

Her womanly influence came to him at a time when it was no longer necessary to rule with such an iron hand, and she guided him to softer measures and more diplomatic ways.

Nothing is prettier than to see them together. This great ruler throws off his official cares in his wife's presence and becomes her lover. The courtesy with which he greets her, his kindly smile on seeing her, that little appealing way in which he speaks to her, and her charm and deference to him, are indeed pretty to see.

An ideal home-life truly.

My first meeting with the President and his wife was very pleasant. As a rule he sees any and everyone during the official hours at the Palace; but I received a bidding to call at his private home in Cadena through one of his greatest friends the day after my first arrival in Mexico and the presentation of my introductions.

This in itself was a great honour. He had taken me on faith. There was to be no officialism. I was to be met as a friend.

It was an ordeal to look forward to, this reception by the ruler of a nation who spoke no language but Spanish, and who had always been represented to me as one who, report said, did not care much for women. I wished for once I had been a man myself.

My new friends, Señor Don Guillermo de Landa y Escandon, Governor of the Federal District of Mexico, and his lovely wife fetched me from the hotel where I had taken rooms, intending to keep them as a *pied-à-terre* during my long stay in Mexico, for the purpose of writing my first book, and away we bowled in their barouche with a fine pair of English horses and an English coachman.

As we drove up to the simple house in Cadena, the big doors flew open and into the courtyard we clattered.

No one lives downstairs in Mexico. The lower floor is given over to the servants and offices—the coach-house, stables, etc., are all on the ground floor—and the President's home is no exception. We ascended a handsome flight of marble stairs, and reached the first floor, off which all the rooms opened. The

gallery with its flowers and plants was exposed to the elements, which is a strange thing about Mexican homes. Often in winter it is really cold, and the summer is tremendously hot. The sun even on a winter's day gives great heat, but when it is cold, the cold is penetrating. Mexicans, however, though accustomed to warmth out of doors, live with open patios, rarely have a fireplace, and never hot-water pipes; consequently their houses, with polished floors, light furniture, thin curtains, and utterly devoid of artificial heat, are cold in winter, while the bedrooms at night send a chill through one on entering. The natural result of all this is that pneumonia, which often ends in death, is common.

On our arrival, the porter below having rung up, we found a door of the gallery open, and a couple of footmen wearing English livery waiting to bow us in.

We walked round the gallery, and at the end were ushered into the ante-drawing-room, a delightfully pretty little room off which the President's own private sanctum leads. Beyond this small chamber was the large salon, a long, narrow room with several windows opening on the street, and actually possessed of a fireplace with the usual chimney decorations, although, as I subsequently learnt, it has seldom had a fire.

Madame Diaz was already in the room when we entered, and nothing more delightful or more cordial than her greeting, not only to her old friends but to me as a stranger, could be imagined. As soon as she found that her English was better than my Spanish, she kindly conversed in my own language.

A few minutes after our arrival the President himself walked in. With a courtly bow, he said he had never regretted his inability to speak English more than on the present occasion, but that I must forgive him, for he had never had time to learn, though he thought English so essential that it was now being taught in all public schools. He was a great believer in education, he said, but it must come to a nation gradually. Let people read first, and then they want to know more, and learn for themselves. It has been part of his educational system to encourage people to read the newspaper. With this object in



view a daily paper is published in Mexico City which is sold at about one farthing per copy, or half an American cent. So much is this appreciated by the peons that its circulation is over a hundred thousand a day. Surely it must be the cheapest paper in the world. Two or three years ago the sight of a Mexican peasant reading would have been impossible; to-day it is quite common, and in the capital those hundred thousand copies at this cheap rate are read with avidity.

General Diaz has organised an excellent system, under which every Indian must learn to read, write and cipher; higher grades are open for those who wish to profit by them.

"I believe this education will awaken the country, and prove an inestimable boon," he said.

That day we met as strangers, but it was a position which did not last long, as before I left Mexico the situation had so changed that on my return three and a half years later I felt as an old friend being welcomed by the warmest sympathy.

