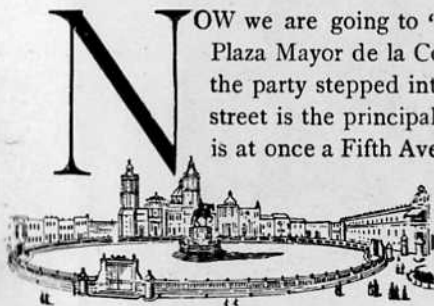


“The good old rule  
Sufficeth them — the simple plan  
That they should take who have the power,  
And they should keep who can.”

*Rob Roy's Grave.*

“The world, which credits what is done,  
Is cold to all that might have been.”

*In Memoriam.*



PLAZA MAYOR IN 1803.

**N**OW we are going to ‘the very heart of Mexico,’ the Plaza Mayor de la Constitucion,” said the Major, as the party stepped into San Francisco Street. “This street is the principal thoroughfare of the city, and is at once a Fifth Avenue and a Broadway. Mexico has no Beacon Street or Commonwealth Avenue. Many of the finest stores as well as some of the finest residences are on San Francisco Street, which is now called Fourth Avenue.”

As they walked along, attention was called to the showy stores, the costly houses, *cafés*, and club houses, the Profesa and other churches. Reaching the end of the street they found themselves in the great square which has been reserved wholly for public use since 1611: they crossed to the Zocalo and took seats.

The history connected with the Plaza is very interesting. Where the little garden is now there stood in 1312 the rocky

island on which the long-looked-for sign was discovered by the Aztecs. Here they built their first temple, here was the enormous Teocalli, or place of celebration and of sacrifice. On this ground in 1521 occurred the final struggle between Cortés and Cuauhtemotzin (so vividly described in "A Fair God"), and here the new city was begun on the ruins of the old one, the temple making way for the cathedral. For three hundred years, on the 13th of August, the celebration of the conquest



ANOTHER PARTY.

was celebrated here by processions in which the mayor bore the standard of Cortés, the viceroy, the council, and the nobility following it on horseback. More than sixty royal governors made official display here, and at least two Emperors were here proclaimed, and in that church had coronation. Since 1821 the flags of two foreign nations have floated from yonder staff, and chief magistrates, almost without number, have crossed this

ground to assume their functions as rulers. Prisoners of church and state have passed here on their way to the fagot and the scaffold.

The square was practically a market place till 1611, when a royal order was given for removal of the booths; trading was, however, continued here, and in 1692 a famine riot occurred in which three million dollars' worth of property was destroyed. For a century the Plaza was a dirty, desolate-looking place, but in



1803 the viceroy prepared a place for the statue of Charles IV. by enclosing a large circular space by a stone wall and iron fence. That statue was removed in 1824, and later the foundation was laid for a memorial to Mexican independence. The band-stand of the Plaza is built upon that foundation (or *zócalo*), and the Plaza is called "The Zocalo." One hears people say, "We are going to the Zocalo" much oftener than "We are going

to the Plaza." There was no garden or park here till 1866, and the gardens about the Cathedral date only from 1880. Many booths are seen in and about the square, but probably they will all disappear in time, if the city ever reaches a point when it can get along without the revenue which the traders contribute. Visitors may well hope that that point is far distant, for with the removal of these peculiar places of trade will vanish one of the characteristic features of Mexican life.

"This seems to be the centre of everything," said the Corporal. "Do all the street cars start from here?"

"Nearly all, and they go, as you see, in trains; that is, two or three start together and run on the same time. The custom is, perhaps, a relic of barbarism or of the old days when protection was the chief thing to think of and provide for. Instead of running one car every five or ten minutes, they start a train of two or three every twenty or forty minutes; this wholesale style makes a wholesale waste of time for passengers, but then time isn't money in this country. Class distinction accounts in part for the train system."

"I notice that there are different colored cars," said the Corporal.

"Yes, colors denote classes. The yellow are first-class and the green second-class coaches. You notice also a kind of double-decked passenger and freight car. The poorest are accommodated."

