

## CHAPTER IX.

National palace—Maximilian's course in Mexico—Personal character—Revenue as Emperor—Manner of living—Decrees—Palace of Chapultepec—Residence at Cuernavaca—Scenery on the road.

THE residence of the Emperor in the city of Mexico was the National Palace.

On the north side of the great square, or Plaza Mayor, stands the far-famed temple, the Cathedral. It has an exquisitely-wrought and costly façade, but its exterior is so dimmed by time that it carries your mind far back into the past. It reckons its age by centuries. As you turn your eyes from it, toward the rising east, you observe a long, very long and massive pile of stone and mortar, that stretches across the entire eastern side of that square, a distance of two hundred and forty-six varas, or Spanish yards. That is the National Palace. It has no architectural beauty, no polish of surface, but you are struck at the sight of its length with a little surprise, and you look again to see if you are not mistaken as to its being one building; then *immensity* is the word that your thoughts suggest.

The same ground supported the lordly palace of Moctezuma. This ancient city, called by the Aztecs Tenochtitlan, was taken by the conquering soldiers of Cortez, August 13th, 1521, and then nearly destroyed. The Spaniards began its reconstruction in 1524. Then was laid a part of its present foundation. If the records be not incorrect, that palace belonged to the family of Cortez until 1562, when it was purchased by the king of Spain for the viceroy, for the sum of thirty-three thousand three hundred dollars. The royal officers took

possession August 19th of the same year. The capacity of the building was, after many years' service, found inadequate for the purposes of governmental affairs, and, in 1693, it was rebuilt, at an expense of nearly a million of dollars.

Tradition has handed down a decree, written in the Book of Fate, which reads that no man can occupy that palace as a ruler over Mexico without coming to an unnatural death, or meeting with some sad misfortune,—that such a Sovereign should stoop from his pride of place, and answer to the call of the executioner, or misfortune's beck! As we look over the long list of chiefs, we see with what unerring judgment Fate has followed them. Arista among the dead, Juarez among the living, are the exceptions.

The palace covers a block of ground, and is square. The two front corners have each a tower. The floors are made of brick, with the exception of a few, which are wooden. It has three stories. There appears to be three general divisions. The southern part was occupied by the Emperor and Empress; the centre by officers of State; and the northern by soldiers and prisoners. The eastern half also was occupied by soldiers. There are three entrances into the façade. The centre one leads you into a court which is about one hundred and fifty feet square, surrounded by two corridors, one above the other, both of which are supported by ten arched stone columns on each side.

On the north side of this court is the apartment now occupied by the President, and formerly, under the Empire, by the Princess Iturbide. The southern entrance opens into a court about seventy-five feet by sixty, also surrounded by corridors. The northern door conducts into another court, without any corridor. There are several other courts in the eastern half, for the purposes of light, air, and convenience of communication.



The lower story was occupied by servants, and as store and carriage houses. The second story, with lower ceiling, was for offices.

The great reception-room, sometimes called the Iturbide Saloon, is in the front of the third story of the southern half of the palace, being about two hundred and fifty by thirty-six feet in dimensions. This is not a remarkably fine or costly room. The ceiling exhibits the cross-timbers, polished and varnished, with gilt edges. It has about a dozen candelabras pendent, and several supported by stands of large Chinese vases. The floor is of dark wood, neatly laid. This saloon contains many fine oil portraits—among which are those of General Washington, Emperor Iturbide, President Arista, Generals Guerro, Matamoras, and Mina; Curates Hidalgo and Morelas. That of the Emperor Maximilian has been taken down, leaving the frame in its position. They are all life-size, and in large gilt frames.

Adjoining, and running parallel on the east, is the Lion Saloon, so called because two marble lions lie as sentinels therein, which room is about sixty by twenty feet. It is adorned with portraits of Ferdinand and Isabella, in one frame; also those of Charles V. and his mother, likewise within one frame. These are ancient paintings. Passing out of the south end of the reception-room into a small room, then turn facing the east, you enter the audience-room, which is at a right angle with the reception-room, and is nearly forty by twenty feet in extent, having an oaken floor, neatly made like inlaid work. The walls are covered with crimson silk damask, in which there are woven at regular intervals the Mexican coat of arms, also the words, "*Equidad en Justicia*" (Equity in Justice). An adjacent room, with like walls, and cedar floor, one hundred by twenty feet, is the picture-gallery, now unadorned by paintings.