It certainly is a curious thing that such a remarkable man as General Diaz should have married a woman who in her own way is as wonderful as himself. When one realises that Madame Diaz was born and bred in a country where tradition has kept women in the background, where education even among the wealthy is scant, and the children of the poor are far better taught than the daughters of the rich, her learning is remarkable. Yes, this woman is not only a linguist, but she is artistic in her tastes, clever with her fingers, has the manners of a diplomat, the cordiality and grace of a queen, is well read and well up in literature of all countries, to say nothing of taking a keen interest in many subjects. She is a woman who would shine in any country, and, therefore, stands out still more prominently in a land where women are so subservient to men.

This is but a cursory glance of the consort of the President of Mexico. In nothing does she show to greater advantage than as a stepmother. When she married, the President's three children, two girls and a boy, were but little younger than herself; however, from that moment she "mothered" them.

General Diaz' daughter Luz married the late Francisco Rincón

Gallardo, a man of large means, and a member of Congress. They had two children. The other daughter, Amada, married Ignacio de la Torre, one of the most distinguished capitalists of the city, who, besides being a wealthy man, is connected with one of the oldest Spanish families.

The only son, Captain Porfirio Diaz, was born in 1872. Although a man of thirty-three, he looks ten or twelve years younger. Part of his education was obtained in England, where for two years he studied engineering. He married Señora Luisa Raigosa, by whom he has three children. Two of them are boys, so the President has two grandsons who bear his name. He holds a post in the army, but has made no attempt to emulate the military exploits of his father, although they are devoted to one another. His talents lie in other directions, and he has a large practice in engineering and architecture, in both of which subjects he is keenly interested. He works hard, resembling his father in that respect, and he has that gracious, courtly charm of manner for which the President is famous. Captain Diaz is chief engineer to the Mexican Construction and Engineering Company, Limited, which has carried out many big works.

It has been a common feeling of men like Napoleon to wish their sons, however incompetent, to succeed them, to make an electoral office hereditary. This is not the case with Diaz. To be the founder of an hereditary dynasty has never been his aim.

For the past twenty years, since he assumed the office of President for the second time, Porfirio Diaz and Cármelita, his wife, have lived quietly and happily in Cadena. In the summer time they have moved out to the Castle of Chapultepec for a few months, so Chapultepec still remains the President's official summer home. On that rock Montezuma built his palace, and all the dictators, rulers, and presidents of Mexico have lived in that historic spot. Maximilian has, perhaps, left the greatest mark behind, as all the open corridors round the roof garden are painted in Pompeian style according to his orders. They are crude and ugly, but the lovely palms, bougainvillea, honeysuckle, date-palms, banana-trees, violets, heliotrope scenting the air, scarlet and gold nasturtiums growing



eight or ten feet high, and passion flowers partly hide their crudeness. A tangled garden of creepers is that roof at Chapultepec.

There is a glorious view from Chapultepec, and in the soft lights of evening, tea on the balcony is delightful—real English tea and cakes dispensed by the châtelaine in gracious and charming style. Madame Diaz has a quiet, refined dignity of bearing which often reminds one of Queen Alexandra, her charming figure and pretty style of dress adding to the illusion. She is, of course, many years younger, taller, and darker in colouring, but the resemblance is strong.

Chapultepec is neither a palace nor a home. It is not large nor handsome enough for a palace, nor comfortable nor cosy enough for a home; but it has a glory of its own: it commands one of the most gorgeous panoramas in the world. It stands on a high rock in the middle of a great plain. The public drive is below, between wonderful cypress trees, where the band plays and many entertainments are given; but no one is allowed up the hill without an order, except the students of the military college, who share with the President the privilege of living at the top.

