

Spanish Conquerors and the ill-fated Emperors Yturbide and Maximilian. There is nothing new about any one of them, and that fact, in my mind, constitutes one of their principal charms.

For my own part I would just as soon reside in Mexico City in the summer as in the winter months, for I have found both seasons of the year very agreeable. There is a popular notion, born of ignorance and lack of experience, that Mexico City is in a tropical region, and therefore abnormally hot in summer. As a matter of fact, a more temperate climate than that throughout the Mexican Plateau could not be found in the wide world—and let me add that I have lived under every kind of clime from Dan to Beer' Sheba. Blankets are necessary at night all through the so-called "hot-season." The early mornings are cool, crisp and invigorating, and when rain does fall, it is almost invariably in the late afternoon and passes away within an hour or two, leaving the sky free from clouds and the atmosphere almost intoxicating in its purity and freshness. The most delightful months of the year are June, July and August, September being the fag-end of the rainy-season, and usually finishing up with several wet days consecutively. For the rest of the year, the rainfall is only intermittent, and never very troublesome on the Mexican Plateau.

CHAPTER XXIV

Street nomenclature—Difficulties of identification in Mexico City—Latter-day improvements—New style of building—Avenidas and Colonias—Clubland—Jockey Club—American Club—British Club—Foreign Clubs—Native Clubs—Casino Nacional—Casino Español—Some distinguished members—Chinese clubs.

THE Mexicans, like all Spanish-American nations, perpetuate in the names of their streets, squares and public places, the honoured names of their patriots, their statesmen, and great national events in their history. In every Spanish-speaking country in the Americas you will find the "Cinco de Mayo" (5th of May) distinguished by at least one and probably several streets thus named; while warriors, both military and naval, have all their memories kept green by the busy thoroughfares being named after them. In Buenos Aires there is the Calle Bartolomé Mitre; in Valparaiso and Santiago the Calle O'Higgins; in Venezuela, Uruguay, Peru and Ecuador, the number of streets named "Trente-Tres" (*i.e.*, Thirty-three), called after the body of patriots who helped to free those Colonies from the thralldom of the Spanish Crown, is strikingly large.

In Mexico the custom of naming thoroughfares has been singularly erratic, and it would seem that the privilege accorded to the civic authorities or the local government have been greatly abused in the past, with the result that in Mexico City particularly the greatest difficulty has been experienced by strangers in finding any one locality, and any assistance from residents has been just as hard to obtain. Heretofore the districts of the City have been divided into North and South, or East and West, with numbers and alphabetical denominations attached. Thus, one would have

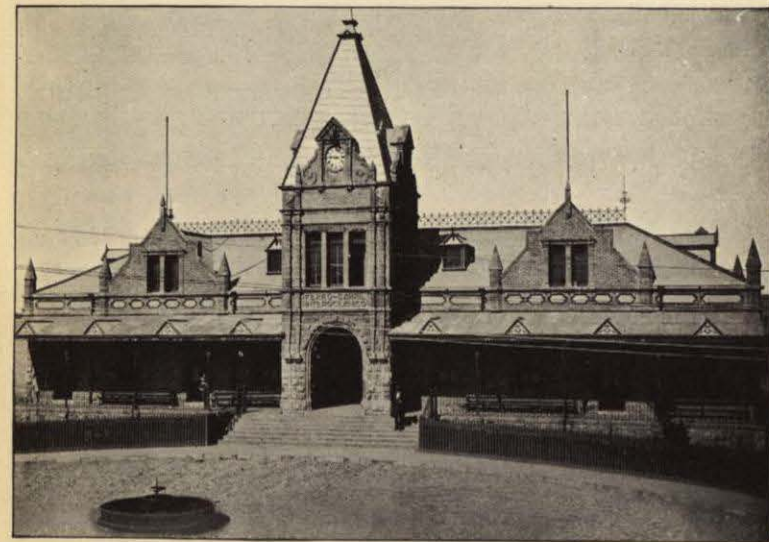
to find out "Calle Sur 36 A" (say "South Street 36 A"), or "Calle Juarez Sur B 12"; while in other localities each separate block of buildings had its individual name or the same name perpetuated with Nos. 1, 2, 3, etc., etc., for each block and a number for each separate house. The most busy and important street in Mexico City, the Calle San Francisco, was divided into "1° San Francisco," "2° San Francisco," and "3° San Francisco," each being numbered from "1 to 20," or whatever number of houses the block contained, the odd numbers on one side and the even on the other. Additionally, one had to struggle with " $\frac{1}{2}$ " and " $\frac{1}{4}$ " on the numbers, "inside" and "outside," all contributing considerably to the general confusion, which was not lessened by every house in the City having an identification number running into the thousands. A residence, say, situated in the Calle Liverpool, might be "No. 5," but it would also bear upon its portals in huge figures "No. 1768." Even old residents in the City found the practice of thus numbering the buildings a great trouble, and new-comers were bewildered from the moment they arrived until the day that they left.

