

GENERAL VIEW OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY, MEXICO CITY.

ruling over the Aztecs when the Spanish invaders reached the present site of Mexico City, after a long and memorable pilgrimage from the shore of the Gulf of Mexico. Their surprise must have been great when they first beheld the Aztec capital, for the city is described as having been in a high state of development, but of an entirely different nature from that of European civilization. The splendors of the city and its evident wealth and luxury doubtless first aroused in the Spanish adventurers the desire to dispossess the Montezumas and to conquer the country.

THE FEDERAL DISTRICT.

Passing over the days of the Spanish Conquest and coming down to the present, we find Mexico's capital located in a Federal District having an area of 579 square miles. The city proper covers about 15 square miles, and the latest population figures show the city and district to have 900,658 people. Mexico City, 615,367; Federal District, 900,658, 1921. For administrative purposes this District is divided into municipalities, of which Mexico City is one. At the head of the Federal District government is a superior council composed of a governor, a director of public works, and a president of the board of health. All are appointed by the Chief Executive, but they act under the Department of the Interior. The governor is the political authority and he enforces laws and decrees, commands the police, fire department, etc., and is charged with the operation of public utilities, the inspection of weights, measures, etc. The director of public works looks after the water supply, streets, parks, lighting the city, markets, and allied activities affecting the public; while the duties of the president of the board of health are indicated by the title of the office. Each of the three officials is separately responsible for the conduct of his department. Sitting together as the superior council they may annul or revise the action of any one of the constituent



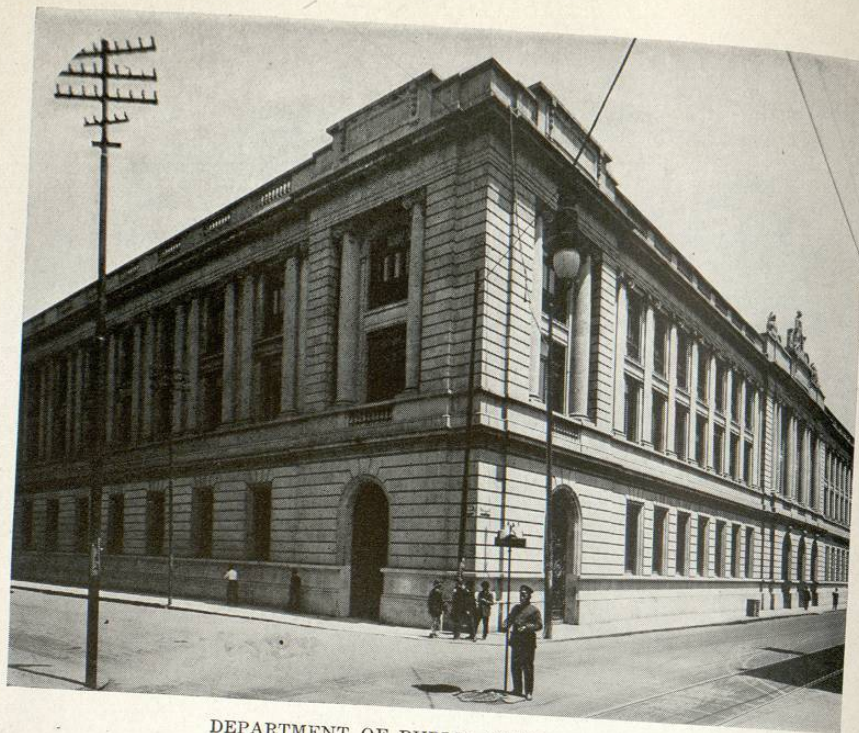
RECEPTION HALL IN THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN RELATIONS

members thereof. The Department of the Interior may annul or revise the action of the superior council itself.