In the late afternoon—about sundown—the aristocracy of the city take their drive. Most people use closed carriages, and up and down, up and down that fine boulevard, to and from the Castle of Chapultepec, they roll in the dark—twilight there is none—and imagine they are enjoying themselves. The grand ladies are seldom seen during daylight, except at early mass; they come out like bats in the dark, yet they need not be shy, for many of them are extremely good-looking, with lovely dark hair and eyes, and wonderful teeth.

One afternoon, about four o'clock on a winter's day, Madame Diaz and I drove out to tea. In deference to my love of fresh air she had ordered a victoria, and as we made our way to Chapultepec we were almost the only people not hidden deep in broughams on that lovely afternoon.

Mexico, as I have said elsewhere, is full of romance, and in the spring-fed pool at the bottom of the hill, nestling among those glorious trees, dwells the water sprite Malinche. This

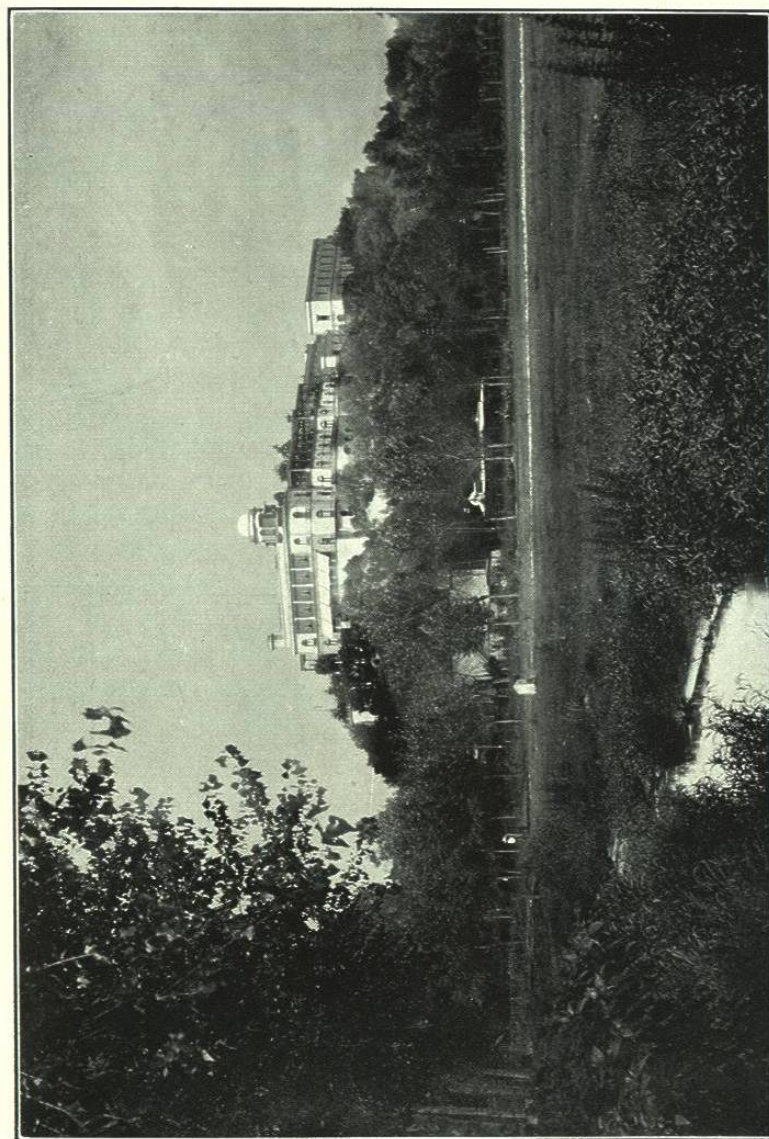
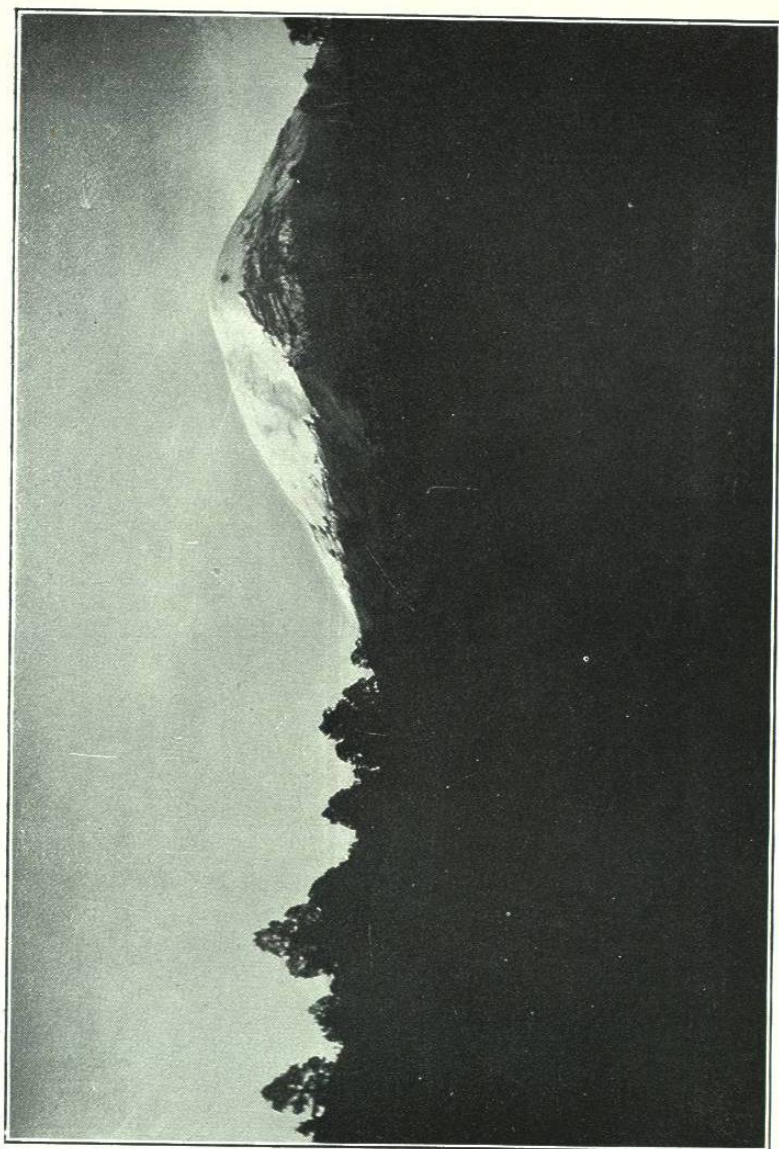