Fortunately all this confusion is being abolished, and in a short while, if the improvement, indeed, has not already become general, the street names of Mexico City will be simple and easily identified. All old name-plates are being removed, and the new ones affixed in their place. Proper names will be substituted for those of unpronounceable Indian origin, and such appellations as "The Street of the Holy Ghost," "Body of Christ Avenue," and "The Street of the Immaculate Conception," will no doubt become things of the past.

Some of the most astounding names upon street-corners confront the visitor, calculated indeed to shock him or her not a little if possessed—as I trust the majority of my readers are—of religious feelings and due respect for sacred names. For instance, one may see in Mexico to-day such signs as these: "The Hang-out of John the Baptist," "The Retreat of the Holy Ghost," "The Delight of the Apostle," "The Retreat of the Holy Virgin," "The Sanctuary," "The Place where Christ Had a Good Time." Many of these names adorn the horrible pulque-shops which abound in the



RAILWAYS OF MEXICO.—The Buenavista Terminus, Mexico City; belonging to the Central Railway.—see p. 258.



RAILWAYS OF MEXICO.—The Inter-oceanic Station, City of Puebla belonging to the National lines of Mexico.—see p. 281.

cities of the Republic. Others are less blasphemous and more suggestive of the establishments which they adorn, such as the "Seventh Heaven of Delight," "A Dream of the Beautiful Moon," the "Land of the Lotus," the "Delight of Bacchus," the "Food of the Gods," and "A Night of Pure Delight." Several grocery and dry-goods stores, all of which bear some distinctive name or other, are known as the Delight, the Springtime, the Progress, the Future, the Great Cheap Place, the Bargain, the 20th Century, the Iron Palace, the Citadel, the Port of London, the City of Paris or the Heart's Content.

In the east end of the City, there are still some few thoroughfares named after animals—thus, "The Rats' Alley," "The Dogs' Lane," etc., etc., which are neither harmonious nor attractive.

The new order of street nomenclature embraces the designation of the thoroughfares after well-known and distinguished statesmen, such as Juarez, Porfirio Diaz, Comonfort, Limantour, Escandon, etc. The City has been further divided into zones, belonging to the Federal Government, and a neat but distinct name-plate will be attached gradually to every corner. The electric-light standards, which are erected in every street of the City of any importance, have been utilised to designate routes of tram-lines, railways, telephones, electric-light, gas-light, etc. Thus, red indicates the Mexican Telephone Co.; red and white the Mexican Electric Co.; white and yellow the National Electric Co.; green and red the Mexican Gas and Light Co.; blue and yellow the Mexican Central Railway; blue and white the Interoceanic Railway; green the National Railway; brown the Federal District Railway; blue and red the Hydro-Electric Co.; and pale rose-colour the Knight Electric Light and Power Co. Besides being a clear indication of the various lines, the bright colours, neatly painted on the poles, lend an additional cheerfulness to the streets and open spaces.

All main avenues are now named and numbered consecutively right through, as is done in all European and American cities, and any public building which occupies a space there will bear the name of the particular avenue. Thus, the Avenue wherein stands the Palace of Justice is

known as "Avenida del Palacio de Justicia." Nothing could be more simple nor more sensible.

Some of the modern avenues in Mexico City are in every way worthy of the names which have been bestowed upon them. The Avenida del Cinco de Mayo is already half-filled with stately buildings, among which the Mutual Life and the Palestina structures take prominence, while a third, constructed for La Mexicana Life Insurance, will be a landmark for many years to come. Above all, however, will be the superb new National Theatre, now undergoing construction. It will undoubtedly be one of the very finest edifices of its kind, vieing with the Opera Houses at Paris and Vienna and La Scala at Milan.

With the exception of Santiago (Chile), no Spanish-American city possesses more Clubs than that of Mexico. Carlyle had but a poor opinion of "clubs" in general, and probably that cynic would have thought little more of those of Mexico City. But the members thereof find them very agreeable and patronise them largely, as well as extending their hospitality to all strangers who come within their gates. Clubs are as popular to-day as they were in the days of the Egyptians, the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans. They are about the first thing that the Anglo-Saxon race concern themselves with when establishing themselves among foreigners. No doubt the main idea of the "club" was, as Carlyle tells us in his "Frederick the Great," the outcome of the laws of chivalry; and if modern institutions can make but small pretence to follow in the same direction, sojourners in a strange land would find their lot extremely dull and uninteresting if the modern club, defective as it may be, were non-existent. The loss would be felt no less by the many travellers and birds of passage who nowadays flit from country to country and from town to town around the wide world, and who, provided their credentials are sound and their manner moderately agreeable, are extended a welcome everywhere by their own countrymen or by those of some other land whose hospitable walls shelter them during their sojourn, whether it be long or short.