"And yonder is a black one!" exclaimed the Captain. "An open platform car with roof only and a cross above it."

"That is a funeral car, Captain. You will often see the same article in white. You'll see processions of cars on the way to and from the cemeteries. There is one coming now. See, the black car has a casket on it. The mourners are in the two following coaches. That is a first-class funeral, as you may know by those yellow cars. Many thousands of funerals have started from this square. It looks now like a little



IN TROPICAL MEXICO.

paradise with its trees, flowers, fountains, and cozy seats for weary walkers, but in days past blood has thoroughly drenched this ground."

"You mean in Aztec times," said the Captain.

"Yes, and as late as 1803. The gallows stood near where we are sitting, right in front of the viceroy's palace, and there was the frame on which the heads of criminals were exposed for a terror to evil-doers. Riots and revolutions almost without number have been witnessed here."

The Plaza now comprises about nine acres, the part between the garden and the palace being used as a parade and review ground for troops. The Cathedral occupies the north side of the Plaza.

"Is that the palace on the east?" asked the Corporal.

"That is the National Palace, the Federal Capitol, the largest building in Mexico. It was begun in 1692, and has been enlarged, as you see, till it covers the whole immense block, an area of about eight acres."

"It looks more like a barracks than anything else," said the Captain. "See the towers and the grated windows, and the soldiers keeping guard."

"Yes, it does," replied the Major; "but it is government headquarters. There are a dozen patios within the walls of the buildings, and around these are arranged the offices of the Treasury, State, and other departments of the government. On that site was the palace of Montezuma, which was destroyed; then Cortés built his residence there, and that palace was used by the viceroys. From that block have gone out the decrees which have governed Mexico for more than five hundred years. Of course we must make a tour of the buildings on the block, for among them are the National Museum. But now look over to the west side of the square."

"Nothing there but houses and stores," said the Corporal, "and not very nice ones either."

“Nothing gaudy to be sure, but they stand on ground once occupied by a palace. Montezuma lived there while Cortés held him captive in 1519; and even now there is one of the great institutions of Mexico housed there. Some think it is the ‘most beneficent institution in the world,’ the Monte de Piedad.”

“What is that?” asked the Captain.

“It is the national pawn-shop.”

“Pawn-shop! what is there good about that?” asked the Corporal.

“‘Hard times comes a-knockin’ at de door’ of a good many rich people, though he spends most of the time hammering on the poor man’s door. There are some good folk who will lend the people who are crowded for money, if sufficient security can be given or sufficient interest be paid. These lenders have been named ‘uncle’ by the patrons of their shops, but I think the name doesn’t imply any affection. Hamlet’s uncle, who took his brother’s life and wife, and robbed his nephew of a crown, was a royal type of the traditional pawn-broker. What kind of an uncle is it that will



charge for a small loan on good security three per cent a month interest for the first six months, and two per cent a month after that; interest thirty per cent a year! isn’t that robbery?”

“I should say it is. That is blood money,” said the Captain.

“This institution is intended, by lending at a low rate of interest, to prevent such extortion. The Count of Regla, in 1775, founded this pawn-shop and endowed it with a fund of

\$300,000, the income to pay running expenses. Loans were and are made up to about three fourths of the value of the article deposited. At first no charge at all was made, the founder believing that grateful patrons would sustain the charity by voluntary gifts, but they did not, and the fund was seriously impaired, but now a fixed rate is charged, and the great pawn-shop is doing an immense business. I saw the statement for one month in 1892. In that month \$168,000 was loaned on 27,000 pawn tickets. About \$60,000 was paid on renewals. The total amount out on loans and secured by articles in the warehouses was \$1,050,000. It lends about a million dollars a year to forty-five or fifty thousand patrons."

"There are plenty of other pawn-shops, I suppose?" said the Captain. "Every city has plenty of them."

"Yes, there are seventy of them in this city, and the census shows that nearly \$5,000,000 was lent last year. We will look into some of these private ones, and will see some fine jewels in the great Monte de Piedad."