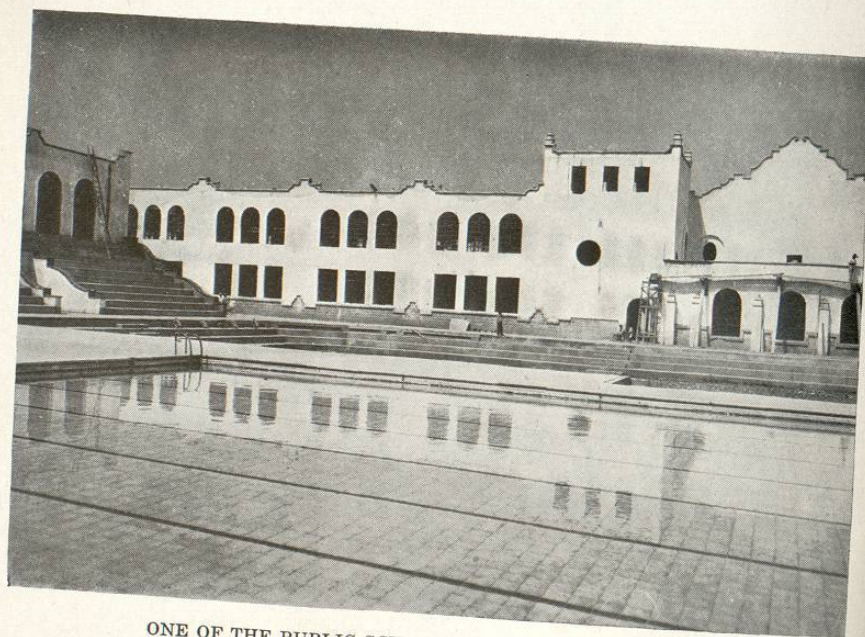
Each of the municipalities, including the City of Mexico, has also its own ayuntamiento, or local council, composed of men elected by popular vote for a four-year term. A councilor must be at least 25 years of age and a Mexican citizen.

One of the city's most important municipal undertakings was the construction of a canal to drain the valley in which the city stands. Begun in the 16th century, it was many years in course of construction. A special board renewed efforts in 1886 and carried the enterprise to consummation by 1900. We have referred to the valley as having no natural outlet; by drain pipes, canals, and a tunnel, however, the surplus waters of the valley and lakes, as well as the underground sewerage of the capital, are now carried beyond the encircling hills and mountains. A waterworks system, utilizing the springs of adjacent mountains, supplies the city today with an abundance of pure water and also flushes the canals, aided partly by mechanical pressure. The whole system cost the municipality more than \$5,000,000.

Mexico City's streets run north and south and east and west, with new and broad avenues that offer interesting contrasts to the narrow streets or "callejones" constructed in former eras. They are usually level and the newer ones well paved or constructed in accordance with modern street paving methods. On older streets the long-popular cobble stones are still to be seen. The beautiful avenue known as the Paseo de la Reforma, stretching about three miles from the city proper to the Hill of Chapultepec, is a model of its kind. Many of the world's avenues were visited and studied by a Mexican street commission, and numerous points of utility or excellence were adopted for the Paseo de la Reforma. Along this unusually broad avenue are half a dozen or more great circles, or "glori-



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION



ONE OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF THE CAPITAL CITY

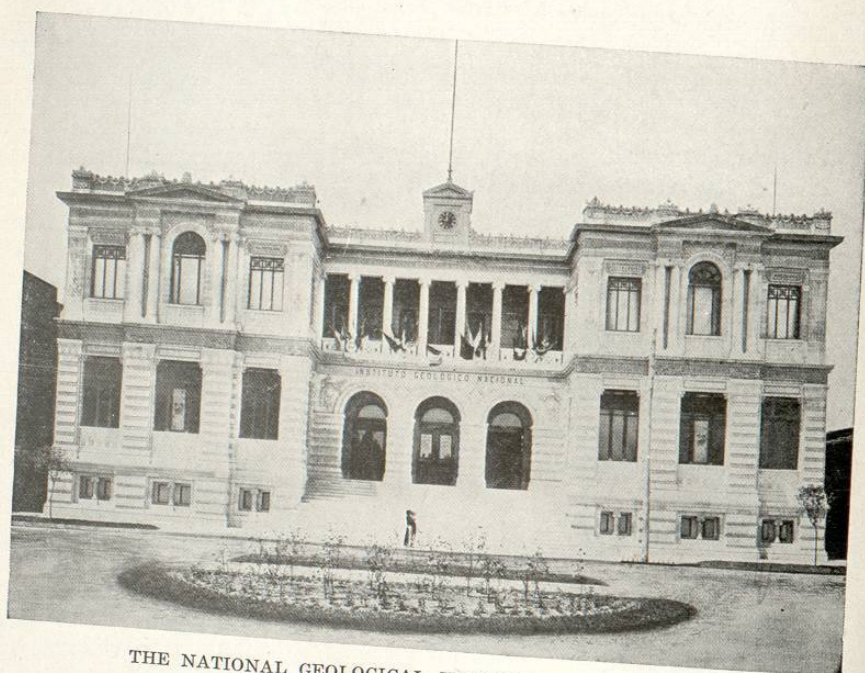
etas," in some of which statues have already been erected, while on the sides at intervals are placed smaller statues of modern heroes. A double line of eucalyptus and other trees add shady patches here and there along the course, while the private lawns and flower beds on either side provide other features that make this one of the world's most attractive and interesting avenues.

