

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.

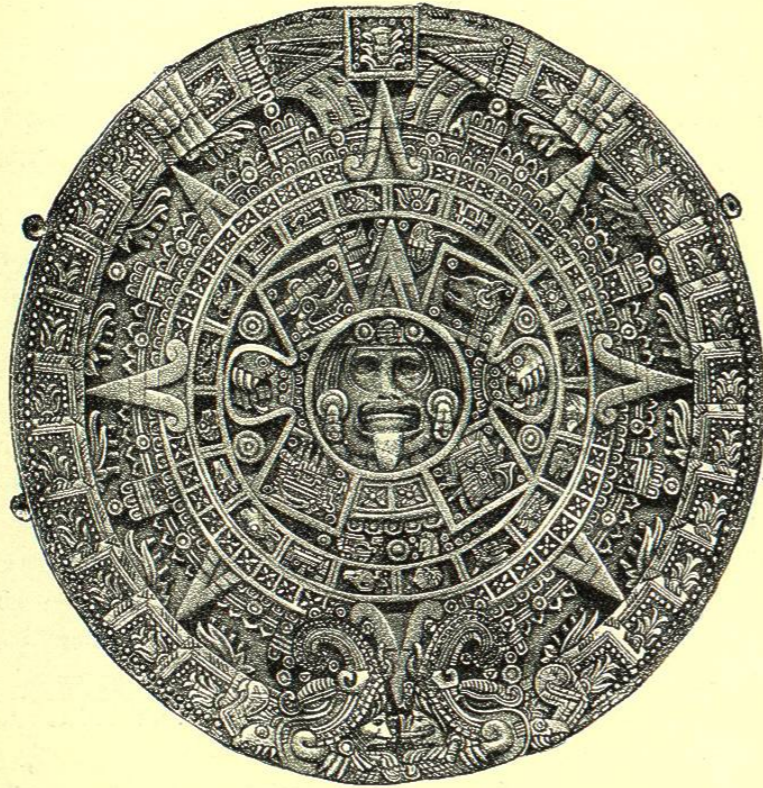
Cabrera and Ibarra are the most prominent figures of the second period of Mexican art, but they are not the equals, either in conception or execution, of the earlier masters.

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



any art gallery in the world might deem its possession a treasure, and the artist accomplished the great task before he had made a visit to the art galleries of Europe.

The next most touching to me was the "Death of Atala," which expresses a divine inspiration and is pathetic to the last degree. In



THE AZTEC CALENDAR STONE.

addition to the works of native artists, the gallery is enriched by many original paintings of the great masters of Europe. But more time cannot be given to one of the most interesting of all the public institutions of Mexico.

Mexican antiquities constitute in themselves a world of thought and research. We read of their spoliation and destruction by vandal

hands, but it seems almost incredible when a visit is made to the National Museum.

A wide difference of opinion prevails amongst archæologists and antiquarians as to the deductions on Mexican antiquities. So far, nothing is shrouded in greater mystery and to the future we must look for a solution.

Until 1884 there was no catalogue by which English-speaking tourists might enjoy the relics of antiquity in the museum. Mr. W. W. Blake, an accomplished scholar and gentleman, has recently arranged and published an excellent catalogue which unlocks a hidden world of knowledge to all who desire enlightenment. Space does not admit a mention befitting the subject, and a mere glance at a few of its leading objects must suffice.

The Aztec Calendar Stone is of solid basalt, porous but fine. It is 12 feet in diameter, and its weight is 53,790 pounds. After the conquerors leveled all the temples of Indian worship, this stone was imbedded a half yard in the marshy earth. It was exhumed in 1790. A Mexican year contained eighteen months, and these were arranged in symbolical representations upon this great stone. Some such names as these are found upon it: Sea Animal, Lizard, Death, Path of the Sun, and others of like order; until one finds himself lost in the mazes of the great barbaric puzzle.