"I can see now how even a pawn-shop can be made a good thing for the unfortunate, if managed as this one is," said the Captain.

The remaining part of the west side of the Plaza is occupied by a long arcade, over which are residences. This arcade is called the Portal de Mercaderes. It has twenty-seven arches, and under them are numberless stands for the sale of notions, newspapers, cigarettes, and candies. Formerly that part of the square was occupied by an Aztec dancing school. The *portales* continue round the corner of this block for a long distance down Sixth Avenue or Coliseo Street.



The southern side of the square has the City Hall, or the Palacio Municipal, a building mostly two stories, but at the corners three stories in height. Here is again a long row of stone arches finer than those of the west side, and in these *portales* are some of the large dry-goods stores of the city. On this site the commander-in-chief of the Aztec army had his headquarters. The city government and the district officials occupy the upper stories.

This rapid review of the buildings facing the Plaza will indicate the important place that this little tract of land holds in the history of Mexico.

Entering the great Cathedral, the party found, of course, a service going on, and took seats near the door. The boys were surprised to see kneeling on the floor, side by side, the richly dressed lady and the ragged Indian, the fashionable gentleman and the poor street sweeper. Cripples hobbled across the floor, and children walked from altar to altar with their parents while the priest was reading and the choir was singing their parts of the service. At last the benediction was given, and the great church was left almost deserted; perhaps half a hundred people remained kneeling and saying their prayers.

The great church is in the form of a Latin cross, and over the central arches rises a magnificent dome decorated by the most celebrated artists of the day. The dimensions of the church are: length, three hundred and fifty-four feet; width, one hundred and seventy-seven feet; height, one hundred and seventy-nine feet. There are five naves, six altars, and fourteen chapels. The grandeur of the great structure is, however, detracted from by the enormous choir enclosure in the central nave; by the high altar, which is too lofty and too gaudy to harmonize with the general simplicity of the surrounding gray and white walls; by the division of two of the naves into chapels; and by a *wooden floor!* But while the first impression is somewhat disappointing as compared with that made by a visit to any of the great

cathedrals of Europe, the visitor is surprised by such a display of magnificence. He thinks, what must it have been in the days of its glory!

The massive railing about the entrance to the choir is a curiosity in metal as well as in art. It is a composition of gold, silver, and copper, and came from China. Along the passage from the choir to the altar are sixty or seventy small figures made of the same brilliant metal, serving as light bearers. The pulpits and the huge holy-water basins are of onyx.

Of the fourteen chapels, seven are on each side. In one of these on the west side is the tomb of Iturbide, and here the title "Liberator" is accorded him. Of the six altars the most beautiful is the Altar of the Kings, modelled after the one by the same artist in the cathedral of Seville. Below this rest the remains of some of the viceroys and of the four patriots, Hidalgo, Aldama, Allende, and Jimenez, who were executed in Chihuahua.

The Cathedral stands on the site of the Aztec temple destroyed by Cortés. It was begun in 1573, and finished in 1667. The towers were finished in 1791, at a cost of \$200,000. The whole structure cost about \$2,000,000.

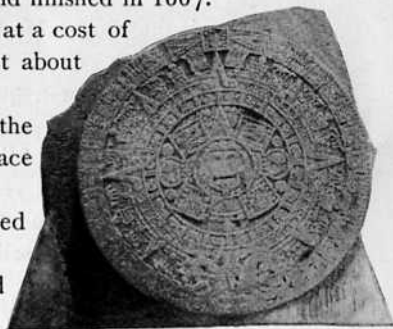
On the wall of the west end of the Cathedral there is a blackened space with an interesting inscription on it.

"What does all that mean?" asked the Corporal.

"It says that here was exhibited till 1885 the famous stone of the sun, or Calendar Stone of the Aztecs, and that now you can see it in the National Museum."

"Is that the stone we see so many pictures of?" asked the Captain.