Photo by Cox.]

Chapultepec Castle, General Diaz' summer home.





Popocatepetl, extinct volcano, 17,782 feet above the sea.

Photo by RAVENHILL.

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## THE INFLUENCE OF A WOMAN.

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being spends her days at the foot of Chapultepec; she woos the passer-by with music, is gentle and sweet, a goddess of love and goodness, but the legend says that at nightfall she flies miles and miles away, her voice grows mournful, and sometimes she becomes very wicked.

'Tis a pretty legend, and one of, oh, so many!

Instead of driving up the hill nowadays, a lift has been installed for the use of the President—a lift which penetrates Montezuma's old rock and brings one out at its very summit in the Castle grounds.

On arriving at the crest of the hill, what a glorious view lay spread before us! Probably the finest panorama in the whole world. Below lies Mexico City, originally founded in 1428, by the Aztecs, under the name of Tenochtitlan, while beyond are the lakes, which, doubtless, millions, ay, billions of years ago filled the entire valley with water. Ten miles away, rising almost perpendicularly from the basin, begins a grand chain of mountains. There, on the right, almost tapering to a point, is the volcano Popocatepetl, some 17,782 feet in height, while next to him is the snow lady, Ixtaccihuatl, 16,062 feet high. They are more imposing than the Alps, because their snow-crowned summits tower singly into the heavens and the extent of valley below adds strength and grandeur to their rugged peaks. This vast expanse gives a feeling of immensity, nothing confined or shut in. It is sublime.