The chapel is the room formerly used by the Senate, under the old Constitution, prior to 1857, when the legislative body had a Senate. It is seventy-five feet by twenty-five, with plastered walls, covered with silk for a space of twenty feet in length by fifteen in height on each side near the altar. The ceiling has a blue ground, spangled with stars. On each side of the aisle there is a row of nine pews, each capable of holding six persons. On the left, near the altar, were two seats for Their Majesties. The room is lighted by six semicircular windows near the ceiling. The altar was quite plain, having a cross with the Saviour, gilded, and six large candlesticks. There is also a gallery over the entrance.

Attached to the palace, and within the outer walls of the exterior, is a small garden, with not a large variety of flowers; but among them is one borne by a tree some twenty-feet high, which flower is in the shape of a bird's claw, flesh-color, called *manito* (small-hand), and blossoms in February. This is a rare tree, and it has been said to be the only one in Mexico. A fountain throws up its jets of water, that sparkle in the sun, and reflect prismatic hues. A small theatre was built therein for imperial recreation. Such is a partially delineated picture of that mansion where monarchs and presidents have held their courtly revels, nearly all of whom now dwell in mansions not coveted by man. Maximilian once observed that he always felt in that palace like a solitary nun in a convent.

As Maximilian became seated on his throne, and surveyed his new country, its people, their habits and customs, the condition of the exchequer, the friendly and inimical surrounding powers, it was quite apparent that there was a great scope for the exercise of administrative talent, as well as military.

It is true it was hoped that the contending struggle of the bordering Republic would so long continue that



sufficient attention could not be given from that source to the new Empire, to endanger its permanency. And thus with the French elements—their bone and sinew, their munitions of war, for a few years, would give His Majesty time to have built a living wall out of the native material, that would be able to resist the disturbing factions within, which were mainly to be feared rather than any exterior attack. There was a contest against a great political principle, which is more hazardous than a mere struggle against man—Imperialism against Republicanism.

The great and continued enthusiasm which had been heaped upon him and the Empress, from the very moment they touched the shores of the Empire till they reached its capital, had brought the conviction to his mind that he was looked upon as their benefactor, and that the number of dissidents was far below the majority of the people. And yet he was not unmindful that, in an empire of such vast territorial extent, and in many parts so sparsely settled, diversified by mountain barriers, ready access to many important places, with adequate forces either defensive or offensive, was quite difficult. He saw the necessity, as it was plainly obvious, of having sufficient forces to keep down the spirit of civil discord fomented by the few malcontents. He was not ignorant of the fact that Mexico had always had at least two parties antagonistical to each other; and as it had thus been under a Republican form of government, the continuation of a disaffected party was in some degree to be expected; while, at the same time, it was by no means even *prima-facie* evidence that the latter was composed of anything near a majority of the citizens.

The Juarez party had fallen back from the heart of the country, until those that composed it found themselves away to the north, few in number, and without

funds, while but a small part of the national territory acknowledged its sway.

The actual jurisdiction and possession of the Imperial forces had extended, like the rippling waves of the still waters from the drop of a pebble, until it embraced nearly all of the Mexican territory.

Whatever views the world, generally, may entertain as to the justness and correctness of the Emperor's conclusion in regard to the loyalty of the Mexicans, he was not alone in his judgment upon that point. There were but few foreign residents, if any, who had endeavored to observe affairs impartially, that did not coincide in that conclusion.

His Majesty began, immediately after his arrival, to busy himself in earnest with governmental operations. Many offices that were absolutely requisite for the just administration of affairs had been created and filled before his departure from Europe.

As he arrived on Sunday, the twelfth of June, at the Capital, one day was deemed necessary for rest and personal convenience. On the fourteenth he commenced business. Attention was forthwith given to the public debt, the repletion of the exchequer, the establishment of the national flag, the commissioning of the requisite officers, the appointing of ministers as representatives abroad, and of consuls, and the formation of courts of justice; all of which was illustrative of energy and ability.

It was a great principle with him, that all should be equal before the law; also, that whoever had cause of complaint should have a proper hearing, and before him in person, if they desired. In order that an opportunity should be given to address him personally, he decreed, in the latter part of June, 1864, that he would give a public audience at the National Palace at one o'clock on every Sunday, commencing on the first Sunday in the



following July. Forty-eight hours' notice was required; also the registry of the name of the applicants in chronological order, not according to rank. Neither color nor poverty was a barrier to an interview with the Emperor, when any complaint was to be made or favor to be solicited.

On the 6th day of July, 1864, he issued a general amnesty to all political prisoners, which included those who had been sentenced.