It is not only for the higher classes—the more intellectual, cultured or wealthy—that Mexico City finds club accom-

modation. Almost every grade has its *rendezvous* and its recreation-room, the interests of practically all classes being represented. All the foreign colonies have houses, the Spaniards, the Americans, the British, the Germans, the French and others, these establishments being entirely social and recreative, politics forming absolutely no part of their proceedings. Indeed, that is one of the strong points in favour of Mexico's foreign population—augmenting day by day in both quality and quantity. By common assent all abstain from interfering in the politics of the country which shelters them, and thus do they show their great, good common sense.

For the young and frequently impecunious clerk the club-house in a foreign land is a great benefit. Here, although, perhaps, tempted to drink rather more than he should and to spend more than he can afford upon reciprocating hospitalities, he finds himself able to read the best books and magazines without it costing him anything, to eat good dinners and drink good wines at moderate prices, and to find plenty of companions of a congenial character without having to haunt public places. Moreover, if he be a man of moderate means only, he is pretty certain to find others similarly placed, and ready to fall in with his ideas of economy and modest habits. As a matter of fact, the member with a restricted income enjoys the same facilities and meets with the same amount of attention—not altogether of the best, I may say, in Mexican Clubs—as the more wealthy among the members. The real democracy of Mexican Club life is as apparent as in New York itself.

Taking into consideration the tips which he saves by dining at his club instead of at restaurants; the reduction of from 15 to 25 per cent. upon the cost of his wines, spirits or mineral waters; the ability to conduct all his private or other business there, if he chooses, thus obviating the necessity for an office; and the free use of all necessary stationery, etc., etc., a clubman should find a decided economy in living, to say nothing of the undoubted pleasures of a luxurious and comfortable home.

Of native Clubs there are probably some fifty or more, such as social, medical, legal, literary, artistic and dramatic,

while, as I have said, almost all other classes of the community, the butchers, the bakers and the candlestick makers, have their clubs and their weekly or monthly assemblies. Music, dancing and sporting associations have theirs; and altogether the Mexicans are a very "clubbable" people, and pass nearly all their spare time in each other's society. Even the ladies have their particular *rendezvous*, there being two or three women's clubs and numerous teachers' associations. Of the numerous Church and Jesuit organisations I know but little, for the members are, naturally, very averse to outside introductions, and the stranger is but seldom invited to their meetings.

In point of importance and stateliness, the Jockey Club, is *facile princeps*. It inhabits a superb old Spanish house in the Calle San Francisco, the principal and most fashionable thoroughfare in the whole city, and it is considered the most aristocratic Club in Mexico. To be elected a member, if only for a few weeks, is considered a distinct compliment, and is much appreciated by foreigners of all nationalities. The whole exterior of the building, which possesses one of the most superb stone staircases to be seen anywhere, is covered with white and blue-coloured tiles and beautifully carved stonework. Some of the most famous names in Mexico are associated with the foundation of the Jockey Club, such, for instance, as General Pedro Rincon Gallardo (the Mexican Minister to the Court of St. James's), Señores Francisco Algara y Cervantes, Francisco Zamora, Manuel R. Rubio, Manuel Soavedra and the Hon. José Yves Limantour, Minister of Finance, who is the President of the institution.

The Casino Nacional is another celebrated club, having upon its members' list the names of most of the distinguished men of Mexico for the last quarter-of-a-century. Its first President was Romero Rubio, the father of the most charming lady in the Republic—the wife of President Porfirio Diaz, and himself a very distinguished and amiable diplomat. Sebastian Camacho, a very deeply-respected and enormously wealthy banker and financier, Pablo Macedo, Alfredo Chavero, Antonio Pliego Perez, and many other equally well-known men, were formerly distinguished as Presidents of this Club.

The Casino Español, in Esperitu Santo, is perhaps as fine

a building in every way as the Jockey Club, and architecturally there is probably but little to choose between them. The Spanish Colony is the richest of any in Mexico, and it is but right that they should have a lordly pleasure-house. There are over 700 members, and the finances of the establishment are practically inexhaustible. Among its more prominent members are Señores de la Torre (son-in-law of the President of the Republic), Mendoza Cortina, Ricardo Sains, José Mario Bermejillo, Pedro Suñiaga, Telésforo Garcia, Antonio Bosagoiti, Saturnino Santo, Delfino Sanchez, Ramon Fernandez and the President, Valentin Elcoro. There is a second Spanish Club, having a membership of 800, occupying a building at the corners of the Calles Monéda and Seminario. The King of Spain is one of the members.