It chanced, when first I was there, to be a glorious sunset. The snow was coral pink, and the clouds chasing one another across the sky and over the mountains were pink, and blue, and grey in turn. Mexico is famous for her skylscapes, and certainly that night she surpassed herself. One moment the picture seemed all ablaze with red and yellow, and the next, as though a curtain fell suddenly from heaven, all was dark.

Yes, that view from Chapultepec was the grandest, the most imposing, and, in those soft evening lights, the most sublime, I have ever gazed upon in the course of many wanderings. Well may the Mexicans be proud of their land.

We saw the Palace—the famous Pompeian court arranged



by poor Maximilian, which General Diaz will not have altered, as he made it—the roof-garden with roses, geraniums, and gorgeous-leaved plants growing in the open air at Christmas time; but inside the building was disappointing, for the rooms were all furnished with modern French upholstery, instead of antique Spanish! Large verandahs, palms and banana plants gave an Eastern effect, and yet a chilliness filled the air on that winter evening.

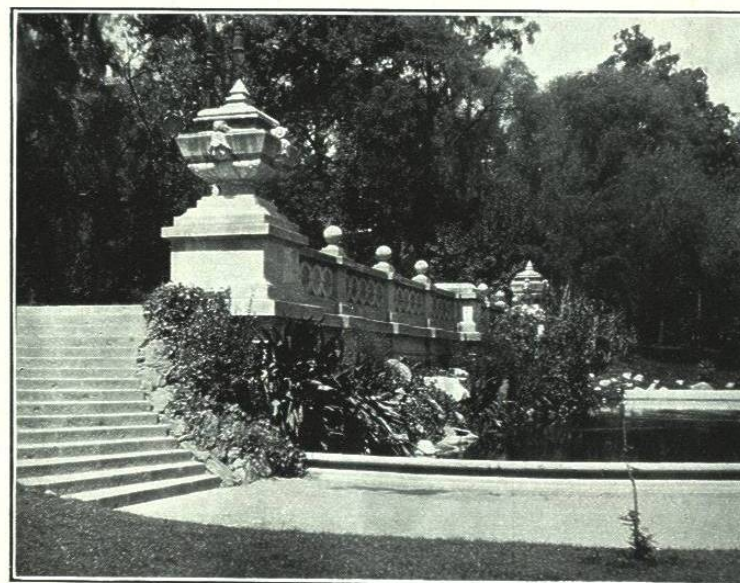
Either Mexico City is growing colder or the blood of the people less warm. The old open houses, with their airy patios, no fireplaces, and huge rooms, are cold and dreary in the present-day winter, and thus it is that some of the modern houses have been built more suitably to the climate.

On the terrace we drank tea, handed round by servants in plain livery and white gloves. We had delicious cakes and strawberries—yes, strawberries at Christmas, in fact, strawberries all the year round are possible in some parts of Mexico. We were joined at tea by Madame Diaz' sisters and friends, and a very happy, jolly little party we were, stopping now and then to gaze at the glorious sunlit panorama.

Madame Diaz has two sisters: Luisa Romero Rubio married the late José de Teresa, who died recently when filling the post of Minister in Vienna; the other sister, Sophia, married Señor Elieza, a lawyer and member of Congress.