The existing laws were speedily examined, in order that a just knowledge of the legislative wants of the people should be obtained. As rapidly as possible decrees were issued for the purpose of advancing immigration, education, commerce, mining and agricultural pursuits. Every stimulus was given to the business of developing the country, and increasing the modes of travelling and transportation, that could be, under the existing condition of affairs. Telegraphic and railroad enterprises were encouraged as much as possible.

The officials of the government were stimulated to the performance of their respective functions by medals of the different orders of merit, as His Majesty deemed them worthy.

The deportment of His Majesty toward all the officers in the various departments of government, from the highest to the lowest, was most affable and kind. He never exhibited the slightest haughtiness. Every act of the Emperor was as void of aristocratical rigor as the proceedings of any former sovereign who bore the name of "President." It was difficult for the greater mass of the Mexicans to distinguish any very remarkable difference between the forms of the government under the Empire from those of the Republic. The main distinction rested in the greater activity of all classes of business under the former, while in fact it savored quite as much of democracy. Under the Re-

public, the President issued decrees; under the Empire, the Emperor did likewise. The latter established laws equally liberal in every respect as the former; and his courts of justice were composed of the best class of men, the most learned in the science of jurisprudence. One of the Emperor's great leading maxims was justice. His motto, that met the eye in every public place, was, "Equity in Justice."

Sin, plated with gold, was no impenetrable armor to the sword of justice; and poverty clothed in rags received no greater infliction from the same weapon. There was a broad equality, which, if it had received the appellation of "republican," could hardly have appeared less oppressive to the mind or purse.

The great business community were of opinion that the nature of the institutions of the Empire were highly favorable to the advancement of commerce and the general interests of the country. The lower class perceived no objection to the reign of His Majesty, but were rather pleased with it. The Indians have been frequently observed drawing a piece of money from their pockets which had the form of His Majesty's head upon it, pointing to it, and saying, "That is the man who protects us." It is some proof, at least, that that class of the community were not impressed with the belief that oppression was allotted to them.

The Emperor and Empress both paid a great deal of attention to the education and support of the poor. Hospitals were established, visited, and cared for, by those sovereigns, as much as time would permit.

No ruler of the nation had a greater desire to develop the resources of the country, to advance its general prosperity, and to educate the people. Although a monarch, he did not believe that his empire would be better supported by the columns of ignorance. He was enthusiastically in favor of popular instruction. Solid,



stable, as well as decorative knowledge, he thought should be widely diffused. He was equally enthusiastic in opposition to bigotry and intolerance. To have a few brilliant intellectual lights illuminating the general darkness, was for him insufficient; he wished every human being within his Empire to be a light of knowledge, whose brilliancy should be increased by the oil of perseverance and time. He was emphatically the friend of mankind. Probably no prince in Europe was more democratic in all his views than he.

His show of sympathy towards men was real; for he had in that no vanity, no pride, to be satisfied with the buzz of admiration. It was that satisfaction only which his conscience received from the performance of duty. He believed in his heart that it was his religious duty to enlighten his people. He viewed with admiration all moral advancement. He was a monarch by title—a republican in his actions.

One day, while in the city of Morelia, in the State of Michoacan, an ordinary Mexican cried out, "Viva the President of the Empire!" His Majesty smiled, and said that he would not object to the adoption of that title, but that the people in Europe might criticize it.

The revenue of His Majesty was at first fixed at one and a half million of dollars per annum, by the Regency. After the first year, it was reduced to one half of a million, at his suggestion. The first amount was the same as that allowed the first Emperor, Iturbide, by the Mexican Congress, December 28th, 1822. Although His Majesty drew a large amount of his revenue, yet he personally received no particular benefit therefrom, except a comfortable living. He was not extravagant; and the money unappropriated for his household affairs went to the poor. The greater part of his revenue was spent for charitable purposes, and the payment of the officers on the Civil List. All of it circulated in the

country. So that its expenditure benefited the mechanic, the merchant, and especially the poor.

Thus it would appear, at first blush, that the sovereign head of the nation was oppressive in his financial demands upon a considerably exhausted exchequer, yet, after all, he was exceedingly frugal in fact.

