

Domestic Life in Panama.

The gentlewomen of Panama are, in common with other Columbians, graceful in movement and charming in manner. The houses of the rich are large and often open on a central court, luxuriant with vines and flowers. Some of these courts are protected by awnings in the sunny hours, and some of them have perfumed fountains, which are used for baths. But, truth to tell, the Columbians do not favor much bathing. An American girl was advised that her frequent use of water would ruin her complexion. Her friends daubed their faces and occasionally their necks with a little *aguardiente*, a sort of cane rum, and dried them with tiny, lace-trimmed towels. The rooms do not usually contain much furniture, but are decked with a wealth of tropical flowers of exquisite fragrance. A rare plant of the orchid family bears the Flower of the Holy Ghost. The petals are of an alabaster white, and within them appears a miniature chapel of alabaster, containing a dove with drooping wings, the stamens and pistils producing the resemblance to the dove form. Other beautiful orchids abound.

Little upholstered furniture is used and the floors are tiled. In the sala, or parlor, is a double row of wicker rocking chairs down the center, and when a hostess receives she and her guests rock continually while they chat. The Columbians are a hospitable people and receive strangers cordially. It is customary for a stranger to send cards to those whose acquaintance he desires, etiquette demands that the recipients of the cards call within a few days.

The dining tables of the rich are spread with fine linen and set with handsome cut glass and china.

A breakfast very often consists of several courses; for instance, fruit, poached eggs with stewed tomatoes and rice; fish, chops, fried in eggs

and herbs, and a tortilla con queso, brain omelette; sweet potatoes or other vegetables and coffee. Saffron is a favorite flavoring for soup. Chicken or game pies contain a variety of vegetables, hard-boiled eggs and other ingredients. A common dish among the poor is a dish called *sin coche*. Another standby is rice and red beans. Rice cooked in lard with a little *tasa-do*, dried beef, for a relish, is a tidbit among the lower classes. The flesh of the *inguaaa*, a species of land lizard, is regarded as a delicacy and is said to resemble chicken. The natives slit the sides of living female *inguaas* and take from them strings of eggs as large as plums. They hang these eggs in the sun and dry them for future consumption.

The huts of the poor are of logs, with bamboo plaited sides and mud-filled chinks. The windows have wooden shutters, but no glass. Sleeping places are bamboo benches with hide thrown over them, or hammocks woven by the women. Gourds of various shapes and sizes do duty for dishes, spoons and knives. Chairs and benches are hollowed logs of wood. But the peons get their living easily and enjoy life well. They delight in music and dancing, and women as well as men are smokers. Cock-fighting is favorite amusement.

The peasant women are usually barefooted and bareheaded, with mantillas for special occasions. Their dress is a short skirt and bodice, or an ample, frilled, low-necked garment called a *pollera*. Even the poorer classes are bedecked with jewelry. The pearls of the Gulf are very fine and the jewelers of Panama make beautiful necklaces, bracelets, etc., of finest gold threads, into which pearls are woven. Women of the upper classes take little exercise in the open air. When a family is in mourning the women frequently remain within doors for months behind closed blinds. — Oregonian.