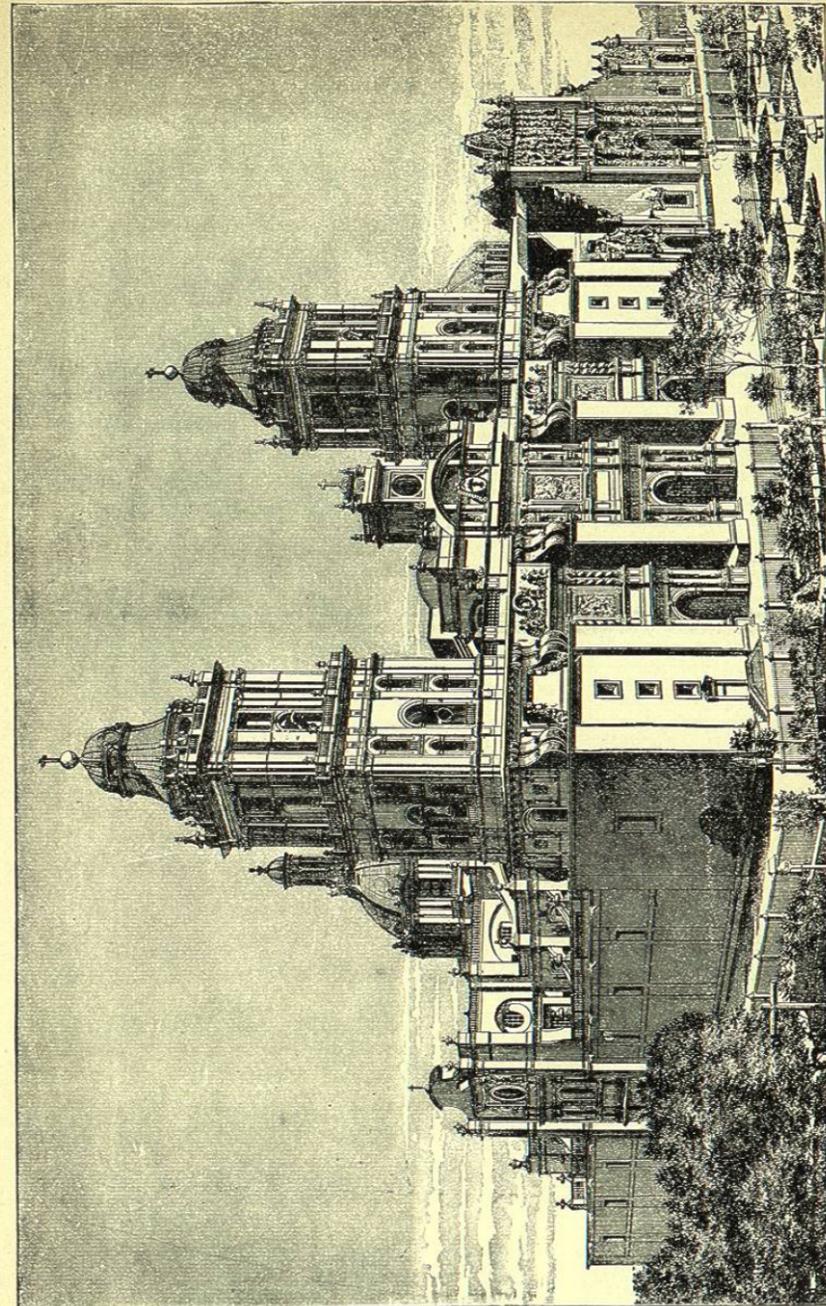


Schools for Men, the Academy of Fine Arts, Conservatory of Music, School of Mines or Engineering, School of Jurisprudence, Military Institute, Medical Institute, Commercial College, Girls' College, Preparatory Institute for Boys (equal to one of our best colleges), Deaf and Dumb, and Blind Institutes, the National Museum, and a superb Public Library with one hundred and sixty thousand volumes.

For the National Schools, President Diaz has prescribed a course of study for seven years in agriculture and engineering. The latter includes French, English, German, Greek and Latin roots, geography, drafting, meteorology, chemistry, botany, geology, architecture, agriculture, technology, surveying, book-keeping, and political economy. The medical course also covers seven years, and includes, in addition to the above, all the branches requisite to the profession. Thoroughness is required in everything, no diplomas being granted without proficiency.

