

enhanced. The moon grows bigger and the scene lighter, and this, you remember, is but one day in beautiful Mexico.

Everywhere the people are cheerful and simple in their ways of living. They all attend church, and are devotional in habit. Doubtless more prayers are said in Mexico in a single day than in all of the United States together; and yet some people in the latter country want to send missionaries to Mexico!

In several different places, including Guanajuato, Mexico has a display of comparatively modern mummies and catacombs. The practice prevails, as in some European cities, of renting tomb space for the use of a corpse. In Mexico, if at the expiration of the original term there is no renewal of the lease, the corpse is dumped into an extensive underground chamber. If in the dry air the evicted mummifies, he stands against the wall; if he tumbles to pieces, his bones join the vast miscellaneous heap. The Guanajuato catacomb is ghastly enough to

satisfy the most exacting connoisseur of the gruesome and blood-thirsty. In some of the mummies which have recently been examined jade teeth have been found, which is thought to be a proof that the Aztec princes used to be supplied by their dentists with handsome jade teeth, whenever their own pearly ones failed, just as the dentist of to-day supplies my lady with an ivory crown-tooth in place of her natural one.

The Mexican beggars are not to be compared in deformity with those of



SELLER OF PETATES.



SELLER OF FOWLS.

Constantinople, or in persistency with those of Killarney, but they maintain a fair European average in both respects, and cause the American visitor who has been abroad to remember them in Mexico. Cortez, distinguishing Cholula from other Aztec cities, said he saw there "multitudes of beggars such as are to be found in the enlightened capitals of Europe." Since the conquest, all the other Mexican cities seem to have attained Cholula's distinction, and now proudly display these evidences of European enlightenment.

Then there are street scenes of a strange and foreign aspect to the American, such as black street-car hearses and street-car funeral hacks. There are also curious street signs, rude but vigorous and highly colored pictures depicting scenes suggestive of the business conducted within, and in appropriate names in staring letters as trade-marks, so to speak, of the different stores. Imagine, for instance, "The Last Days of Pompeii" as a business sign, or "The Sacred Heart of Jesus," which is the name of a score of establishments, ranging from a saloon to a flour-mill; and what do you think of these as names of streets?—"Crown of Thorns Street," "Fifth of May Street," "Holy Ghost Street," "Blood of Christ Street," "Body of Christ Street,"

"Mother of Sorrows Street," "Street of the Sacred Heart," "The Heart of Jesus Street," "Street of the Love of God," "Jesus Street," "John the Baptist Street."

Other governments might well take pattern from the Mexican parliament. No other government in the world has one like it in point of courtesy and dignity. The Mexican legislature holds its sessions in the evenings. The seats of the members are arranged in semicircular rows, and the presiding officer and officials of the house sit upon a large dais, or platform. At each side of the platform is a sort of pulpit, from which very formal addresses are delivered; but unpretentious discussions taking a conversational and unimpassioned form are conducted on the floor of the chamber. The orchestra and the galleries are divided into boxes, which are reserved for spectators; but it is only a rare occasion that brings outsiders to listen to the deliberations of their rulers. There is much etiquette in the parliament: members appear in evening dress; there is no confusion; there is seldom any rude or improper language like that which so often disgraces other deliberative assemblies. Speakers are courteous, even-tempered, and apparently conscious of the dignity of their position. More than three-fourths of the assemblage are white, and the Aztec blood is hardly traceable in the remainder. As a rule, men of character, means, and social position seek legislative honors, and hence it is a strong point with them to be careful about their honor. Extreme dignity and decorum mark the proceedings, which are always short and practical. The legislature meets twice in each year, in the spring and in the fall. The House of Representatives has one member for every forty thousand inhabitants, and the Senate has one senator for each state in the republic.

Perhaps nowhere else in the world is graceful horsemanship so common as in Mexico. The Mexican of adventure first thinks of a dashing horse, with showy saddle, gay saddle-cloth, and gleaming bridle and bridoon, bits, and rings. Then this high-spirited horse with his flashiest accoutrements is not complete without a rider "to match." The Mexican accordingly arrays himself in a bright sash, a flowing cloak like that of a mediæval cavalier, and a broad-brimmed sombrero. As he dashes along the streets of Mexican cities he suggests the gaudiest kind of butterfly, and he is often found beyond the city on the plains. In the United States territory he is the envy of the cowboy, and receives the sincerest form of flattery,—namely, imitation. It is not unusual to find an ordinary American citizen, after three months' absence on the plains, so completely metamorphosed as to be hardly distinguishable from a Mexican.

A word should be spoken of the patient little burro, too, the most sedate and serious object one meets in Mexico. He is everywhere to be found. On his stout little back is loaded freight of all kinds; and he often carries packs much heavier than himself. One driver can manage twenty of these plodding fellows, so gentle and patient and trustworthy are they. And yet they never ask anything in return.

