

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

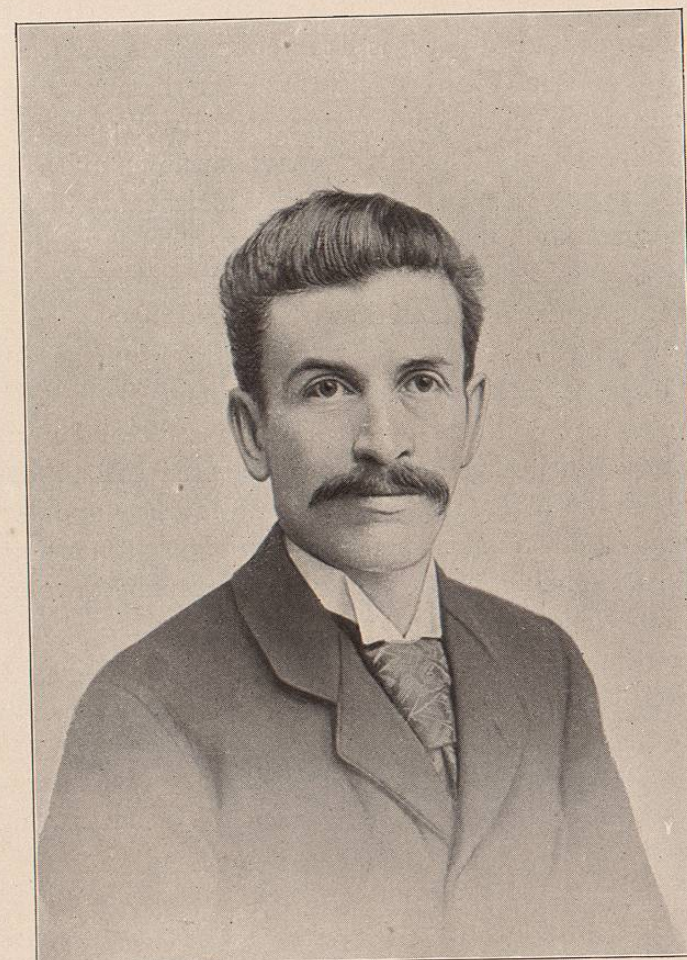
"**SEE** Naples and die," the Italians used to say of their famous and lovely city. "See Mexico and live" is the motto of young Mexico.

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



SEÑOR DON RAFAEL REBOLLA,  
GOVERNOR OF THE FEDERAL DISTRICT.



foliage, ancient cypresses wave their moss-hung branches in the breeze, buried cities lie calmly under growing cornfields, broken columns point upward through the cacti, grim idols grin in unexpected places, and beauteous fields of living green alternate with virgin forests of mahogany or costly dye-woods.

Everywhere the air is poetic and dreamy with age, and the traveller is in an enchanted land of balmy air and soft Italian skies.

It has been said that nowhere in the world can a more splendid scene be presented than the first view of Mexico, the new city of the ancient Montezumas. Against a magnificent sky that defies all attempts of the painter's art are outlined minarets and domes and spires. Belfries and towers mark the numerous churches and gorgeous palaces; and the brightly painted houses, the gleaming lake in the background, and the snow-crowned mountains beyond, all go to make up a picture never to be forgotten,—a fit approach to this magnificent and stately capital.

Neither does it disappoint the traveller, as do so many cities with a fine view from afar. Oriental in effect as it certainly is, it does not dwindle, like too many cities of the East, into a vulgar, squalid town as one approaches. Switzerland furnishes no more beautiful mountains or lakes than those which surround this city; England and France show no more beautiful villages. And yet it is like neither Paris nor London. Mexico is distinctive and individual.