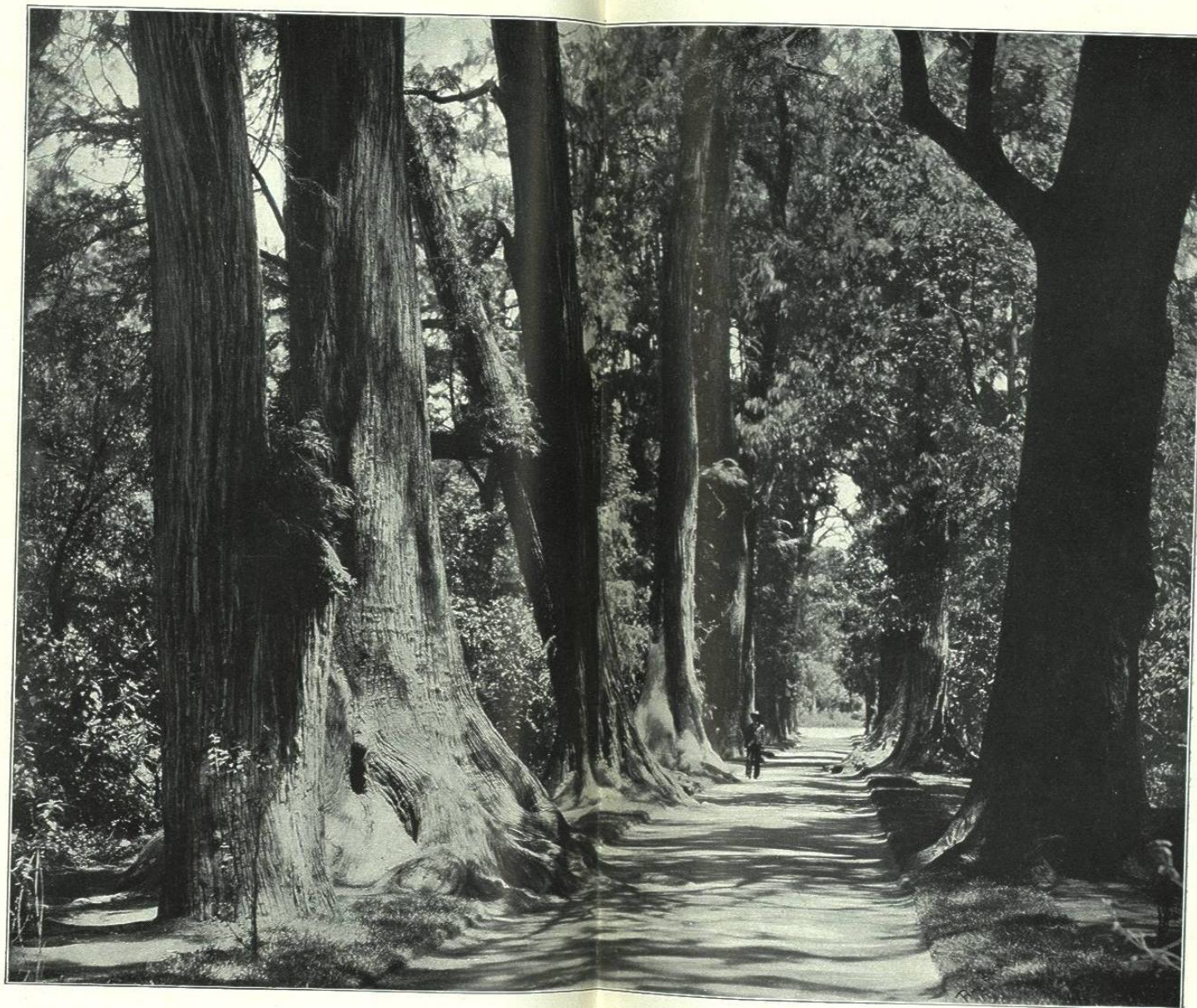
It was almost too beautiful a night to talk, and thoughts of the history of that great rock on which we sipped our modern five o'clock tea kept recurring to one's mind.

A great page in history is covered by the rock of Chapultepec. Here the Aztecs burned their sacrificial fires—here the victims were bound, their living hearts torn forth to assuage the anger of the gods. Here deeds of cruelty and horror were enacted through long centuries. Here feather-decked Aztecs made revelry and brought offerings of fruit and flowers to lay at the foot of Chapultepec. Quaint gods were set up in niches cut in the rock, incense was burned in vases and large spoons resembling frying-pans. The milder early people of Mexico, the Toltecs, had been overcome by the more cruel Aztecs—a people who



A terrace at the castle of Chapultepec.





