

when Mexico was pouring countless millions into the coffers of Spain, and when there was no lack of money for the most extravagant projects.

When Church property was nationalized by Juarez, and monasteries and nunneries were suppressed, it was found that three-fourths of the wealth of the republic had gone into the hands of the Church. The moneys, and to some extent the rich adornment, of the churches were affected by Juarez's reform; but still these structures are, as in Spain, the country of wonderful cathedrals, the sights most proudly pointed out to the tourist. There are churches in the most inaccessible spots, on the summits of pyramids, the vast artificial mounds which formed the favorite foundation of temples of Aztec sun-worshippers; and thus the church edifices are numerous beyond conception, though many have long ago been disused or fallen into ruin.

But to return to the city of Mexico. The modern cathedral belongs to the Doric order. The architecture is severe and grandiose. The interior is composed of five naves, which



A STAIRWAY IN THE MUNICIPAL PALACE.

gradually increase from the central to the lateral ones, which are occupied by fourteen chapels. The high arches are supported on fluted columns, the middle one being decorated with a capital of the greatest beauty, on which the visitor can admire paintings in distemper by the celebrated Jineo representing the Assumption of the Virgin in different groups, composed of the patriarchs and the most celebrated women of sacred history. The tabernacle is a modern work, far from being in harmony with the severe style of the older edifice. The principal façade of the cathedral—that toward the south—has three portals, which are composed of two orders of architecture, the first Doric and the second Ionic, ornamented with statues, bas-reliefs, pilasters, and capitals in white marble. The towers, which are over two hundred feet in height, are also composed of two architectural orders, the first Doric and the second Ionic, and are crowned with bell-like structures. The cornices of the towers in the different parts of the edifice support beautiful balustrades, with pilasters surmounted by magnificent urns and handsome statues. The statues on

the towers represent the doctors of the Church, and those of the centre portal, where the clock is, the theological virtues. The plan of the cathedral is a Latin cross, five hundred feet long and nearly two hundred feet high. It was estimated by a Spanish historian that over sixty thousand men had perished in human sacrifices upon its site. The building alone cost two million dollars, and the decorations far more. When these massive foundation-stones were laid, Queen Elizabeth was monarch of

England; Philip II. reigned over Spain, Charles IX. in France; Cervantes was writing "Don Quixote;" Titian and Paul Veronese were painting their masterpieces; the Turks were overrunning the plains of Hungary with the intention of wiping Christendom out of existence; Poland was a mighty empire, extending from the Baltic to the Black Sea; Sir Francis Drake was just beginning his career as a navigator, and Sir Philip Sydney was writing "Arcadia"; the first pipeful of tobacco had not been smoked in Europe; there were no telescopes; Shakespeare and Spenser, Beaumont and Fletcher, Ben Jonson and Bacon, were in their prime, and Russia was a savage and insignificant power.

As you walk through the building, on either side there are different apartments filled from floor to ceiling with paintings, statues, vases, huge candlesticks, waiters, and a host of



STREET SCENE, CINCO DE MAYO, SHOWING THE NATIONAL THEATRE IN THE DISTANCE.

other articles made of gold or silver. This, too, is only the every-day display of articles of least value; the more costly are stored away in chests and closets. What must it be when all these are brought out, with the immense quantity of precious stones which the church is known to possess? And this is only one of the churches of the city of Mexico, where there are between sixty and eighty others, some of them possessing little less wealth than the cathedral. It should also be remembered that all the large cities, such as Puebla, Guadalajara, Guanajuato, Zacatecas, Durango, San Luis Potosi, all have a proportionate number of equally gorgeous establishments.

But the immense wealth which is thus collected in the churches is not by any means all, or even the larger portion, of the wealth of the Mexican Church and clergy. They own very many of the finest houses in Mexico and other cities (the rents of which must be enormous),

besides valuable real estates all over the republic. Almost every person leaves a bequest in his will for masses for his soul, which constitute an encumbrance upon the estate, and thus nearly all the estates of the small proprietors are mortgaged to the Church. The property held by the Church in mortmain is estimated at fifty millions.

The streets in Mexico are exceedingly wide,—much more so than is necessary, considering that they are not obstructed, as is the case in many cities, by drays and wagons.

