

Capital of Guatemala Clean and Pretty City

GUATEMALA CITY—Come with me and take a look at the capital of Guatemala. It is one of the prettiest towns of the western hemisphere, and at the present time the cleanest and brightest of all the cities of Spanish America. It contains over 100,000 people and covers enough ground for 1,000,000. Just now the town looks as though it had come out of a hand-box. The houses were all newly painted, by the orders of the president. Just before the visit of Secretary Knox, all the same time brass knockers on the doors were shined, the brass knobs on the balconies were made to look like gold, and the result is we have a newly created city as sparkling and span as the rose-colored capital of Japan in India.

A Spanish Town.
Guatemala City is Spanish in architecture. The only buildings over fifty feet high are the churches. The residences are low and seldom of more than one story. Skyscrapers are unknown in Central America, and the sky line is, as a rule, straight from one end of the street to the other. Most of the houses are close to the street. They are built of brick or stone covered with stucco. They consist of large rooms running around a patio, or garden, in the center. The windows facing the sidewalk are low and are invariably covered with iron bars. There are ledges which are used as seats and leaning places, and one frequently sees pretty Spanish girls looking out.

The most of the roofs are flat, with walls along the front, which are often decorated with knobs or ornamental stucco work. The roofs are of red tiles, and, as a whole, the buildings are picturesque.

Artistic and Quaint.
I wish I could take you inside some of these houses. They are delightful homes and they abound in quaint features. As our young girls would say, "I am just crazy over the door knockers." They are made of brass and are of most beautiful shapes. Some are brass hands, others are female heads and some are of wrought iron artistically shaped. The doors themselves are heavy and are often studded with iron or brass nails exquisitely finished. Some of the front doors are as big as those of a barn and the larger ones have smaller doors cut through them. The big door is for the carriage, and a man's team drives right into his house, the curbstones being so sided in places that one can get to the sidewalk without jolting. In some houses the stable is at the back or side of the patio, and the best rooms are often on the second floor.

The Denver of Central America.
Guatemala City is the Denver of Central America. It has the same clear air, the same bright skies, and it is about as near heaven as our plums metropolis of the Rockies. It is situated on the backbone of mountains which run from Alaska to the Strait of Magellan, and its altitude is 1,600 feet above that of the Alleghenies. It lies in an amphitheater surrounded by volcanoes and is bordered by gorges and ravines, which its people think keep off the earthquakes.

The present capital was founded just about the time that we sent forth our declaration of independence, but the old city of Guatemala, which lay thirty miles away at the foot of the Volcans de Agua, was one of the first cities of the new world, and 100 years or so ago it far surpassed anything in the United States in its size and magnificence. Its location, however, was bad, and it was destroyed again and again. The last earthquake occurred about 1773, when for the third time the city was reduced to ruins. The people then decided to move, and they came to this place and laid out the town of today.

The new Guatemala was planned after that of the old city. It has many plazas or open spaces, and its streets cross one another at right angles. There are eleven streets and thirteen avenues, the streets crossing the avenues at right angles and forming many square blocks of 30 feet on each side. The streets are wide and well paved. They are bordered by sidewalks and lined by these Spanish houses, which are painted in all the colors of the rainbow.

In the center of the city is a great plaza, upon which is one of the largest cathedrals on the continent, and where there are also the city hall, the Episcopal palace, the old mint and the Portal del Comercio, consisting of fine stores which look out upon arcades facing the plaza.

A City of Churches.
The cathedral here is worth seeing. It is planned after that of Mexico City, in



Natives of Guatemala

Guatemala's famous bull statue

the form of a Latin cross, with three aisles running down the center and other aisles on each side, making five in all. It covers a great area and its gigantic towers can be seen for miles over the country.

The building was begun in 1528, and at first it was planned to cost but \$300,000. The expenses upon it have, however, been many times that, and it is now one of the gorgeous buildings of Latin America. The pulpit is plated with gold and there is a gold crown above it. Gold emblems hang from each of the pillars and there are scores of paintings of saints in gold frames on its walls. The altar is of Carara marble with beautiful carvings, and the whole church is magnificent.