"The same, and there is a cast of it in the Smithsonian Institution at Washington. The stone was first found about three hun-



dred years ago, but buried again at the order of the archbishop. In 1790 it was discovered again — it had not stirred probably — two hundred and twenty feet west of the main entrance to the National Palace. It was brought here, where it remained till 1885. Certainly it is a wonderful thing. It is an immense block of porphyry nearly twelve feet square, about three feet thick, and weighs nearly twenty-five tons. On this block is engraved a disk more than eleven and a half feet in diameter. In the centre is carved the face of a man; some say it represents the sun, others think he is the man of the moon and the months. Around this are symbols, arranged in seven circles. It is now believed, I think, generally, that it had more to do with slaughter than with seasons. Bandelier, the highest authority, concludes that this stone was a sort of nether millstone in the Aztec sacrifices; his words are, 'It served as the base of the smaller perforated stone to which the victim was tied, and upon the two stones the gladiatorial sacrifice was performed.' Strange relic of a strange people!

"Here is the Flower Market. We must come up to it early in the morning. You will be astonished to see how many flowers you can get for a quarter, or rather for the omnipotent *dos reales*."

"What kind of flowers?" asked the Corporal.

"All kinds, and all the year round. Roses, and pansies, and heliotrope, 'too numerous to mention.' '*Muy bonita, señor*,' and '*Muy barata*,' the sellers say, and very pretty and very cheap the buyers think. We shall see great boat-loads of flowers when we go to the Viga Canal, and there are often literally wagon-loads here in and about this little pavilion of iron and glass called the Mercado de Flores.

"While we are so near it," continued the Major, "let us go into the Plaza de Santo Domingo. It is rather a forlorn-looking square at present, but, like the large Plaza, it has been the scene of interesting events. Here is the house of the Inquisition,

which 'strong fort and mount of Zion,' as one writer calls it, was founded in Mexico in 1571. Indians were by royal order excluded from the jurisdiction of this holy court, but the Inquisition found material enough to work upon. The patriot Morelos was the last victim. He died in 1815."

"Did they burn people in this square of Santo Domingo?" asked the Corporal.

"No, they divided the honor, or the horror, as we think, between two other squares. The principal *brasero*, or burning place, was near the church of San Diego, on ground which now is a part of the Alameda. You see that blunt-cornered building yonder? In that were the court and prison of the Inquisition."

"And what church is this?" asked the Captain.

"The monastery church of Santo Domingo. Like that of San Francisco, the establishment has been all cut to pieces by new streets and other improvements. Many buildings once here have disappeared entirely, parts of some remain, as you see, but the church has



been spared. It is one of the largest churches in the city. This plaza is interesting also as the second-hand market of Mexico. Let us look around a little."

"What is that man doing? Is he writing?" asked the Captain.

"Yes. He is an *evangelista*, one of a class that has nearly gone out of business; its business is to write letters for those who cannot write: love letters, begging letters, all kinds."

"He seems to be busy; why do you say the class is going out?" asked the Corporal.

"The schools are doing the business. Thousands of children have learned to write in recent years, and much that these street writers used to do is now done at home by the children. The city has more than a hundred schools now, and is increasing the number rapidly."

"That is good for Mexico," said the Captain. "There is its chief hope for the future."

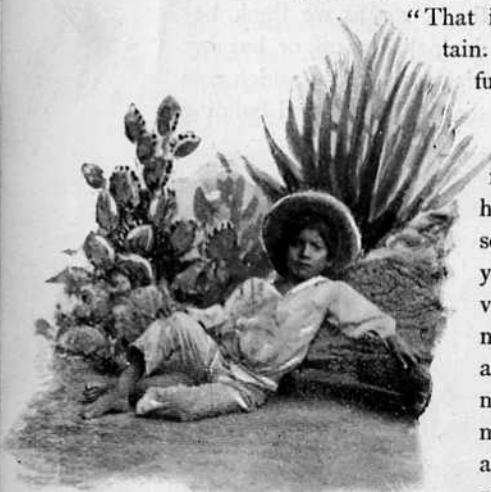
"Yes, Mexico is rising; the present administration is doing nobly in providing schools, but at present hardly one third of the children of school age are in attendance. Forty years ago not over \$100,000 was devoted to schools by the government; now it appropriates about \$3,500,000 a year. A good beginning has been made, however, and rapid advancement may be expected. The people are learning that education means money to them.