The sidewalks are uncommonly narrow. The streets are all paved with round stones, the sidewalks with very rough flat ones. The houses on the principal streets are all two or three stories high. The elevation of the rooms from the floor to the ceiling—eighteen to twenty feet—gives to a house of two stories a greater height than we are accustomed to see in houses of three. The roofs are all terraced, and have parapet walls three or four feet high. The walls are built of rough stones of all shapes and sizes, and large quantities of lime mortar. They are very thick,—in ordinary buildings from two to three feet, and in the larger edifices of much greater massiveness. The foundations of most of the largest buildings are made with piles. Even these foundations are very insecure; and it is surprising that they are not more so, with such an immense weight of stone upon such an unsteady foundation. The streets cross one another at right angles, dividing the whole city into squares. Each of these squares is called a street, and has a separate name. In most of these streets there is a church, which gives name to the street in which it stands. In many instances these churches and convents (that of San Augustin, for example) cover the whole square,—not with separate buildings, but one single edifice, with the usual patio or court, an open space in the centre. There is not, I believe, a house in the city without this court, of greater or less dimensions, in proportion to the size of the building. There is only one door on the lower floor, and none on the outside of the upper story. The door is very strongly built, and high enough for a coach to pass through. It opens into the patio, through which you pass to the steps leading to the upper stories, where almost everybody lives, except the lowest classes.

At the period of the conquest the water of the lakes flowed through all the streets of the city, which were crossed in canoes or on bridges. Inundations of the city to the height of several feet were of frequent occurrence. These inundations were caused by the overflowing of the lakes San Cristobal and Zumpango, and the rush of their waters into the bed of the lake of Tezcuco, on an island in which the city of Mexico was, and near the border of which it is now situated. The city has been drained, and there is no longer the disadvantage of overflow.

Since the establishment of Mexican independence the city has been the scene of several revolutions and insurrections, and a number of important battles have been fought in the vicinity, the most noted being those of Contreras and Churubusco, August 20, 1847, and of Chapultepec, September 13, fought between the American army under General Scott and the Mexican army under General Santa Anna. After this battle the Americans occupied the city and held it until the ratification of the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, in May, 1848.

CHAPTER VI

CHURCHES AND SHRINES

MOST of the churches in Mexico are beautiful pieces of architecture. Although they often mingle the Italian, Moorish, and Gothic schools, they yet preserve a delightful harmony of design and do much toward accentuating the picturesque beauty of the country. The façades are exquisitely finished in fine carving cut by loving hands into the delicate soft stone. The domes are either brilliant or soft with burnished tiles, and the light and graceful towers and belfries against the sapphire Mexican sky, make up a picture never to be forgotten by the artistic soul.

Inside there is often to be seen some fine hand-carving; silver railings and candelabra, rare old Spanish paintings, rich tapestries, and dainty ornamentations give a matchless *tout ensemble*. The high altar always rises under the great cathedral dome; the choir-room is in the nave, handsomely wrought in carved woods and furnished with wrought-metal screens. From high up on the wall the dim light filters down through small windows, while the slow monotone of a Gregorian chant floats from dawn till dark among the arches of the great building. And all the time reverent and loving worshippers glide in for a moment's prayer in the solemn hush, or glide out again to the world outside with souls refreshed and strengthened; for over all is a mystical, religious atmosphere so natural to the place that many a weary soul gladly welcomes a sanctuary here, and in the solemnity and hush girds on its armor anew.

"Our Lady of Guadalupe" is one of the most beautiful buildings in the world. Of course it is not so large or imposing as the cathedral, but it is artistically perfect. Instead of the balustrade of gold it has one of pure silver, and of the same size as that in the cathedral. Most of the vases, waiters, candlesticks, and other service are of silver also. The legend of the Virgin of Guadalupe runs thus:

In the year 1531 an Indian, Juan Diego (John James), was going to Mexico early in the morning, and as he was passing over the mountains three miles from the city he saw a female descending from the clouds. He was terribly frightened, of course, but the figure, which turned out to be the Virgin Mother, told him not to be alarmed, that she was the Virgin Mary; that she had determined to become the patron saint of the Mexican Indians, and to take them under her special protection; and that he must go to the city and tell the bishop that she wished to



THE CROWN OF THE VIRGIN OF GUADALUPE.