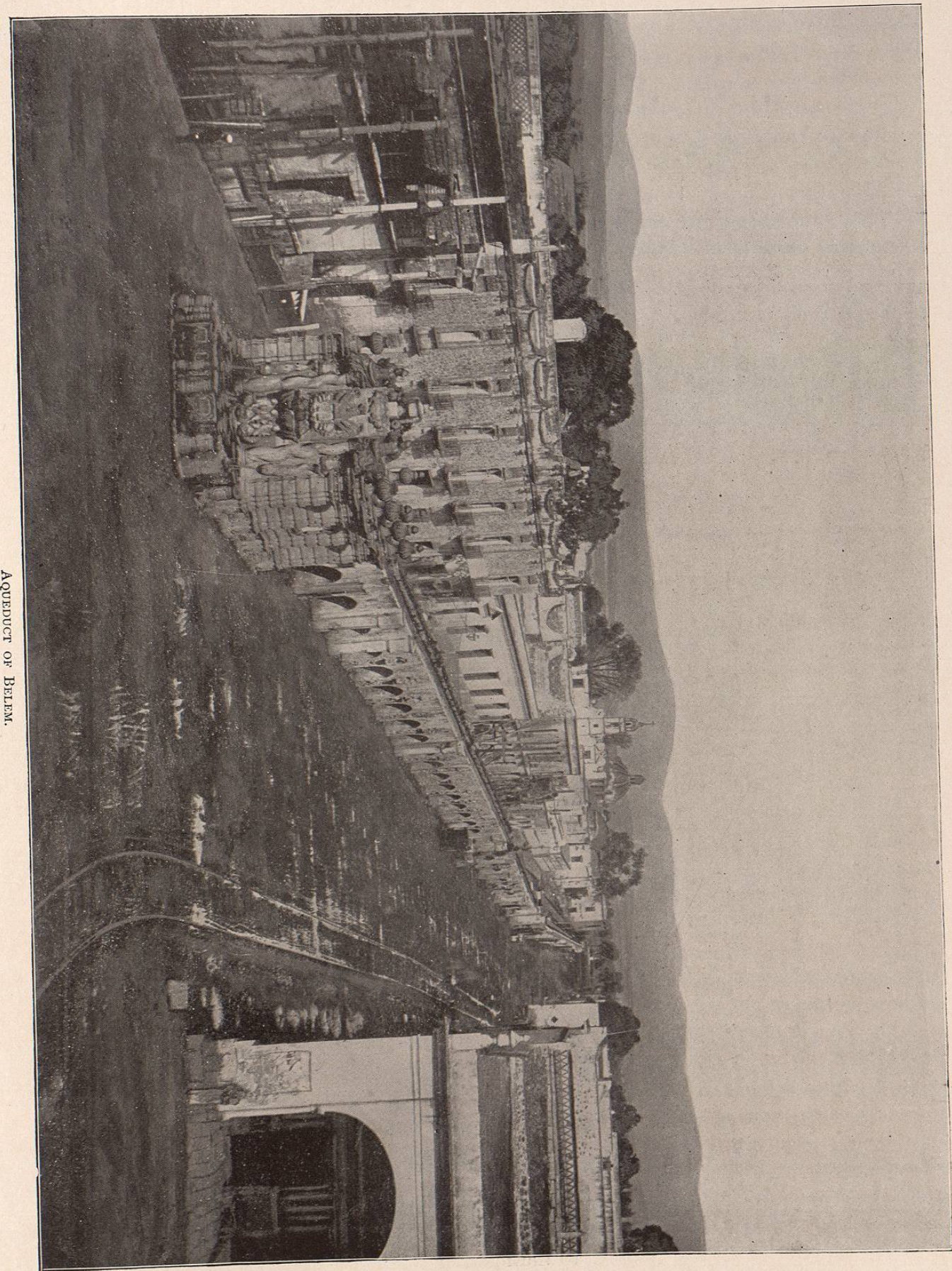
It is a Western city of Eastern sumptuousness in architecture. The wide, handsome streets are clean, and wholesome as well; electric lights and street-cars are seen in every part of the town; hundreds of magnificent churches testify alike to the wealth and the morality of the people; and the magnitude and beauty of the public buildings tell of a modern enterprise and ambition that place the city on a level with the foremost capitals in America.

It appears from history that the Aztecs discovered this fair valley about the twelfth century, having come down from the north.

Fair indeed was the new country; and here they chose to settle, some establishing homes on the lake-shore and others pushing on to the mountains. Anahuac they named the whole region; but it was by no means vacant and awaiting their arrival. Other tribes had settled there long before, and these resented the appearance of the upstart Aztecs. They hovered about, however, loath to leave so lovely a spot, until, according to tradition, they saw a superb eagle, with outstretched wings, mounted on a nopal which clung to a crevice in a rock. In his beak he held a viper, which he was rapidly devouring. This sign was taken by them as a token from their gods that they should found a city. Probably there were more or less internal disruptions, but at last, in 1325, they established their city, calling it Tenochtitlan, in honor of their high priest.

