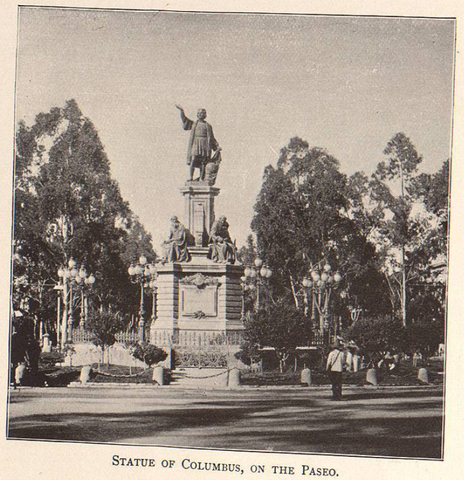
forests of Yucatan and the picturesque ranges of Lower California! What variety! And all enriched and ennobled by the historic reminiscences evoked at every step by those mute witnesses of a civilized past which lie everywhere.

Science, commerce, and the arts draw many visitors to Mexico, but for the artistic or poetic visitor she holds treasures far exceeding those material and inexhaustible ones which in all times have roused the cupidity of the entire world. Here some little town, the time-blackened walls of its ancient church showing through the surrounding trees, melancholy, dreaming over the



STATUE OF COLUMBUS, ON THE PASEO.

past; there some castle, proud, poised upon its rock like an eagle, half hidden in century-old cypresses, whose boughs, hung with paxtle, sigh sadly to the breeze; there, again, some fortress rising from coral beds, within whose walls more tears have been shed than there are waves in the salt sea around it. Buried cities one finds, the green corn waving above them; pyramids of time-worn stone; broken columns; baths where kings have sported, carved in the solid rock; grim idols, half hidden in the prickly pears, and whose weight is calculated by tons. Gloomy temples are there like those of India and Egypt, palaces of an architecture monstrous and superb as that of Assyria, hidden in savage and virgin forests whose ever-renewed youth mocks at cities and civilization as Eternity mocks at Time.



# CHAPTER IV

## CUSTOMS AND CHARACTERISTICS

MEXICO was christened by the conquerors "New Spain," and to this day it has many Spanish characteristics. The city of Mexico is nearly as large as Madrid or Barcelona, and far surpasses both in novelty and interest. Outside of its wonderful picture-gallery, the finest in the world, Madrid is only an imitation Paris, while Barcelona is a bright, attractive modern business city. Mexico is all these, and, in addition, interests with Oriental scenes and suggestions. It has many of the sight-seeing attractions of Madrid, Barcelona, and gay Seville, with touches of scenes from the streets of Cairo. Guadalajara and Puebla are nearer the size of Seville, and each has manifold attractions. Guanajuato is the Mexican reminder of Toledo and Granada, perched on the rocky hill-sides, terraced, quaint, and picturesque. You hear the same language spoken as in Spain; in both countries you pay separately for each act at a theatrical performance; men smoke constantly and everywhere, as, in fact, some of the women do; while in no other country except old Spain is the bull-fight so popular an institution.

PATIO OF THE NATIONAL SCHOOL.

And, after all, bull-fighting seems more or less appropriate to the peculiar civilization of Mexico. The picturesque setting that is given there calls up vaguely the bouts in the amphitheatre in the days of Roman glory, and the more modern jousts and tournaments of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers.

The best place chosen in Mexico City for the contest is in Tacubaya. The amphitheatre is enclosed by a wall of adobe. The sunny side of the enclosure is furnished with rows of wooden benches, but the shady side is provided with boxes for the accommodation of the grandees of the city and of distinguished visitors. The audiences are composed of all classes of society,—from the proud swell, with his four-in-hand, to the barefoot, dark-eyed, patient-faced Castilian lad. About one-fifth of the gathering is composed of women. In the boxes are beauties with olive skin and peach's bloom,