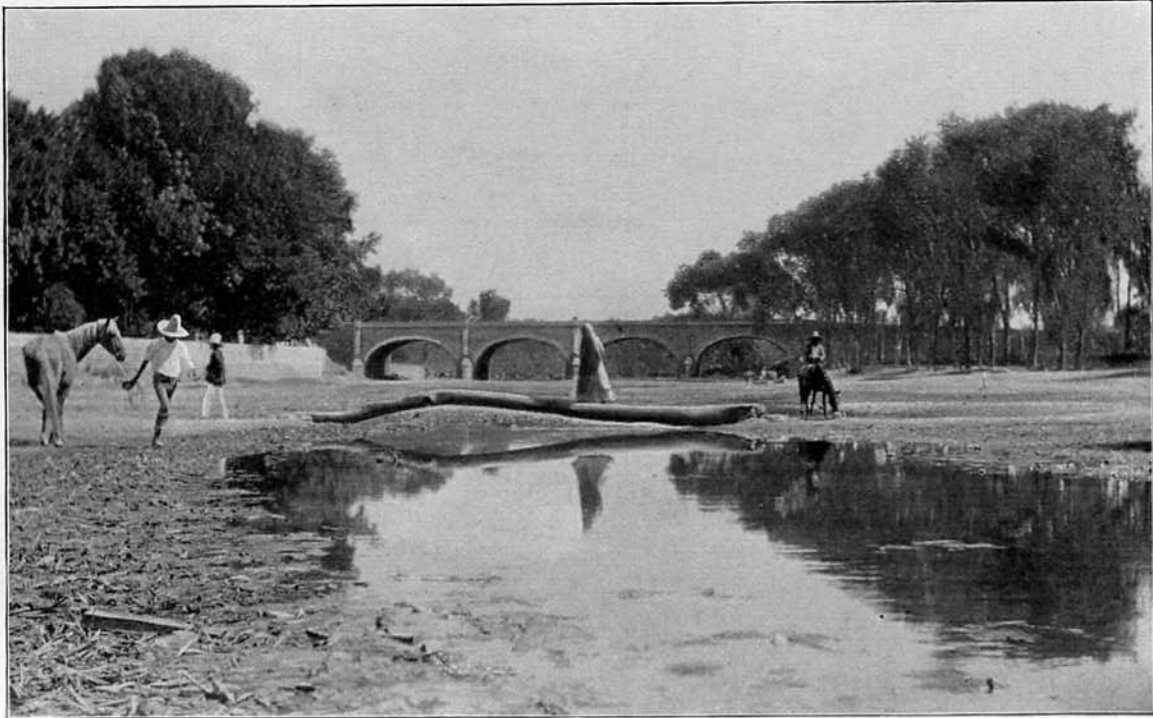
"There are three or four interesting points near the Alameda," said the Major, "which we can visit before lunch."

"Oh, this beautiful Alameda!" exclaimed the Corporal as they entered the park; "it seems prettier than ever."

"It is always charming. And what a pretty name! that, you know, comes from *álamo*, a poplar; but we see here now not only poplars, but eucalyptus, willow, ash, cypress, and pepper trees. Then the palms and banana plants, and the roses, geraniums, and calla lilies! Isn't it beautiful? Notice here the models or miniatures of the volcanoes, crater and all."

"We might ascend Popocatepetl," said the Captain.





BRIDGE AT LAGOS.

"Yes, we might, but there would be an eruption if that policeman should see us.

'Try not the pass, the old man said,'

or would say."

As they reached the west end of the park they stopped on the spot where the Inquisition punished its offenders, near the church of San Diego.