The Emperor lived plainly. Nor could the articles of his household furniture be considered of too costly a character for a sovereign. He well knew that the greatness of a ruler was not measured by the value of the silver, gold, and brilliancies in his mansion; nor by the glitter of richly decorated equipage, with its long train of tinselled escort. It is true, that among his three elegant carriages there was one beyond the ordinary value and richness of vehicles which are made even for the conveyance of imperial sovereigns. But he obtained it by no expenditure from his own purse, nor the treasury of Mexico. It was presented to him by the citizens of the city of Milan, as a token of affection and esteem. One cannot view a gift of such artistic skill and of so much value, without being reminded of the fact, that Maximilian could not have been considered as a tyrannical Governor over the province of Lombard-Venice.

The exterior of that superb carriage is nearly all richly gilded—particularly the iron-work. The small part of the wood-work not gilded, is bright crimson. The exterior of the body is veneered with tortoise-shell. One large shell covers the door, on which is beautifully portrayed the Mexican coat of arms. The handles, hinges, buckles on the straps, the caps and rims of the hubs, a fabled griffin on the top at each corner, and the coat of arms surmounting the carriage on every side, are of solid silver. The top is about nine feet from the ground, curving outward a little, bell-shaped, and a foot wider than the centre. On each exterior corner is an angel some eighteen inches long, richly gilded all over.



The interior is of richly figured light-colored damask silk. It cost twenty-four thousand florins; which is less than twelve thousand dollars. It has been used but five times, twice in Milan, and three times in Mexico,—in the latter country, on the sixteenth day of September, 1864 and 1865, the anniversary of the Independence of Mexico, and on the sixth of July, 1865, the anniversary of Maximilian's birthday. It is now locked up in the carriage-house of the National Palace. It would suggest itself to refined minds of honor, that, inasmuch as it was a present from the people of Milan, the magnanimity of the conquerors ought to be great enough to cause it to be returned to the family of Maximilian.

The Emperor had forty mules, thirty of which were white; and six of the latter were usually driven in the carriage in which he rode. He also had sixty horses; several of which were expressly to be used under the saddle.

He was anxious to bring about harmony with the dissidents on the mildest terms. On the 27th of July, 1864, he issued a decree to the effect that those who felt disposed to lay down their arms, could do so, and return to private life, without being questioned as to their political views.

August 7th, 1864, he decreed that every one might freely express his opinion upon all official acts, with a view of showing their error and ill consequences.

Highway robbery became so frequent, that the Emperor issued a circular, September 16th, 1864, in which it was ordered that those charged with the crime of robbery should be tried before the French Court-martial. Many of those who were tried and executed for that crime have been considered by the Liberals as political prisoners, and the charge of cruelty therefor has been made against the Emperor.

Soon after the machinery of government under Maxi-

milian was in good running order, he sought for a rural spot in which to repose—some place outside of the hum of the city walls, where he might survey Nature's beauty, reflect in silence upon the vastness and richness of his adopted home, and meditate upon the contemplated splendor that was to surround his new empire. And what could suggest loftier ideas than the sight of that bold, grand, and sublime mountain-pile, Popocatepetl, with its hoary head bathed in the summer cloud, while nearer and all around Nature was arrayed in her mantle of loveliest green, all studded with Flora's variegated colors. The Emperor found all this, coinciding in taste with Moctezuma, by selecting the famed hill of Chapultepec as his country-seat.

A little south of west, at a distance of two and a half miles from the city of Mexico, stands the palace or castle of Chapultepec, on elevated ground, nearly two hundred feet higher than the surrounding valley, which on the east side presents a porphyritic base, still bearing the prints of Aztec sculpture. The base of the hill from east to west is not far from fifteen hundred feet in length, and from north to south about one thousand, and oval in form. The eastern exterior line of the grounds is bounded by a long one-story stone house, nearly two hundred feet in length, near the centre of which is the entrance, through a large arched portal. Surrounding the hill for several hundred yards is a beautiful grove of elms, poplar, oak, and cedar. The latter class of tree has some among its number whose mighty trunks inform the traveller that they shaded the old chieftain Moctezuma from the noonday sun, while he plotted for the defence of his home against the advancing hordes of the Spanish invaders. The maguey, the narrow leaf pepper-tree, with its crimson berries, wild shrubbery, mingled here and there with some sweet-scented flowers, spread all over the steeps of that enchanted crest. An



ancient road winds around its base, once only tracked by Indian foot-prints. Now is seen a superb macadamized road, that circles around from the east toward the right, until it reaches the summit of the terraced hill on the western side. This is one of the wise improvements of Maximilian. The building that faces the city is one hundred and twenty-five feet long, with two verandas, one above the other, supported by seven columns of the Doric order, between which is an iron balustrade three and a half feet high, richly gilded. From these verandas the view is perfectly enchanting. The great city in front, its cathedral, with its twin towers, catches the eye, as the great guiding object; the serrated mountains circled in the distance, the green lawns all around, studded with beautiful shade-trees, and variegated with the mosaic work of Art and Nature combined in its cultivated fields, present one of the most charming views to be witnessed anywhere. It causes the traveller to exclaim, "Who would not live in the valley of Mexico?"