The Sacrificial Stone is a religious symbol as



TOLTEC—COLOSSAL HEAD IN DIORITE.



well as an historical monument. Its diameter is about two and one-half meters—seven and one-half feet, while its height is perhaps four-fifths of the diameter. This stone was exhumed in 1791, about one year after the Calendar Stone. It was dedicated to the sun, and has a sculptured image of the luminary on its upper face. Groups of people are seen on its convex sides, but it is blood-curdling to see that some of these are held by the hair.

In the days of its use, it is said that from twenty to fifty thousand persons were annually sacrificed on it. Prisoners of war were usually chosen as a proper sacrifice. Arrayed in gorgeous apparel, decked with flowers, and bearing in his hands musical instruments, the victim ascended the steps of the temple. He was made the bearer of orders and messages to the sun, and when at last the stone

was reached five priests bound and laid him on it, while a sixth, with a "scarlet mantle, emblematic of his bloody office, dexterously opened the breast of the wretched victim with a sharp razor, made of *itztli*, a volcanic substance, hard as flint, and inserting his hand, tore out the palpitating heart."

As this ancient relic now stands in the National Museum, one may recall a long past scene, by inspecting the canal cut across the top and down one side, for the blood to pass from the victim, yet writhing in his death agony.

In close proximity to the Sacrificial Stone, the Mexican Mars (called by the euphonious name of *Huitzilopochtli*) rears his monstrous head.



HUITZILOPOTCHLI, THE AZTEC GOD OF WAR.

In the historical part are relics of the noted men of the past, Hidalgo, Guerrero, Santa Anna, and the Emperor Iturbide. Of the latter ill-fated monarch there are ten pieces of glass showing excellent photographs.

There are about thirty pieces of Spanish armor, two of the pieces having engraved upon them the name of Pedro Alvarado. The plate of Maximilian and also his bust are here.

In the archæological department are paintings, Aztec weapons, musical instruments, wedges, spindles, idols of stone and clay, and so on, *ad fin.*

Each of the beautiful environs of the Mexican capital has its picturesque little plaza, sparkling fountain, gay flowers, and many national embellishments. A perfect street-car system, stretching over thirty-three leagues, enables the tourist to observe at leisure these towns, several of which were in existence before the conquest.

A charming day may be spent by taking a car at the Zócalo for Tacubaya, the Versailles of Mexico, thence to San Angel, where if you have not provided your own picnic dinner, you can dine at one of the comfortable *fondas*. The air is delightful here, and fruits and flowers are in abundance. Take another tram-car, from which you gain enchanting views of field, forest and glen, passing the shady picturesque village of Coyacuan, and "*El Arbol Bendito*"—a grand old tree, centuries old. Not far off may be seen the first church built by Cortez, near the capital, and the monument at Churubusco. Near this, the tram passes from Mexico. Taking it, you soon find yourself at the charming suburban town of Tlalpam—seventeen miles from the city—lying peacefully on the spurs and foot-hills of the lofty Cordilleras. With delightful impressions of the excursion you return to the city, reaching it about seven o'clock in the evening.

Another excursion of equal interest may be made, which includes a pilgrimage to the most sacred shrine of Mexico. Turn northward toward Lake Tezenco, still by tram, and you soon reach Cerro del Tepayac, historic ground from the days of the conquest. From this point you may survey the identical route taken by the conquerors on