their large, dark eyes lighting up with enthusiasm at exciting turns in the sport. Bands of music play lively airs, and great drums are pounded to keep the spectators satisfied during the preparations for the fray. Presently a herald, stationed in the governor's box, sounds a call, whereupon the pit opens and a troop of matadors appears. Each one wears a plumed hat, a scarlet sash, an appropriate jacket and breeches of black velvet trimmed with gold lace. A poniard hangs from his belt, a scarlet cloak upon his arm, and a pike-staff in his hand. Altogether the matador is an extremely picturesque-looking fellow, and his figure is usually lithe and dashing. Behind the matadors comes a troop of horsemen, mounted on handsome beasts decked out with the gayest trappings. Following comes a team of mules dragging a whiffletree and a long rope. This takes some of the romance and beauty out of the *ensemble*, for these mules are to drag the dead away from the field. The cavalcade stops before the governor's box and salutes his excellency, who makes a brief speech, commending their appearance and wishing them good luck. The matadors then go to a rack in front of the governor's box, upon which hang several rows of darts gaudy with colored paper rosettes and fringes. Upon this rack they hang their plumed hats, and then pause to give the spectators an opportunity to admire their attractive persons. The horsemen ride out, followed by the mules, and the beginning of the sport is close at hand. Again the pit opens, and the horsemen re-enter. A door is opened in the pit, and a bull emerges into the ring. As he lunges in one direction, two or three matadors flap their scarlet cloaks in his face; when he turns from them and bounds in another direction, he runs into the cloaks of the other matadors. In a little while his temper becomes aroused, and he runs madly across the ring and tries to clear the wall; but this, of course, he cannot do. If he will not attack his tormentors one of the horsemen rides up to him and strikes him in the face with his spear. The poor animal, maddened with pain, rushes at the blindfold horse, which he raises upon his horns and flings to the ground. The horseman knows what is coming, and dismounts just before the critical moment. After one horse is disposed of, others are brought out. When the bull grows exhausted, the matadors re-enter and tease him with their scarlet cloaks and the points of their lances. Should the bull suddenly turn, his tormentor, putting the point of his lance in the ground, vaults by its aid over the lowered horns and retreats behind some planks. The next part of the programme is to throw ornamented darts into the bull's side. The brute runs hither and thither. Soon, whoever has charge of the entertainment sounds a call, which is the death-signal. The chief matador steps forward with a red blanket and a sword, and, approaching the bull, flaps the blanket in his eyes. The bull lunges toward him, but with great precision and

PATIO OF THE NATIONAL PREPARATORY SCHOOL.



dexterity the matador jumps aside, and with one swift thrust puts his weapon into the bull's heart. The animal staggers and falls to the ground, and the matador pierces his brain with a poniard. The mules appear and are hitched to the dead beast; the band strikes up; the matadors bow to the aristocratic boxes, and clowns disport themselves in the ring till another bull is brought forth. The horses are nearly always killed, the bulls are always dispatched; but the riders and matadors seldom receive any injuries.

The Christmas customs of Mexico are uncommonly pretty and touching. The Christmas-tree is not a native institution, though it gives indications of becoming naturalized. In its stead Mexican children have what they call a pinata, which affords them just as much fun. The pinata is a large earthenware jar, which is covered with colored tissue-paper, often in such manner as

A BULL-FIGHT.

to represent a ship, a balloon, a grotesque human figure, or other object. This jar is filled with all sorts of dainties dear to children,—oranges, raisins, candy, peanuts, etc.,—and is hung up in the corridor or court-yard of the house. Each of the children and grown-up people is blind-folded in turn, and, after being turned around once or twice, has a stick placed in his or her hand and is invited to break the pinata. The other guests have to be on their guard, for the wielder of the stick is generally, after being turned round, quite out of his bearings, and often brings down his stick within an inch of the head of one of the party. He is allowed three trials, and if he is not successful the handkerchief is removed and another takes his turn. At length a crash is heard,—some one has made a true hit,—the pinata is broken and the good things fall in a shower to the ground, and a general scramble ensues among the young ones to obtain possession of as large a share as possible.