I visited many of these public institutions of learning, and found them admirably conducted. I was especially interested in the School for the Blind, and surprised to find the pupils outnumber the teachers only a little more than two to one—the former numbering sixty-seven, the latter thirty-one. The salaries of teachers range from twenty to seventy dollars per month. On entering the school a photograph is taken of each pupil and pasted in a large book. By its side is placed a full description, with age, date, and place of birth, and quantity and quality of clothing. The object of the photograph is to prevent a possible substitution of one for another, and preserve the identity of each pupil.

Musical culture is the leading feature here, as in every institution of learning in the country. The orchestra played, and a young girl of sixteen sang for us, in a rich, mellow contralto which filled the building, selections from *Il Trovatore*. Another was asked by her teacher to read for us. She began in a clear voice reading an account of the entrance of General Scott into the city of Mexico. When she read "he entered *sin valor*" ("without courage"), the teacher gently interposed, and requested her to read in another place, which she



THE CATHEDRAL.

did, to my serious disappointment, for I was anxious to know in what spirit even a blind Mexican would read the history of that war.

The School for the Deaf and Dumb is conducted after the most modern methods, the pupils being taught articulation, only the older ones using manual signs. Many of the teachers have received a European education.

The noblest institution that I visited was the "*Escuela de Artes y Oficios para las Mujeres*" ("School of Arts and Trades for Women"), of which Juarez was the founder and benefactor. It gives to poor girls unequaled advantages for learning, without fear of the absence of their "daily bread," to make themselves independent of want. The government gives them comfortable rooms, two good meals a day, and furnishes many of the poorer pupils with clothing. Each girl wears a long, brown holland apron; their faces are clean, hair neatly braided, and every care taken that they may make, at all times, a neat appearance. Several hours daily are devoted to the acquirement of a practical education. Bookbinding, printing, book-keeping, drawing, painting, music, embroidery are taught; also the manufacture of picture-frames, and, on cunning little hand-looms, cords and fringes of all colors for decorative purposes. The pupils upholster skillfully and artistically furniture that would adorn a mansion. There is a neat store in the building, belonging to the institution, in which the work of the pupils is disposed of for their benefit. They conduct a neatly printed weekly newspaper, consisting of four sheets, and called *La Mujer*.

In all the wise concepts of her Indian chief, Mexico has no higher monument to his greatness than this industrial school for the elevation of her women.

There are three hundred and sixty-eight pupils receiving the benefits of this institution, from misses of twelve years to demure matrons in middle life.

The public schools are numerous and well patronized. I was pleased to see the eagerness with which the pupils seized their opportunities for gaining knowledge. My American friend, Mrs. C——,

has classes in English in several of these institutions, where I heard them reciting fluently in my own tongue. It is estimated that fully eight thousand people are now studying English at the capital.

The public charitable institutions are also numerous, and include the Insane Asylum, Foundling Hospital, House of Maternity, founded by Carlotta; Poor-House, Leper Institute, and several hospitals.

The *Monte de Piedad*, or pawnshop, founded by Count Regla, is one of the noblest benefactions, enabling those whom misfortune has visited to realize or receive advances upon valuables without the risk of losing them. These pawnshops exist all over the country, and all classes can alike avail themselves of their advantages.



WATER-CARRIER AT THE CAPITAL.

The city has four large theaters, the National being the second largest on the Western continent, but its interior furnishings are but a mockery in this age of elegance and luxury. Once gorgeous in their rich gildings and fanciful upholstery, they now appear in a sad state of dilapidation. There are many hotels, all kept upon the European plan, and the *Con-*

cordia, which is the Delmonico of the capital.

The mercantile establishments do not generally possess in their exterior the attractions of those of our own cities. It is but a short time since a few of the leading merchants have had recourse to show-windows, but in these now are exhibited the choicest wares of home and foreign production—exquisitely set diamonds, rare jewels of all kinds, bronzes, statuary and French china. Added to these are displayed laces, velvets, silks, and Parisian dresses, and an endless variety of foreign importations, including French dolls, the prettiest I ever saw. Once inside the stores, the activity and agility of the clerks, in

their eagerness to wait upon you, are equaled only by their lack of system and business management. Be sure, however, that you will have an opportunity of purchasing some of the rarest and most costly dress fabrics upon which one's eyes ever rested.