The width of the front building is twenty-five feet. It has six rooms in the upper story, which was occupied by Their Majesties. There is nothing fine in the construction of this palace, nor did it contain costly furniture. The southern end has annexed thereto a tower ten feet in diameter, and about forty in height. The west side has also a veranda. The north end has a wing running west about twenty-five feet. About fifty feet in the rear of the centre of this building is another one, running west over two hundred feet, at a right angle with the former; on the east end of which is another tower thirty feet in diameter, and fifty high, having within it a spiral stairway, and surmounted by a gilded iron railing. In the latter building is a new dining-room one hundred feet long and twenty-five wide. It has five windows on each side, between which are two fluted

Corinthian pilasters; and the cornice, which is very neat, is adorned with a gilded crown and Mexican eagle alternate. The floor is of oak. This room, as well as the main part of the building, is not completed.

In the parterre in the rear of the front building, and running along on either side of the other structure, are exquisite groups of flowers, among which are the rose, the jessamine, the myrtle, the fuchsia, the honeysuckle, and countless others, mingling their ingredients in the balmy air, until intoxication from the sipping of the scented compound lulls the buzz of the numerous gaudy-plumed humming-birds. In front of the large tower is a fountain, throwing up its glittering spray, while the surrounding bronze statues are apparently silently listening to the music of its pattering drops. This was a favorite spot for Moctezuma, as it was for others who came before him in the same ancestral line.

While Maximilian was charmed with the interesting grounds of Chapultepec, he occasionally desired to wander where the sunbeams of the warmer clime of the lowlands bathed the tropical fruits; and where, in order to reach the spot, he would have to journey through wild mountain-scenery, receiving the pleasures of the ride, while he drank in the odors of the forest foliage, and photographed on memory's leaf the surrounding grandeur.

Cuernavaca, fifty miles south of the capital, was the attractive garden of the *tierras calientes*. Here he was surrounded by wild and cultivated flowers, aromatic shrubs, intermingled here and there with some stately and gracefully-bending tree, that cast a pleasant cooling shade beneath the burning sun.

It was a retreat particularly interesting and romantic to the Emperor and to the Empress, who not unfrequently accompanied him there. His Majesty visited that valley quite often, remaining there from three to



ten days at a time. The climate is charming during winter and spring.

Bathing in the limpid waters, in the early morn, was a treat of which the Emperor availed himself. He expended no large sums of money there for costly mansions, nor for imperial show of grandeur. He first resided in an ancient building, formerly occupied by Cortez, which the Ayuntamiento tendered him. As it was considerably dilapidated, and not pleasant, he rented a better one, for which he paid \$40 per month. He also purchased a tract of land containing about five acres, at Acapamzingo, a half-league distant, on which he erected a small house, with five rooms and a bathing place. He cultivated a little flower-garden near the house.

Cuernavaca had its charms for Cortez. He owned there an extensive estate, which may be seen to-day pouring forth its riches, in luxuriant growths of sugarcane, coffee, and spangled all over with golden fruit.

Long before the traveller reaches that enchanting rural spot, the eye has been enchained by the sumptuous beauties of the road-side. The scenery is rich, beautiful, wild, and grand. You cast your eye downward, and you behold the slanting rays of the sun burnishing the deep ravines, fathomless to the eye; but from which, in countless places, shoots up exquisite foliage, apparently springing from an aerial base, or, as one might fancy, supported by some angelic hand anxious to bathe its paradisaical vegetation in the soft mellow light of the sunbeams. Amid the thickets, intertwined and embroidered with intoxicating flowers, is heard the various notes of the bird of Paradise and other sweet songsters, clothed in their mail of deeply-dyed plumage.

High above and around, massive rocks stand as sentinels, as if to guard the bewitching scenery from the touch of man, and sometimes curtain from his sight the deep-growing beauties that sparkle below.

And between those colossal walls float the glossy-plumed warblers in the ambient air, as gently as the seagull on the ocean's deep; and turn their golden hues to the glittering sun, and sparkle like the phosphoric gleam in its evening dance on the surface of a southern sea.