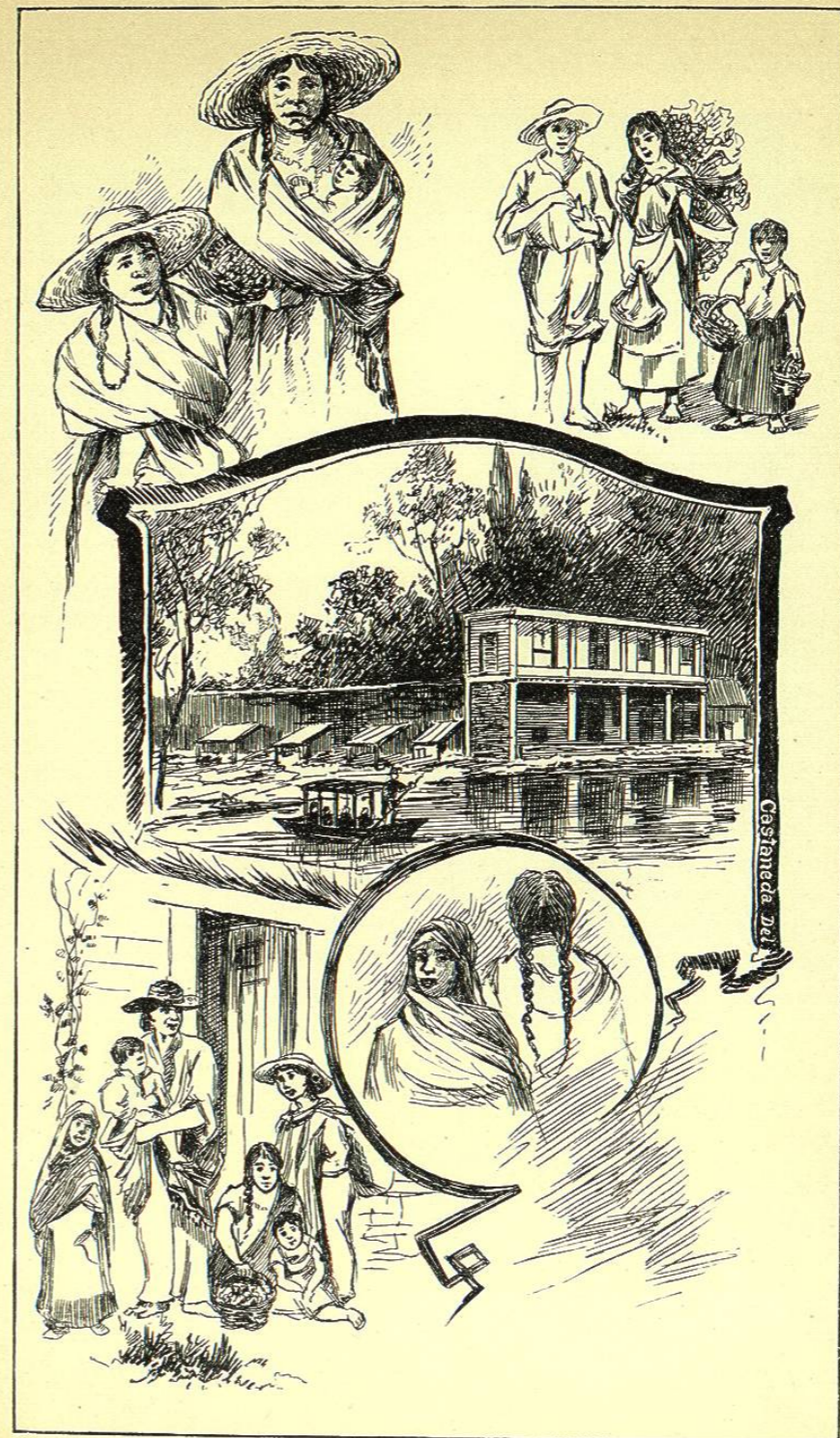


entering the capital. Here also, in the *cuartel* of the soldiers, the treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo was signed between the United States and Mexico, which closed the war of 1846-48.

Returning, pass along to the Viga boulevard, bordering the canal of the same name, and, leaving the car, hire a boat for a small sum and proceed down the canal to the *Chinampas*, the legendary floating gardens. The water has not a ripple, save what is made by the oars, and the big-hatted boatman gracefully swings them until you come suddenly upon the village of Santa Anita. Here you may refresh yourself with a Mexican luncheon. Lake Xochimilco, sixteen miles distant, is the main outlet of this canal. But we may come and go as oft as we will, and still find the floating gardens purely legendary. The nearest approach to a realization of the legend consists of a space of earth forming a bed for vegetables, fruits, and flowers, having on either side a ditch from which the garden is irrigated.