"Do you see that flag, boys?" asked the Major.

"Hurrah!" exclaimed the Corporal, "it is the stars and stripes. Hip, hip, hurrah! Salute the flag!"

"There is the office of the legation from the United States. Our minister plenipotentiary and envoy extraordinary exercises his mighty functions on ground once belonging to the Monastery of San Diego. The church is still used, and its interior is beautiful."

"I dare say our minister doesn't attend church there," said the Captain.

"A minister ought to go to church," remarked the Corporal.

"He wouldn't have to go far," said the Major, "for here are five Catholic churches almost within a stone's throw, and right over yonder is a Protestant church. Between those two churches



OLD CHURCH OF SAN HIPÓLITO.

across the street to the north stands the monument of Morelos, the last victim of the Inquisition, and a hero second only to Hidalgo. He, too, was a priest; he carried on Hidalgo's work and followed him in martyrdom. Maximilian unveiled this memorial in 1865. Well, here we are at the old church of San Hipólito. Notice that stone memorial tablet on the corner, so worn that we can hardly read its inscription."

"If it were in letters of gold or of blazing fire, I couldn't read it," said the Captain, "it is in Spanish."

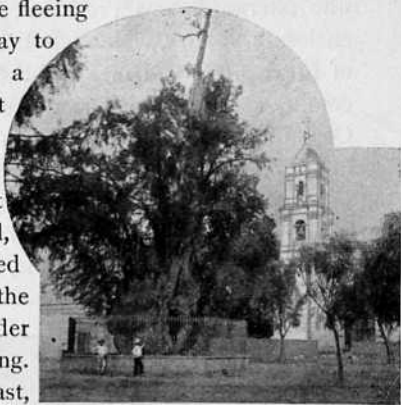
"Well, can you read the picture in stone? You see an eagle bearing aloft an Indian (not a snake, as on the coat of arms). The story of that aeronaut is this. An eagle carried him away from his work in a field to a mountain cave; there a spirit told him he must return and tell Montezuma that the gods were angry with him, and that the kingdom would be destroyed. The eagle brought him back and set him down right on this spot. Now you know the story in stone. As to the inscription, it remarks: 'In this place on the night of July 1, 1520, called the Dismal Night, so great was the slaughter of the Spaniards by the Aztecs, that after entering the city again in triumph the next year, the conquerors determined to build a memorial here to be named the Chapel of the Martyrs; and to be dedicated to San Hipólito, for on that saint's day the city was taken.'"

"Martyrs! Cortés and company martyrs!" exclaimed the Captain. "If the inscription had said butchers, it would have been nearer the truth."

"Well, they're dead now," said the Corporal, "don't rake up old scores. Was Cortés here himself?"

"Yes, but his captain, Alvarado, was the hero of the hour. Right here was the city limit on the west; a moat surrounded the town, and here was a fortification; in fact, it was also the prison where slaves intended for the sacrifices were kept. The Spaniards had been in possession of the city since November, 1519, and their cruelty caused the Aztecs to rebel. They

pursued the Spaniards, who were fleeing for their lives, over this causeway to the mainland. Here so great a slaughter occurred that the moat was filled with bodies. Alvarado, like Ney, the last to retreat, saved himself by a most wonderful leap over the canal, and joined Cortés, who had halted at Tacuba. The tree, called the El Arbol de Noche Triste, under which Cortés wept, is still standing.



The Spaniards started for the coast, but went only to Tlascala, where they were promised men and means by the Tlascalans, who were the mortal foes of the Aztecs. Six months Cortés worked day and night getting ready to return and punish the rebels. Re-enforcements came from Cuba, boats were built and launched on Lake Texcoco. Sulphur was brought from the volcano and made into gunpowder, and the native troops were drilled in the art of war. On the last day of the year, 1520, Cortés with his Spanish force and Indian allies began the siege of the doomed city. The siege lasted more than half a year, and on Aug. 13, 1521, the Spaniards took possession again and ruled the country for exactly three hundred years. Iturbide, you will remember, put an end to their power in August, 1821."