The posadas are a characteristically Mexican celebration. They commemorate the journey of Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem. This journey, performed by Mary mounted on an ass, which Joseph guided, is supposed to have occupied nine days. Each evening they naturally approached some dwelling to beg a night's shelter. It is this nightly episode that is commemorated in Mexican houses by the posadas, or the begging of the posada (*pedir posada*), meaning shelter, lodging, or entertainment. It is customary for a number of Mexican families to club together to celebrate the nine nights. At the appointed hour the guests assemble at one house. Each guest is provided with a taper. All the servants are invited to take part in what is regarded as a religious ceremony, for Catholicism in Mexico is a democratic and levelling element. There are no fashionable and expensive pews in Mexican churches, and one often sees the ragged beggar kneeling side by side with the inheritress of a hundred Castilian titles. A procession is formed, at the head of which are carried figures of Mary riding an ass and Joseph leading it. Overhead hovers an angel guiding the pilgrims on their way. The dresses of the holy couple are of gay-colored satin. St. Joseph is usually represented with a pilgrim's staff and gourd. The procession marches several times round the corridors of the house, intoning the Litany of Loretto, a series of poetical invocations in honor of the Virgin. When the litany is finished, two or three of the party enter the house, which, according to Mexican custom, opens on the corridor. They close the door on the rest of the party, at the head of which are the Virgin and Joseph. A dialogue in chanted verse then ensues,—this being the nightly request of the pilgrims for shelter from the cold and dangers of the road. The party outside speak in the name of Joseph and beg admittance for his wife and himself. Those within at first deny the favor, but at last relent, touched by the innocence and distress of the pilgrims. The versicles are simply sung to a tune of immemorial antiquity in Mexico. When the doors are thrown open the pilgrims are placed on an improvised altar decked with quantities of lighted tapers, shiny tinsel, and toys of small intrinsic value. All the party kneel, and prayers are recited. After that a tray is passed round containing small jars filled with candy. Each guest is invited to take one, and with this compliment the ceremony, properly speaking, ends. In the patriarchal days of the viceroys the posada was a strictly religious custom, and in a few old-fashioned families it is so still. But in most Mexican houses the posadas are only a pretext now for having a good time. The religious exercises are observed in the quickest and most perfunctory manner, and a dance and general romp follow, kept up until the early hours of the morning. The ninth night of the posadas—that is, Christmas Eve—is celebrated on the most extensive and luxurious scale of all, and generally the wealthiest of all the families that have clubbed together gives the entertainment. In memory of the night when the Saviour was born, the figure of an infant is carried in procession, and is placed in a manger between the ox and the ass in a prettily adorned cave, which is intended to represent the stable where Mary and Joseph took refuge when they found that there was no room for them in the inns.

November marks in Mexico the setting in of winter fashions. For years it has been the custom to partition off a portion of the Zócalo or the Alameda as a promenade for the rich and well-to-do. One year the whole Zócalo was enclosed and decorated with flags, mirrors, Spanish moss, and potted plants, and at night was lit with many-colored electric lights. On certain nights of the week this enclosure was frequented by all the *beau monde* of Mexico, who formed an elegantly attired throng.

The feast day celebrated by the Catholic Church on November 1 is called All Saints', and ranks as one of the most solemn of the year. It was instituted at an early period in the history of the Church as a means of doing honor to the many saints to whom it was impossible to assign



a separate feast. The feast which follows on November 2 is popularly known as All Souls', and is the day for the commemoration of the faithful departed. On this day masses are said and special prayers offered by Catholics for the release of souls from purgatory. The priests wear black vestments, and in some of the churches a huge catafalque is erected in the centre of the nave.

The origin of the feast of All Souls dates back to the year 827 A.D., when Amalario, the deacon of Metz, published the office for the dead; but it was not until 998 A.D. that St. Odillon, abbot of Cluny, instituted in his churches this feast in commemoration of the faithful deceased. This feast soon prevailed in the Catholic Church. It took a rather wider range in France in the eighteenth century, when the laborers began to dedicate gratuitous work, for the benefit of the poor of All Souls' day, and offered to the Church wheat, which, according to the Pauline designation, is the symbol of resurrection.

Fountain of the Salto de Agua.

The idea of these November feasts is not original with Mexico; it has found root in nearly every religion.

The feasts of All Saints and All Souls, although not celebrated with the *éclat* of former years, are still very interesting in certain portions of the republic, especially along the gulf coast. There the Indians are in the habit of placing upon the graves dulces, or sweetmeats, prepared with *chilacayote* and *calabazas*. The Indians place these dulces with large jars of water upon the tombs of their deceased relatives and friends during the afternoon of November 1, so that the dead—that night at least—can have something to eat and drink. This latter arrangement is similar to some of the customs of Germany and Central Europe.

"Responsos" are not given everywhere in the churches, as in Mexico City, and recited over a skull. Out in the country district they are given in the cemeteries by some priest. Armed with a bough of aromatic hyssop and his well-thumbed breviary and his ready rosary, the priest visits the tombs, sprinkles upon them some holy water, and recites a Latin prayer or two. Receiving his "medio," he is jostled on to the next grave.

The "ofrenda," or offering, is, singular to say, of Aztec origin. The Aztecs were in the habit of cremating their dead; and they kept the ashes in an urn with fragments of precious metals, emeralds, etc., also putting in food and catlis, together with bows and arrows and a quantity of a great golden-hearted flower called the *zempoalzoichitl*, which can be found growing in Mexico profusely at this day. This flower is used to decorate the sepulchres in company with white roses, the ruby "*flor de noche buena*," the haughty hortenses and velvety forget-me-nots, as well as violets, geraniums, and marguerites. In the country districts the ofrenda is much more elaborate than in the city. The women make handkerchiefs and napkins curiously embroidered, also wax figures more or less hideous, and offer these with trays of sweetmeats