The streets of Mexico City are somewhat puzzling to the stranger. For instance, Calle San Francisco, now the Avenue Francisco I. Madero, always a popular thoroughfare with native or guest, had different sections, as First San Francisco, Second San Francisco, etc., according to the location of a certain block. This ancient system was changed a few years ago and all streets from east to west were designated as avenues; those running north and south became streets or "calles," and in each case a single name was bestowed on the entire thoroughfare. Legend and tradition are strong, however, and many people appear to prefer the older order of street designation, except in cases of some of the new avenues. Mexicans also cling to patriotic names, like Calle Cinco de Mayo for instance, which is the date they won a victory over the French (May 5, 1862) at Puebla. We also find the Spanish equivalent for such street names as Illustrious Men, Sad Indian, Walking Priest, Lost Child, Bridge of the Raven, The Watch, etc. There are nearly 1,000 streets and "lanes."

At the outward end of the Paseo stands the castle of Chapultepec, constructed on the crest of a high natural bluff, from which one may enjoy a magnificent view of the city and surrounding region. A winding roadway leads from the lower level to the top of this "Hill of the Grasshopper," as it is often called; and along the route on stones are figures and hieroglyphics made by the Aztecs or their predecessors. At one point on this road we pass a cavelike opening which is the entrance to an underground passage to the top of the hill, said to have



HEADQUARTERS OF THE POLICE DEPARTMENT OF MEXICO CITY.



THE NATIONAL GEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE, MEXICO CITY.

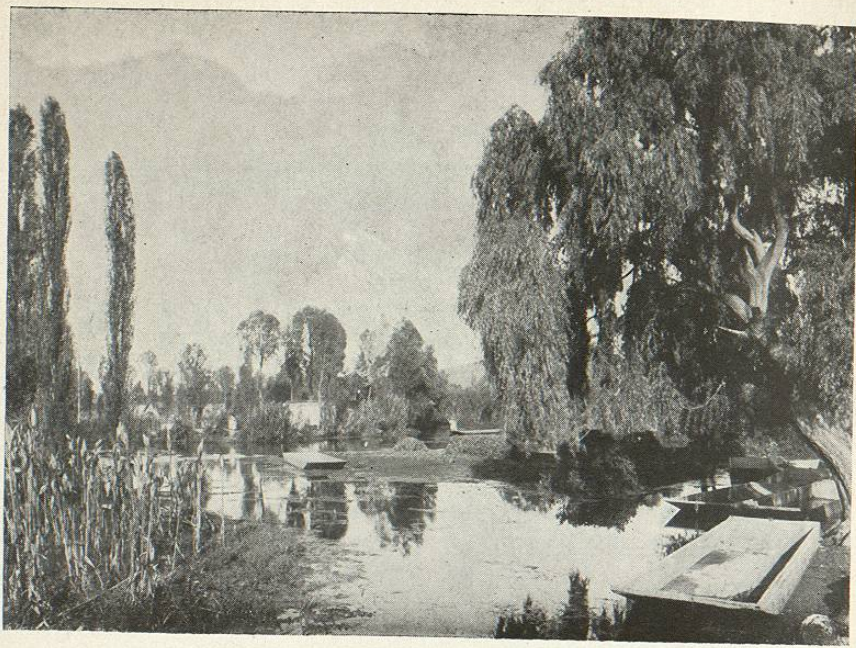
been a secret route of ascent in olden days. This interior passage is closed today to visitors, but years ago an elevator was constructed in one part of the passage which has been frequently used by the Presidents of the Republics.

Once upon the crest of Chapultepec, 200 feet above the city, the traveler is charmed, not alone by the views but by the way nature and man have combined forces to produce the unusual, the interesting, and the picturesque. On the Pyramid of the Sun, of which we have spoken, all is ancient work; on Chapultepec a great modern castle and fortress stands, a portion of which has long served as the summer residence of the President of Mexico.