The *Monterilla*, the stores along the *portales*, are the "Sixth Avenue" of the capital. The same classes of goods are kept as on *Plateros*, and for a much less price, a fact which holds in check the charges in the latter.

I saw comparatively few of our American dress fabrics in any of the stores; only domestics, prints, and goods of low grade. But there is no question in my mind that American silks, hats, ribbons and woollens, as well as almost every kind of ready-made goods, would find a profitable market if only properly introduced. The *portales* is the place of all others to buy curios of every possible description.

A few practical words must be given as to the general lives of the people of the capital—the method of house-renting, and the forms to be complied with before establishing a home there. Agencies for the leasing and renting of houses, accompanied by our modern advertising, are unknown. To secure a house, one must tramp up and down the streets looking for pieces of paper pinned to the iron rods of the windows. On finding one that suits, he must strain his neck out of the socket and wear out his shoes searching for owner or agent. Then he must procure a *fiador*—generally a merchant or man of business, who will act as security and assume responsibility in case of a possible delinquency. The contract is well worthy of attention. It is almost enveloped in stamps, and bulky enough for a treaty between foreign nations. After much delay and formality, this document is duly signed, and you are put in possession of your new domicile.

The familiar phrase, that "Three moves are equal to a fire," is here emphasized. One's earthly goods must be carried either on the backs of men or on the street-cars. If the first mode of transportation be resorted to, it is generally necessary to dispatch a trusty serv-

ant of the household with each load of goods, lest the *cargador* find it convenient to take his departure, with your valuables, for some unknown locality.

Houses are generally constructed on the *vivienda* plan; that is, on one floor there may be from four to six establishments containing from two to six or eight rooms. But such smaller conveniences as closets are unknown.

Rents are high at all times, and in desirable localities excessive. Inside apartments, with five rooms facing the court, rent for \$40 per month; of the same size, with one to four windows opening on the street, from \$60 to \$80, according to location. Houses are, generally, two and three stories in height, and the higher one goes, the more rent is demanded. For health's sake, the sunny side of the building is absolutely necessary—a fact considered by the owner in his assessment of rents.

Greater attention is now paid than formerly to the plumbing, ventilation and general sanitation of the houses, but still there remains much to be desired. The drainage of the city is so very imperfect that it will be long, if ever, before the houses built many years ago can be made to fulfill modern requirements.

Many well-to-do families occupy apartments over business houses, and sometimes over *pulque* shops. The *portero* may be either a man or woman, who resides with his or her family in a little dark, damp apartment under the stairs. I have sometimes counted two or three turkeys, several chickens, a pig or two, dogs without number, and endless children, besides all the cooking and sleeping arrangements of the whole family, in one small room. When you ascend the stairs, the transformation is complete. Blooming plants, singing birds, carpeted halls and stairways, curtained windows and shaded balconies afford a striking contrast.

I wish that space would admit of an extended mention of the Mexican flora, the variety and gorgeousness of which must be seen to be appreciated. The most striking characteristic of the Mexican flowers is their deep, rich coloring. If red, it is the most glowing and



EL ARBOL DE LAS MANITAS
TREE OF THE LITTLE HANDS.

HATHORN & WYLLIE LITH'RS N.Y.

intense; if yellow or purple, the richest; if white or pink, the purest and most delicate.

There is not a day in the year when fresh and lovely flowers may not be purchased for a mere trifle—roses, with great soft petals folded over each other, vie in loveliness with pansies as large as a dollar; calla lilies, the size of a fan, bloom luxuriant in every ditch; geraniums as tall as a man; sweet pea, heliotropes, camellias, and magnificent poppies, so enormous that one will cover a plate, and so resplendent in color as to rival the far-famed poppy fields of India.

The most remarkable of all the flowers is "*el arbol de las manitas*" ("tree of the little hands"), *cheirostemon platanoides*, a native of cold lands. The bright-red flowers are well-defined, miniature hands. It has the leaf of the platanos tree, which is common in European gardens. The flower is a popular remedy with the Indians for heart disease. It grows wild, but is very scarce, there being only one in the National Palace Gardens, one in San Francisco Garden, and a few in the valley of Tohica. It has a black seed, smaller than a pea, is very slow of growth, and at ninety years of age has attained no remarkable size or height.

