

both Oriental and Occidental, it will be seen that a porous tufaceous rock or a hard trachyte are those most available.

The latter is what seems to be mostly used in the expensive buildings, while in the greater number of structures I imagine that it is the softer rock, finished, as they all are in the well built streets of Mexico, by smooth plastered surfaces. Such are the materials seen on every hand to constitute the buildings.

Far up on the mountain sides, beyond 10,000 feet, there are wooded slopes; but the magnificent groves of cypress and cedar said to have existed everywhere throughout the valley at the time of the Conquest have disappeared under the hand of the ruthless so-called civilizer, who imagined, while he destroyed, that New Spain, when robbed of her trees, would look more like his barren Castilian plains.

Before describing the buildings and their interiors, it will be proper to refer to the general appearance of a Mexican city. I had the opportunity of visiting several cities, and all seem to be constructed, so far as the surface makes possible, on the same general plan. Everything centralizes at the plaza or city square, called the *zocalo*, and in the City of Mexico "Plaza de Armes." About this square are ranged the cathedral and municipal buildings; and in Mexico the departmental government buildings. From the plaza runs the *calle real* or main street. Along it may be one or more parks, while other streets are parallel to the main street or cross it at right angles.

In the City of Mexico, this arrangement is exquisitely carried out. The main street, Avenida de San Francisco, runs for some six squares of principal shops, and then widens out into broad drives on either side of the Alameda, or alley of poplars, as it properly means, but what is really a beautiful promenade with broad walks lined with ash or lime trees, with awnings stretched at many points for protection against

the fierce rays of the mid-day sun. Pretty flower-beds and fountains are here and there intermingled with the walks. These broad drives on either side of the Alameda continue as a wide drive for some squares to a bronze statue of Charles IV. of Spain. At this point, continues, south-westerly, the Paseo or grand promenade or drive, which runs for two miles directly to the Castillo de Chapultepec. It is two chains, at least, in width, and has various statues of historic personages. Its equipages, in number and style, are probably not excelled on any grand drive on this continent. Such then are the outlines of the City of Mexico and, unless in extent, of those of other Mexican towns.

With regard to the appearance of the houses and streets, the latter are, as a rule in Mexico, about a chain wide and generally cobble-stoned. Several of the principal streets are now asphalted from wall to wall and kept fairly clean.

The houses, on account of earthquakes, it is said with some reason, are low, seldom more than two stories, thick-walled, flat-roofed, and so equally built that they seem like mere rows of white walls. The windows of the lower stories, when not shops, are barred with iron railings, and the upper stories are provided with a balcony, extending usually the width of two windows and not more than two feet beyond the wall line. These are almost universal in the better houses and are supplied with a vertical awning enabling one to see up and down the street without being readily observed. From behind these awnings love-sick maidens make eyes, on the sly, at their patient lovers, standing perchance in the doorway of a neighboring house. This is the national custom of courting or "playing the bear" as it is called.

But the plain bare wall gives no index of the house within. The average frontage of the city residences is probably 30 feet. On the ground floor is a