"Mexico," to which the name of the city was afterward changed by the Aztecs, came from Mexitli, the god of war. These men always honored the nopal, and soon after claiming the city raised a temple near it, afterward the Teocalli, which greatly astonished the Spaniards. Cortez spoke of the city as being of the size of Cordova or Seville. At least, it had a population of three hundred thousand when the Spaniards discovered it. There was a magnificent imperial palace, with twenty gates, walls of porphyry, fountains, and baths. Its sculptured roofs were of pine and cedar; and gold, silver, and precious stones were used in its furnishings. There were also a high-priest's palace (the temple of Texzatlipoca) and several other important and handsome public or semi-public edifices. There was an aqueduct from Chapultepec, and another from Churubusco, supplying drinking-water to the city.

But all this magnificence was razed to the ground as soon as the Spaniards had subjugated



AQUEDUCT OF MEXICO.



Montezuma and his people. Even after the siege the destruction was continued. Cortez divided the land among the invaders, and, after having chosen certain places for churches, ordered the erection of a cathedral upon the very ruins of the grand Teocalli or Aztec temple. With the aid of his multitudinous Indian allies, whose hatred of the Aztecs led them to work with zeal, seven-eighths of the city had been levelled to the ground in a few weeks, and when he determined to rebuild the city, he soon had four hundred thousand Indians at work.

This first cathedral, threatened as it was by repeated attacks, served the Spanish worshippers until 1626, when the newer and grander sanctuary was sufficiently safe for a transfer of the holy sacraments. When this was done with all due pomp and ceremony, the temporary cathedral was destroyed, leaving only the stone outlines of the Teocalli.



CARRIAGE-ROAD TO THE CASTLE OF CHAPULTEPEC.

In the National Museum are two of these blocks which served as pedestals or columns of the old Aztec temple. One is curiously inlaid with feathers, the other is sculptured with snakes.

The city of Mexico is said to be the finest built city on the American continent. In some respects it certainly is so. In the principal streets the houses are all constructed according to the strictest architectural rules. The foundations of the city were laid and the first buildings were erected by Cortez, who did everything well which he attempted,—from building a house or writing a couplet to conquering an empire. Many of the finest buildings in Mexico are still owned by his descendants. The public square is said

to be unsurpassed by any in the world; it contains some twelve or fifteen acres paved with stone. The cathedral covers one entire side, the palace another; the western side is occupied by a row of very high and substantial houses, the second stories of which project into the street the width of the pavement; the lower stories are occupied by the principal retail merchants of the city. Most of these houses were built by Cortez, who, with his characteristic sagacity and an avarice which equally characterized him in the latter part of his life, selected the best portion of the city for himself.

The President's Palace, formerly the palace of the viceroys, is an immense building three stories high, about five hundred feet in length, and three hundred and fifty feet wide; it stands on the site of the palace of Montezuma. Only a very small part of this palace is appropriated to the president; all the public offices are here, including those of the heads of the different departments, ministers of war, foreign relations, finance and justice, the public treasury, etc.

But the cathedral, which occupies the site of the great idol temple of Montezuma, offers a striking contrast. It is five hundred feet long by four hundred and twenty feet wide. It would be superfluous to add another to the many descriptions of this famous building which

have already been published. Like all the other churches in Mexico, it is built in the Gothic style. The walls, several feet in thickness, are made of unhewn stone and lime. Upon entering it, one is apt to recall the wild fictions of the Arabian Nights; it seems as if the wealth of empires was collected there.

The cathedral of the city of Mexico may be compared in size with the vast cathedral of Seville, and that of Puebla, in beauty of interior, with the best of Spain. The only church in the world that, beyond question, exceeds in size the Mexican cathedral is St. Peter's at Rome. The Seville cathedral is three hundred and ninety-eight feet by two hundred and ninety-one feet, and the nave is one hundred and forty-three feet high. Baedeker gives the Mexican cathedral's dimensions as four hundred and twenty-five feet by two hundred feet;



PATIO OF A PRIVATE RESIDENCE IN THE CITY OF MEXICO.

height, one hundred and eighty-five feet; towers, two hundred and eighteen feet high. The Mexican cathedral is, therefore, higher and longer than that of Seville, but not so wide. The Seville structure occupies a larger area; but a part of that vast building has fallen in, and is in the hands of workmen, who may be engaged upon it for centuries. According to Baedeker's figures, the Mexican cathedral ranks in the class of Seville and Milan, surpassed only by St. Peter's, and surpassing not only all other Spanish cathedrals, but every other in the world, including St. Paul's, London, St. Sophia, Constantinople, and the cathedral of Cologne. The city of Mexico has over sixty churches, and Puebla, the sacred city, with not over a hundred thousand population, has as many. Not only are these structures notable for their number, but many are impressive in size, architecture, and adornment. They were founded in a cathedral-building age, and constructed according to the plans of Spanish architects, at a time