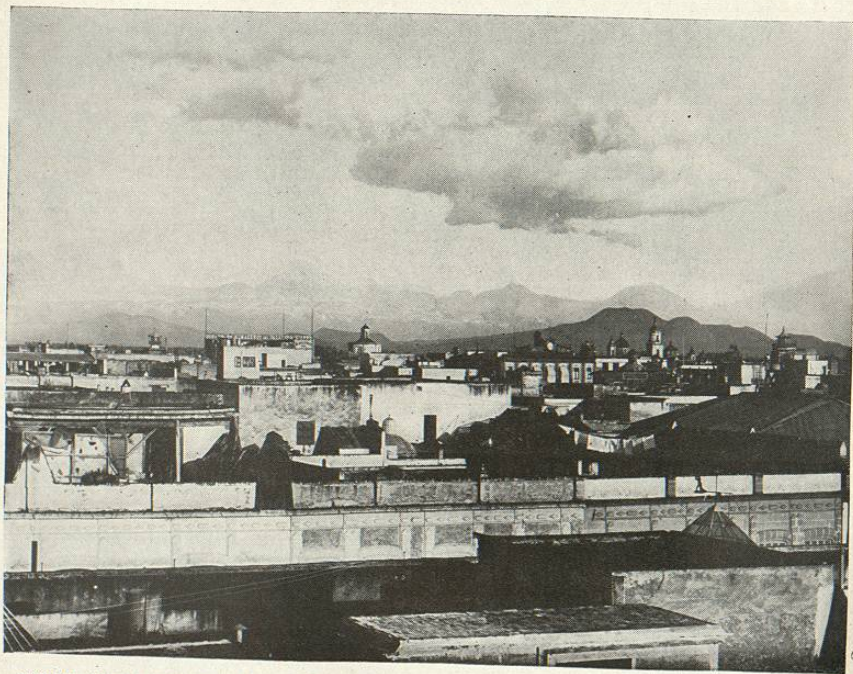
From Chapultepec we have what might be termed a close view of the capital city—much closer than from the pyramid's crest. At the immediate base of the hill stands the Bosque or forest of fine old cypress trees overshadowing miles of drives and walks, with here and there hanging baskets of moss and vines arranged by nature herself. On the edge of this historical setting the Chapultepec restaurant has been erected. So popular has this resort become that in late afternoons or evenings the élite of capital society may be found there sipping the tea of the Orient, domestic chocolate, or partaking of some of the best prepared food to be found in the city. The roads are crowded with motor cars, carriages, and slow-moving pedestrians, all out for pleasure and recreation, and for the time being forgetful of the more serious side of life.

Another famous hill in the suburbs of Mexico is that of Guadalupe, and in visiting its sacred precincts we pass over an ancient causeway rich in legendary lore and along which modern electric cars and automobiles are now operated. High on Guadalupe's crest stands a chapel which is closely related to the history of the colonial period. At the base of the hill is the famous shrine of Guadalupe.

Still another interesting sight, especially for the visitor,



A SUBURBAN VIEW, MEXICO CITY



VIEW OF THE VOLCANOES POPOCATEPETL AND IXTACCIHUATL FROM THE ROOF OF THE ITURBIDE HOTEL, MEXICO CITY

is the old tree in the suburb of Tacuba under which Cortes sat and wept on the night of July 1, 1520, when he and his troops were so terribly defeated by the Aztecs. The tree is a species of cypress, and some years ago a fanatic attempted its destruction by starting a fire at its base, but the prompt arrival of officers prevented the tree's destruction. Today a high iron fence surrounds this relic which has long weathered the ravages of time. It is called the "tree of the sad night," or, in Spanish, "el arbol de la noche triste."

In Coyoacan, another suburb of the capital, stands one of the homes of Cortes, still in a fair state of preservation and in use as a public office building.

To the stranger the ancient structures of Mexico City are far more interesting than those of recent date. We have space for only a glance at a few of the most noteworthy. The site of the Aztec ruler's *teocalli* or temple is occupied by the present cathedral, a massive structure 374 feet long and 198 feet wide, containing marble altars, silver rails, and priceless paintings and tapestries. This great structure was started in 1573 and was many years in construction. Architecturally it is said to be "composite." The lower part is Doric, above this is exaggerated Ionic, while the higher parts are Corinthian. The *façade*, from which rise two towers each 204 feet high, is divided into three divisions, which represent the three Greek orders. Gray stone and white marble were used largely in building this cathedral.

Another side of the Plaza Mayor is occupied today by the National Palace, the official home of the President of the Republic and various other Government officers. On the site of this palace Cortes built a home, which was destroyed in 1692. The present edifice was begun shortly after that date and has been enlarged from time to time. Over the main entrance hangs the liberty bell of Mexico, which was rung in 1810 by Hidalgo to call his fellow-countrymen to arms.