Tulipan—botanical name *Hibiscus rosa sinensis*, a native of East India. The flowers are both single and double, are scarlet, pale yellow, and chocolate-colored—three varieties. They are indigenous to hot countries, and serve no purpose save ornamentation. The leaf is a beautiful dark green, resembling that of the orange; altogether, it is one of the most gorgeous of all the flowers that are seen in Mexico.

"*Flor de noche buena*," or Christmas flower (*Poinsettia pulcherrima*), belongs to the tribe of Euphorbia. It grows about four meters high; the leaves are large and of a dark, lusterless green. When the plant stops blooming the leaves put forth. The flower itself is insignificant, but around it are several bracteas, large, and of a brilliant scarlet color. It begins to bloom at Christmas and ceases in about two months. It is also used by the Indians as a remedy for some of their numerous maladies. It can be grown from cuttings.

Another remarkable plant that blooms in the hot countries as early

as January, February, or March, and in colder climates later, is called *plumeria*. In the stem and leaves it contains a white milky juice. It grows to several yards in height. Some bear rose-colored flowers, others white, and others yellow, which have a powerful but pleasant odor. The Aztec name is *cacolox ochitt*, which means the flower of the raven. It is indigenous to the country, and is propagated from branches.

The Valley of Mexico is the valley of the lily, although the lily of the valley, as I am told, does not grow there. But there are above fifty varieties, no two alike, blooming on mountain, crag, or plain, which for beauty and coloring are unequalled.

ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM.

A visit to the Academy of Fine Arts should not be omitted. Hours may be profitably employed there, and one will come away with the desire to examine further its impressive treasures.

The native talent is unquestionably fine. But, though fostered and encouraged by the government, it lacks the stimulus of popular appreciation and demand. Thus it happens that some of the most accomplished artists suffer for the essentials of life, or, as an alternative, expend their skill upon the gay interiors of *pulque* shops.

In the great National Academy of San Carlos, one may see drawings that would reflect credit on any school of art. They display a soft and delicate touch, with much attention to the most minute details of finish.

In painting, as in drawing, the art school chooses an over-smooth finish; in this differing from the general modern style.

Few of the pupils seem to have been inspired by the beautiful natural objects of their own country. Indeed, with the exception of Velasco, who takes precedence in landscape, and whose subject is the Valley of Mexico, no one has given any attention worthy the name to Mexican scenery. Of Sr. José M. Velasco, Professor of Perspective and Landscape in the Academy, Señor Landesio, in 1867, in a

work entitled *Landscape Painting and Perspective in the National Academy*, says: "This young artist, who already is strong in himself, warrants the highest hopes, and will do great honor to his country, contributing efficaciously to this high end by his noble efforts."

His paintings have taken premiums in the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, and in the Paris Exposition, and occupy prominent places in the National Academy. The world may unite in raving over its exquisite beauties, but the average native artist seeks his inspiration from other sources.

There is something mediæval in their so frequent choice of religious themes.

Some of the most interesting works in the collection are those by the early masters of the Spanish-Mexican school, to whom must be accorded precedence.

In the early part of the seventeenth century, Baltazar Echave put in the initiatory strokes. All the works of this time have a mellow richness and an even distribution of color that bespeak a broad and vigorous thought. Gay colors fill the canvas smoothly and harmoniously.

Luis Juarez has many wonderful exhibitions of his great genius. In none is it more clearly expressed than in his *St. Ildefonso*. The scene represents the saint having conferred upon him by angel hands the robes of office of a bishop. A virgin and angel heads fill the upper space of the canvas, the whole imparting a sweet and touching impression.

Nicolas and Juan Rodriguez, as also other contemporaries, have exhibited an equal genius and care in the execution of their work.

Cabrera and Ibarra are the most prominent figures of the second period of Mexican art, but they are not the equals, either in conception or execution, of the earlier masters.

Of the moderns, one of the noblest of all the paintings in the Academy is that of "Las Casas" (a priest) "Protecting the Aztecs from Slaughter by the Spaniards." It is the work of Felix Parra, and