Humboldt says with regard to floating gardens, commonly known as the *Chinampas*: "There are two sorts of them, of which the one is movable and driven about by the winds, and the other fixed and attached to shore. The first, alone, merit the denomination of floating gardens.

"The ingenious invention of *Chinampas* appears to go back to the end of the fourteenth century. It had its origin in the extraordinary situation of a people surrounded with enemies and compelled to live in the midst of a lake, little abounding in fish, who were forced to fall upon every means of procuring subsistence. It is even probable that nature herself suggested to the Aztecs the first idea of floating gardens. On the marshy banks of the lakes Xochimilco and Chaleo, the agitated water, in time of the great rises, carries away pieces of earth covered with herbs and bound together by roots. These, floating about for a long time and driven by the wind, sometimes unite into small islands. A tribe of men, too weak to defend themselves on the continent, would take advantage of these portions of ground which accident put within their reach, and of which no enemy disputed the property. . . . In proportion as the fresh-water lake has

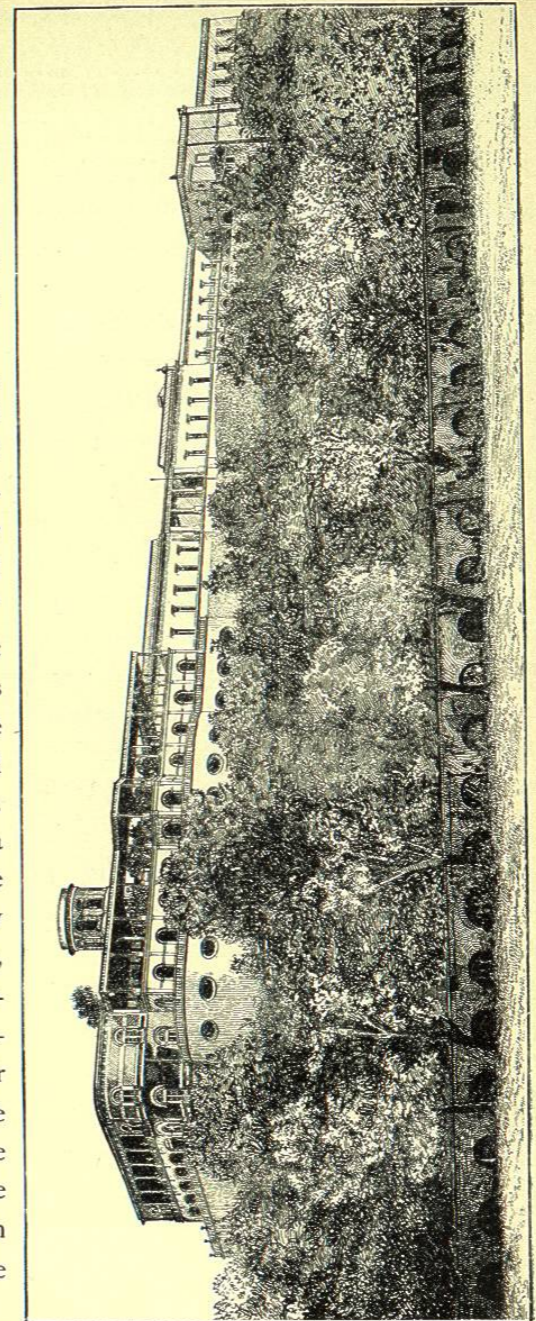


AN ANCIENT HOUSE ON THE VIGA CANAL, AND A FEW OF THE PASSERS-BY.



become more distant from the salt-water lake, the movable *Chinampas* have become more fixed. . . . Every *Chinampa* forms a parallelogram of 100 meters in length, and five or six meters in breadth (328 × 16 or 19 feet). Beans, peppers, potatoes, and a magnificent variety of vegetables are cultivated on them, and every border, almost, is hedged by lovely, bright flowers."