Leaving the cathedral and driving about through the city one sees fine churches or church buildings in almost every block. In the past the people were not known devout than they are now and the priest had more power. Today some of the old convents have been turned into government offices and the administration is rather opposed to the church than in favor of it.

One of the most interesting of the ecclesiastical buildings is the Church of Santo Domingo. It was begun when the city was founded and was completed about the same time that Thomas Jefferson left the White House. The stones of this church are said to be laid in a mortar mixed with milk and sugar cane juice, supplied by one of the nabobs of the past. In its vaults are the mummies of the early friars.

The Church of San Francisco, which was begun in 1890, had its mortar mixed with the whites of eggs, but just how many eggs were employed is not known. This church once had a convent connected with it, and at one time it was used as a pantheon for the burial of distinguished persons. The church has now been taken over by the government and the general postoffice occupies the convent.

Many of the churches are shrines and in some of them pilgrims come from all over Guatemala. In the Church of La Merced is a statue known as the black Virgin, which was consecrated in 1717, so that it is almost 200 years old. It is considered especially holy and is a favorite shrine.

A Good Mission Field.
And just here I would say that Guatemala is a splendid field for missionary work. The people are Catholics, but they have a religion like that of the middle ages and they need regeneration. The work should be done by our Catholic missionaries, who would, I believe, find the grain ripe for the harvest. It must be remembered that a great majority of these Guatemalans are Indians. Guatemala has more than two millions population, and of these about 1,500,000 have no white blood. The Indians are divided up into tribes, and many of the tribes have a mixture of Catholicism and of their old faith. They have their priests, but they also have medicine men and fire and devil worship. This is so of the Quiches, who are descended from the Toltecs, who ruled Mexico before the Aztecs. There are several hundred thousand of them.

The Indians of Guatemala are naturally devout. The greater support of the church comes from them, and I see a half dozen men to every white man in the churches. It is perhaps due to the Indians that the worship of today is so full of superstition. The statues in the churches are gorgeously decorated. In some places the Christ is clad in a woolen gown like a monk, and nearly everywhere the wax Madonnas have gowns of broad silk and their heads are decorated with jewels.

As it is now the church is very poor, and with the opposition of the government it is difficult to support the clergy. The priests are not free to speak as they please, and the power and wealth which they had in the past have disappeared. As to Protestant mission work, there is some carried on by the Presbyterians, the Methodists and the Evangelists. I am a Presbyterian myself, but I really believe the best work can be done here by the Catholics, and that Central America should be given over to them. What is wanted is not a new faith, but a regeneration, revivifying and modernization of what the people believe now, and this can be much more easily and effectively accomplished by our Catholic church as it is today.

The Theater and the Bull Ring.
But you must not think that Guatemala is all churches. It has a fine theater and a well patronized bull ring. The theater is named after Columbus, and its building was modeled after the Church of the Madeleine in Paris. It has a subsidy from the government, and stars are brought in from Italy, Spain and Mexico. The bull ring is right near the Central railway station, and during the season all classes meet there Sunday afternoon to see the fun. Now and then bulls are imported from Spain to contest with the Guatemalan bulls, and some of the chief Spanish bullfighters come here to take part. As a rule, however, the animals used are oxen, with now and then an old bull for a change.

There are always good bands at the bull fights and the city has plenty of music. The military bands play in the parks and on Sunday afternoons rich and poor walk about there and listen to popular and classical airs.

Mule Street Cars.
There is also plenty of driving and a little automobile, but joy riding is largely confined to the rich. The only street cars are old-fashioned trams drawn by mules, and the cars go at such

irregular intervals that one can hardly tell when they will come. Besides they are usually filled with Indians and half-breeds, which many consider unpleasant. The fares are equal to two-thirds of a cent of our money, but the street car company pays no dividend.

As to the main drives one is to the Hippodrome, where is the race track, and Temple of Minerva, and another is out over the Boulevard de Reforma to the national museum. This boulevard is one of the fine roads of Central America. It is several hundred feet wide, and the four driveways are divided by rows of trees and greenward. There are statues under the trees, and now and then a circle with some great monument in it. The boulevard is lined with the chief public buildings. There is a fine military school, a hospital for convalescents, the military hospital, and the homes of the rich Guatemalans, the street ending at the national museum.