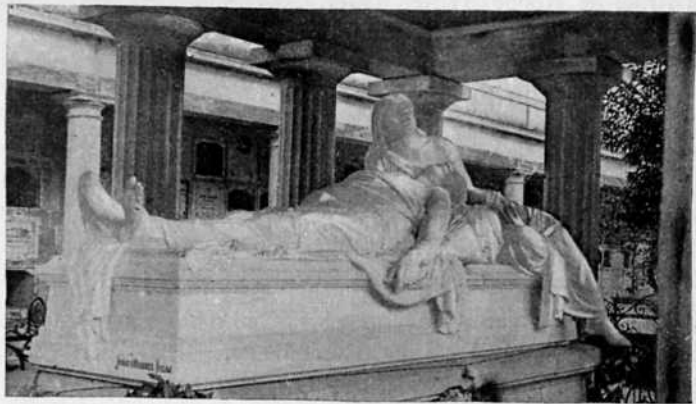
"This is an 'old corner bookstore,'" said the Corporal; "it tells us so much."

"Well, come on, there's another place near by that will tell us several stories. It is the *panteon* of San Fernando, only two blocks west of San Hipólito.

"This is the little plaza of San Fernando; that bronze is a statue to Vicente Guerrero, the leader of the patriots, with whom Iturbide joined to achieve the independence of Mexico, and

who afterwards was President. We shall see his tomb in the enclosure yonder, which has been aptly termed the Westminster of Mexico. There many of the most distinguished men of the country are buried. The names of Juarez, Guerrero, Zaragoza, Comonfort, Mejia, and Miramon recall the most stirring events in the history of the Republic."

Of the tombs none are worthy of note except that of Juarez. This is by far the finest memorial in Mexico. On a stone platform in an open marble temple, the roof of which is supported by sixteen Doric pillars, stands the massive sarcophagus on



which rests the memorial sculpture. It represents the Republic holding in her lap the head of the hero over whose dead body she mourns. A grateful country has filled the little temple with tokens of admiration and affection. The tomb of Juarez meets every requirement of a worthy memorial to one who, like our Washington, was "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen."

"Here Juarez slumbers in divine repose,  
His effigy in marble robes arrayed,  
And in the statued lap of Freedom laid  
As pure as the Sierra Madre's snows."

A suggestive fact it is that here, within a few feet of the tomb of Juarez, rest, in sepulchres inscribed only with their names, the remains of the unfortunate generals, Miramon and Mejia. A magnanimous country, in permitting their burial here, recognizes their bravery.

"This is not now a public cemetery," said the Major, as they were walking towards the gate. "There are perhaps one thousand two hundred graves here; many of them, as you see, chambers in the *walls* of the enclosure."

"Curious they don't give dates of birth and death," said the Captain, pointing to a tablet on which were only two words. "Here is 'ELLA DUERME,' and nothing more."

"That is enough," replied the Major, smiling at the natural mistake. "You will probably find a name and the dates on the other sides of the monument. Those words simply say, 'She sleeps.'"

"That is a good one on you, Captain," said the Corporal.

"Easy enough to make a mistake like that here where men are named Maria," replied the Captain, smiling.

"Let us look into the old church of San Fernando," continued the Major. "It is one of the largest churches in the city."

"Are there many Protestant churches in Mexico?" asked the Captain.

"The Presbyterians have about ninety churches, and a membership of about four thousand; the Methodists have fifteen churches, and a membership of nearly four thousand; the Baptists have fifteen churches, and a membership of about one thousand."

"And how about Catholic churches?" asked the Corporal.

"The census of 1888 state that there are 10,112 Catholic churches and chapels in Mexico. The membership includes the whole population of 12,000,000, excepting, perhaps, 25,000. State and church are separated by the Laws of the Reform, established in 1874, but operative before, under the administration of President Juarez. Six archbishops and twenty-one bishops now administer the affairs of the church in Mexico."