*Photo by PERCY S. COX.]*

General Diaz' favourite walk at Chapultepec.



revelled in human sacrifice—and at religious ceremonies were cannibals.

How many millions of years—for time counts for nought in the construction of the world—is it since that old rock of the Grasshopper (Chapultepec) raised its head out of the marshy, lake-like valley below. Its emblem, a large red porphyry grasshopper over a foot long, is in the Mexico Museum.

We could picture the priests of yore, issuing forth on just such a night, followed by their acolytes and choristers, and in solemn procession descending those steps to the scent of wafted incense, made from copal, such as is used in the churches of Mexico to-day, and accompanied by the chant of human voices. We seemed to see them cross the hill-top, pausing finally before a sacrificial stone, similar to that which is now in the Mexican Museum; we saw the human victim led forth, bound and fettered, and then—!

Such barbaric festivals lasted until the time when Cortéz, in 1519, marched into the valley of the Aztecs, and the great Hill of the Grasshopper, the stronghold of Montezuma, passed into the hands of a conquering power. These Aztec people are not dead, as many suppose. There are half a million or more in Mexico to-day, who still speak the Aztec language and closely resemble in physique and physiognomy the pictures carved thousands of years ago on such fortresses as Xochicalco.

The Aztecs were a race of great culture and refinement, and artistic in a high degree. Their altars, tombs, gods, gold work, pottery, bespeak rare gifts. Their decorations were not conventional. Usually they are found chiselled all over the stone work, representing human figures, and large eagles or serpents, and are entirely unlike those of the Zapotecs, whose work was mostly geometrical, and closely resembled Greek designs.

The meal was over; the sun had set, darkness covered the land before we turned to leave. As we reached the entrance to the lift, the custodian advanced, hat in hand, bearing four lovely bouquets, apparently for the four ladies of the party—one of heliotrope, one of nasturtiums, one of roses, and one of



forget-me-nots, and handed them to the President's wife. The flowers were fresh picked from those blooming on the terrace. She waved him to let me, as her guest, have first choice. Very pretty and gracious of her, but then everything she does is on a par with this. Laying our sweet-scented bouquets on the seat of the carriage, we bowled away beneath those glorious cypress trees, and back to Mexico City.

These cypress are famous all the world over. Beneath their shade Montezuma walked and Cortéz rode, as the President of Mexico rides and walks to-day. Grey, tangled moss falls in showers from the branches, reminiscent of the more tropical vegetation of the South.

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A Guard of Rurales and the Castle of Chapultepec in the background.  
General Díaz.

Señor Guillermo de  
Landa y Escandon.

#### A MORNING'S RIDE.





Madame Diaz, the queen of Mexican society.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### SOCIAL DOINGS.

BEFORE leaving the subject of Madame Diaz, it may be well to give some idea of Mexican society, whose acknowledged queen she is. Therefore this chapter will deal with habits and customs, street life and daily events, rather than with war, politics, mining, or agriculture.

The City of Mexico has been likened to Paris, and in many ways the comparison is good. It is not as bustling as New York, nor yet as conservative as London. The gayest society, the smartest frocks, the prettiest women are to be found; but the restaurants are indifferent, and the hotels worse. Advanced civilisation, great refinement, beauty and talent can be seen in the capital itself, yet barbarism exists outside.

There is great wealth in the city, palatial homes where the occupants do not even enjoy the luxury of a want.

Society is very exclusive. The families are wonderfully united, and spend most of their time together; that is to say, the women folk do, for the men, until last year, had a way of slipping off to the Jockey Club, where they played baccarat, which began at five o'clock every afternoon, and did not always stop at five next morning. The baccarat tables are now closed, and other forms of gambling do not prove quite so alluring.

The day begins with coffee, taken in the bedrooms—a custom that enables people to go about in negligé attire for the greater part of the forenoon, as in France. The ladies slip mantillas over their heads, and black cloaks about their bodies, and start off to early Mass, but on their return they disappear into dress-