The British Club, which has its house in a former private residence of some Spanish grandee, but much modified to meet present requirements, opens its hospitable doors to all subjects of his Britannic Majesty. Within its cosy quarters one may always feel certain of meeting some "good fellow," and of an evening its walls re-echo with the merry laugh and the jolly jest, for the British community of Mexico City are a jovial lot, and make the best of life and of everything. On frequent occasions the Club holds "Smokers," and no more agreeable evening can be passed anywhere than at one of these "impromptu" entertainments, where everything is so admirably arranged beforehand. That, at any rate, is sufficiently "Irish" to pass for British. The musical programmes are invariably good, and the company even better.

The American Club, which last year went into new and very handsome quarters in Independencia, is a delightfully attractive house, well managed and usually well filled by good-natured, hearty and hospitable representatives of the Stars and Stripes. Probably the Membership of the American is among the largest in the Republic, and if all the members were to take it into their heads to assemble at the same hour on a given day, possibly many of them would have to find accommodation on the roof. Although called the "American" Club, as a matter of fact there are a good many members of other nationalities on the list, and very comfortable they find their quarters.

The German Club occupies some handsome rooms at the corner of Colegio de Niños and Independencia. The same kind of *patio*, which forms so great an attraction at the Jockey Club, may be found here, the trees and flowers giving an air of luxury and beauty which the members and their many guests thoroughly appreciate. The reading-rooms, billiard-rooms, dining-room, bar, library and ball-room are all of handsome dimensions, and in the last named are held a number of agreeable social entertainments during the course of the year.

The French Club is on Calle Palma, and also has a fine *patio*, and all the necessary accommodation to make it a comfortable and attractive place of resort. The French element has of late years become exceedingly influential, and many of the members of the community have amassed considerable fortunes, principally through banking and finance. Very attractive and well attended entertainments are given here by the members to their friends, and on the "14th July," the great National French holiday, the whole Club is lavishly decorated from top to bottom. With their natural good taste and innate courteous hospitality, the French make as excellent hosts and charming companions in Mexico as they do everywhere else.

Even the Chinese, who form no inconsiderable or unworthy part of the heterogeneous collection of foreigners in Mexico, have their Clubs, there being two in the City of Mexico alone. One is at the Plazuela Tarasquillo, and the other at 1015, 3A Calle de Colon. The appointments of these houses are thoroughly comfortable, and the conduct of the various members above reproach. The first-named club has the countenance of the Chinese Chargé d'Affaires, Liang Hsun, who, indeed, opened it in March of last year. There are, at present, between 300 and 400 members. Being very fond of weird, soft music, as may be heard in their own Flowery Land, one of the principal attractions at the Chinese clubs are the hidden orchestras which play during dinner hours and in the evenings. The effect of this curious, concealed music is singularly soothing and delightful, and visitors who have once listened to its charm are always ready and anxious to repeat the experience.

CHAPTER XXV

Hospitals and charitable institutions—Federal and State control—Mexico City's principal hospitals and charities—The American hospital—Doctors and physicians—Fees charged—Public places of amusement—Theatres—Music-halls—Games and pastimes—Golf—Spanish ball—Bowling—Mexico City teams.

HAD Oliver Wendell Holmes, the famous American essayist and unconventional humorist, known anything about the conduct of hospitals, especially those to be found in the Republic of Mexico, he never would have allowed himself to write: "I firmly believe that if the whole *materia medica* could be sunk to the bottom of the sea, it would be better for mankind and all the worse for the fishes."

It is not unusual for great writers to scoff at the medical profession, at least until such time as they may require their services; and then occasionally they change their opinions. Certainly no one who has had any experience of the merciful and beneficent institutions having for their object the care of the sick and the dying would join in this senseless condemnation, and might even feel some indignation at its utterance.

Well-managed hospitals and many free dispensaries exist throughout the Republic, and both the Federal and State Governments look well after the bodily ailments of the poorer classes. Upon many of the large haciendas, likewise, medical service is provided free; while upon some others a small fee, amounting to a few centavos only, is demanded from the poorer patients, so as to prevent any abuse of the privilege taking place. Usually, the peon will not call in a doctor except in extreme cases, believing more in the efficacy of the priest than of the medico.

The principal hospitals in the City of Mexico are the Concepcion Beistigui, the Hospital del Divino Salvador, the