In all the Mexican towns of any size there is a Plaza de Armas, or Central Plaza, in which the band plays nearly every evening, and whither every one goes. On one side of this plaza is invariably the cathedral; on two of the other sides, if the town is a state capital, the governor's palace and the palace of the state legislature and the supreme court; and on the fourth



INDIAN FROM THE MOUNTAINS.

side, large stores or handsome private residences. According to the custom of the country there, "an endless chain" of girls, in groups of two, three, or four, promenade in one direction, with a similar chain of young men going in the opposite direction, while the older people sit on the benches and seats. Thus every girl can be seen in succession by every young man in the other chain; and both parties make good use of their eyes. Where any mutual liking is evinced, or any encouragement shown, the girl's home is ascertained, and then the smitten youth takes to "playing bear," as it is called. That is, he promenades at certain hours back and forth beneath the narrow balcony on which, in this delightful climate, the inamorata sits in front of her apartment. He casts from time to time amorous glances, for he is not allowed to call at the house. If he receives encouragement, or thinks he does, he contrives in some way to transmit a letter. The first letter is never noticed. The second letter is answered by the same underground route, and either terminates or encourages his suit. If the girl's father approves, the youthful parties are then permitted to meet in the presence of some discreet elderly person until the preliminaries have been settled and the engagement announced. The marriage is not valid in law unless celebrated before the civil authorities, and as the women usually insist on being married by a priest, the hymeneal knot is thus usually twice tied in Mexico, as in France.

In Guadalajara there is a double walk-way around the plaza. By tacit consent, on the outer one of these the young men and maidens of the lower classes, the wearers of the serapes and rebozos, promenade, with their endless chains going in opposite directions, while at the same time, on the inner walk, separated from the outer one by a row of seats, the young people of the upper classes do the same in their American or French costumes. In some other cities this matter is tacitly arranged by one class promenading around one plaza and the other class around another; and in still other towns by one class promenading on certain nights and the other on certain other nights.

In Mexico there is a marked absence of those race distinctions which exist in the United States and many parts of the Old World. There are social inequalities, and sharply marked, but the social distinctions arise not from caste, but from those causes which create social distinctions in any country where the people are of the same race, as in France or England. Juarez, the greatest man Mexico has produced, was a full-blooded Indian; Diaz, the present able president, is part Indian, while many of the most distinguished men have been of pure Spanish descent.



CHAPTER V

IN MEXICO CITY

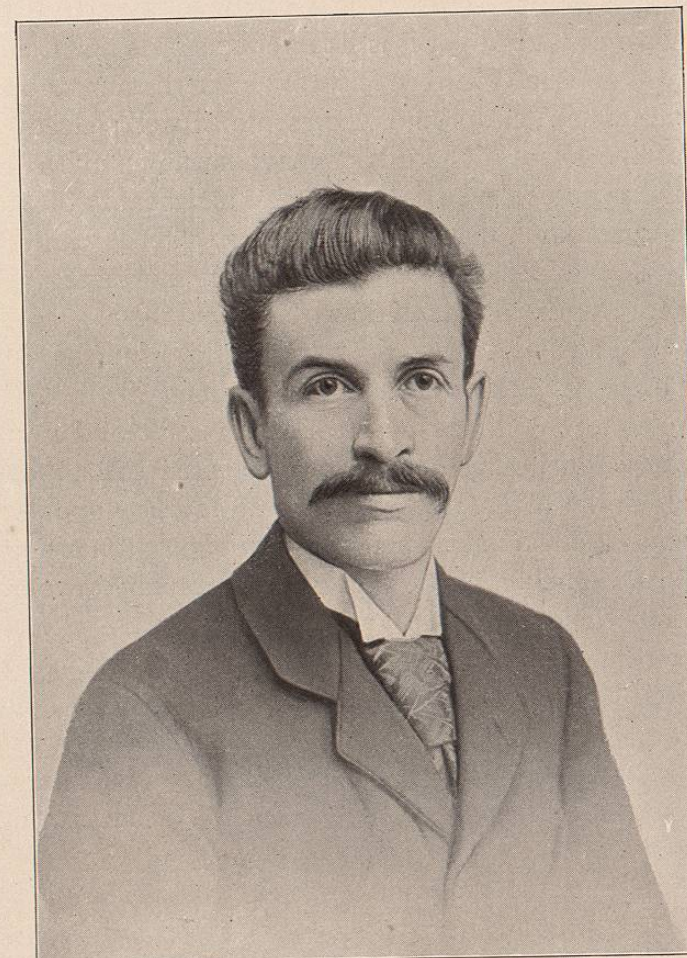
"**SEE** Naples and die," the Italians used to say of their famous and lovely city. "See Mexico and live" is the motto of young Mexico.

Other cities are, like Jerusalem of old, "beautiful for situation;" others have magnificent buildings, wide streets, and natural beauties. But when the traveller first looks on Mexico, as he approaches from afar, he experiences a new stir of

the imagination, a new strain at the heart-strings. For are not here some of the relics of the oldest civilization of this continent? Not only does he feel a mysterious quality of attraction for her beauty, bathed as she is in tender clinging lights, and set like a jewel in burnished silver lakes and emerald hills, but he recalls with a thrill of eager emotion that here was the first theatre of mighty contest between Europe and a coming civilization,—a contest that was but the forerunner of final American independence.

Popocatepetl itself seems to glint down through a vista of centuries and wear a cap made up of the mists of antiquity. The mighty king of volcanoes has known such bloody scenes, such despotic wars, such idyls of love and passion, such dreams of happiness and depths of woe, that even the grim snow-crowned monarch suggests poetry, romance, and a thousand tender reminiscences.

Throughout the country one experiences the same feeling before many a time-honored city or fortress, and gazes at relics innumerable. Here it is a village, old and peaceful before Cortez's time, or an ancient church where members of his army may have worshipped. There it is the ruin of some old Aztec temple or a relic of the Toltecs. Everywhere little towns gleam through embowering



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