It is on this boulevard that stand Guatemala's two famous bull statues. These are life-size figures of bulls represented as they might be in the bull ring. One shows the bull defiant and the other when it has just been struck with the banderillo in the shoulder. They are the only statues of bulls I have ever seen, except the great one in the museum at Naples. The only camel statue is that ridden by General Gordon at Khartoum in the Sudan.

Among the most interesting monuments and buildings of Guatemala are those erected in honor of education, and this strange to say, in a country where there are less than 2,000 school children in a population of 2,000,000. The president of the republic is an enthusiast on the subject of schools, and one of his ways of showing it is by the erection of these temples to Minerva, which are to be found at all the large cities.

The temple here, of which I have already spoken in connection with the visit of Secretary Knox, covers about a quarter of an acre. It consists of a great platform with a roof upheld by twenty-four Ionic columns. The front of the building has allegorical figures representing Civilization and Progress and under them an inscription saying that Manuel Estrada Cabrera, the president of the republic has erected this for the study of the youth of the country.

Similar buildings, though not so grand, have been erected to the Goddess of Wisdom and Education in other places. I saw one in the town of Progreso and came over the railroad from the Caribbean sea to Guatemala City, and there are others at Quetzaltenango and elsewhere.

In these temples there are annual festivals of the school children, at which time the eminent men of the republic make speeches and the little ones come out in great parades. There is song singing, oratory and essay reading, and altogether a feast of reason and flow of soul—a sort.

Cabrera and the Schools.
I understand that President Cabrera has done considerable in the way of improving the schools. At the time he came into power they were closed for lack of funds. He ordered them opened, and a year later began these festivals to Minerva. Since then he has established some thousands of primary schools and has instituted normal and industrial schools. The country has now a national institute, which confers degrees. It has a manual school for women, a national conservatory of music, a school of art and schools for law, medicine and engineering.

The national library contains about 25,000 volumes and many manuscripts, including the records of the Inquisition in Guatemala. In the law school library there are 3,000 law books, and the city library has about 3,000 more. One of the best English libraries is that of the American club, which numbers 2,500 volumes.

Teachers at 15 Cents a Day.
The chief trouble with the schools here is the lack of money for teachers. A great deal has been spent for temples and for putting up school buildings. But many of the buildings are empty, and some of the schools are without scholars. There is not enough in the treasury to pay for good teachers, and ordinary instructors get from 12 to 15 cents a day.

It is the same with other government employees. I am told that circuit judges receive 200 pesos per month. This, at the present rate of exchange, equals \$12 or \$15; and as a judge of this kind usually has a house which would rent for three times that per month, it is hard to see how he keeps up the proper style on this salary. The only way he can do so is by graft, and as a result justice is often for sale to the highest bidder.

The process of getting a favorable decree, as I am told, is as follows: The man who wishes to win his case calls on the judge a night or so before the day set for the trial. He does not argue for or against it, but merely makes a social visit, and upon leaving lays a check payable to bearer upon the chair or table. The judge understands, and if the check is cashed the man is the winner.

As it is, everything about the schools is behind the times. I bought a geography of Central America at one of the chief book stores. It was published by Appleton & Co. in 1905, and from it the little Guatemalans are learning that the United States has now 25,000,000 people, while the other figures given are those of eighteen years ago.

A Word About the Press.
It is the same with the newspapers. They are few in number and small in circulation. There is not one in the cap-

ital which has a daily issue of more than 5,000, and the Sunday issue of the journal which you are reading contains more print than any Guatemala newspaper has in one week—I might almost say in a month. Nevertheless, there are four dailies published in Guatemala City, and there are eight more periodicals registered. The papers have six columns to a page and the pages measure twenty-two by twenty-eight inches. There are some telegrams, considerable local news and not a little advertising. The advertising rates are not more than 5 cents per inch for each insertion, and they run as high as \$10 gold per page, with reductions for long contracts.

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