But chief in historic interest of the sights in the vicinity of the capital, is the grand old fortress of Chapultepec. It is reached by either a pleasant stroll of three miles, by tram, or by carriage on the Paseo, and at last we rest beneath the shade of stately old trees, with their clinging drapery of white moss; some of these trees are reputed to have been in existence fifteen hundred years, and are known as *ahuchuetes*.



CHAPULTEPEC, WITH VIEW OF MILITARY COLLEGE IN THE EXTENSION.



According to Humboldt, Chapultepec rises above the plain to the remarkable height of 7,626 feet. "It was chosen by the young viceroy, Galvez, as the site of a villa (*Chateau de Plaisance*) for himself and his successors.

"Of the fifty viceroys who have governed Mexico from 1535 to 1808, one alone was born in America, the Peruvian, Don Juan de Auiña de Casa Fuerte (1722-1734), a disinterested man and good administrator. Some of my readers," he continues, "will perhaps be interested in knowing that a descendant of Christopher Columbus and a descendant of King Montezuma were among the viceroys of Spain. Don Pedro Nuño Colon, Duke of Veraguas, made his entry at Mexico in 1673, and died six weeks afterward. The viceroy, Don Joseph Sarmiento Valladares, Count de Montezuma, governed from 1697 to 1701."

A glance either way revives a history which fills the mind with thoughts too sad for utterance. This noble hill of solid porphyry was the country place of Montezuma and his ancestors; and since then no marked event has ever occurred, within access of it, in which the grand old castle has not played a prominent part. On entering the gates, turn to the right and you are soon far around the circle, where the sweet, soft air sighs through the cypress trees, and seems to speak in broken accents of the "voiceless past."

Near at hand is the aqueduct, built by Montezuma, now bordered with long grass and wild-flowers with their heads drooping downward, and through which, despite the decay and havoc of centuries, the water trickles, sweet as ever.

Turn another way, and see the stone steps which Montezuma had carved in the hill, then the only mode of ascent; and his cave, said to have no termination. Near this point begins the drive constructed by Maximilian, winding around the mountain, and greatly facilitating access to the castle—now the residence of the President, and the West Point of Mexico.

The architecture of the fortress is grand and imposing. With immense portholes in its circular towers, and with its massive rounded

corners, it recalls the feudal castles of the middle ages. The extensive wings constitute the military schools.

The castle is fitted up and decorated in a manner worthy of its present occupants, having been frescoed by Casarin, a pupil of Meissonier. The wood-work in the President's room is of ebony inlaid with gold. The walls of the drawing-room are covered with satin damask, while the carpet alone cost \$2,000. Beyond all question it can be surpassed by few, if any, royal residences in the world.

Three hundred and fifty handsome, manly young fellows receive, in the Academy at Chapultepec, a scientific and military education, free of all charges. It was my pleasure, on one occasion, to witness the drilling of these young cadets; and I must say that they went through their evolutions with an ease and familiarity that would have reflected credit on our own cadets of West Point.

Passing Montezuma's spring and the grand old tree under which he sat, at a short distance and in full view is Molino del Rey, where another sanguinary battle was fought. Within stone's-throw stands the monument which a generous people permitted our government to erect to the memory of the soldiers who fell there.

On the eastern and most inaccessible part of the hill is where the American forces stormed the fortress. At this point stands a beautiful monument, on which I read the following inscription: "To the Memory of the Scholars of the Military School, who died like heroes in the North American invasion 13th September, 1847."

Every day in the year the students tenderly lay upon it fresh flowers and green garlands in honor of their dead compatriots.

Before the battle the cadets formed a sacred compact between themselves never to surrender save in death. Their ages were from fourteen to eighteen years. But they fought like heroes—first one, then another taking the flag, until, still standing and fighting, the last of the gallant forty-eight surrendered his young life in defense of his country.

The climate, of which so much has been written, is exceptionally agreeable, yet difficult to describe. If one can conceive the delights