

GLIMPSSES INTO the HEART of MEXICO

What the People Are Like Beyond Vera Cruz.



In a Public Laundry in Mexico City.



Making Tortillas for Her Husband's Dinner While He is on the Fighting Line.



The Public Letter Writer.



Women Beasts of Burden.



"The Old Oaken Bucket" in Mexico.

VERA CRUZ, May 29.—(Special Correspondence.)—Beyond Vera Cruz toward Mexico City, every type of native is seen, from a full-blood Aztec to a dashing Spanish cavalero. There is music as plaintive and weird as any ever heard on a mid-way plainscape; people in costumes of all descriptions, and some with either demi-toilets or none at all.

The stage setting is perfection, and though the atmosphere is not all that could be desired—especially through the tierra caliente, the hot lands to be traversed—it would be a poor traveler into the interior who would allow this to interfere with his enjoyment of the interesting types on every side.

Here one sees the true child of nature, who has never known the restraint of clothes, shoes or stockings. The author of "Sartor Resartus" would find no food for thought here, and nothing on which to hang his philo- sophy, for while the extremely décolleté dress of the grown-ups would make the half grown of one of our society belles seem a Puritan costume by comparison, the babies and children pose in the altogether.

Emerging from the hot country into the foothills of the Sierra Madre Mountains, with the snow-tipped peak of Orizaba in the distance, a cool breeze is felt; refreshing mountain streams rush like a swift torrent, or meander through the landscape, adding beauty to the scene and furnishing a laundry and bathing place for the Indian family whose adobe or reed hut is on its banks.

The peon does not go to bed while his clothes are being washed, but simply takes an air bath while they are drying on the bushes, and joins his family for a social hour.

If there are a few maguey plants on the banks of this stream, it is bliss indescribable for him, for he can extract the pulque from these for his nighttime or morning constitutional, and wags and rumors of wars do not rob him of a moment's rest.

It matters not if one be artist, sociologist, soldier of fortune, or simply a globe-trotter on pleasure bent, he will find enough and to spare of every variety of climate, scenery and peoples in traveling through this country.

So little have the centuries changed it that if General Winfield Scott were alive and could lead the way to Mexico City he would enjoy some improvements, but find few changes, and would encounter the same mode of life that he found when he marched through it in 1847 and that Cortes found when he took the same route nearly 400 years ago.

Now, as in the time of the Spanish conquistador, cargadores are used to

transfer luggage, household effects and take supplies over the mountains, where it is difficult for even a burro to go.

On landing in Vera Cruz the traveler is quickly surrounded by these little lean-looking brown men—and women, too—wildly gesticulating and soliciting patronage. There may be a transfer wagon near at hand, but the cargadores is taken for no other reason than to eliminate one of the dozen hanging at one's heels.

They carry on their backs anything from a large-sized dress trunk to the entire furnishings of a small American apartment, their load frequently so enveloping them that as they run along, winding in and out among the traffic of a crowded street, all that is visible is a pair of thin muscular legs and feet seemingly pinned to the bottom of a trunk or box.

These cargadores, messengers and aguadores in Mexico have dynamics down to such a fine point that they could wind in and out of a crowd at Broadway and Thirty-fourth street in a way that would make a New York policeman's hair stand on end. And an aguadore, or water-carrier, can go through a crowded thoroughfare with two large open-mouthed water-jugs filled to the brim and attached to either end of a yoke and another large jugful on his head and never spill a drop.

Moving day in Mexico is filled with interest to the tourist, and particularly so if the event takes place in one of the viviendas, or tenement-houses. Instead of a moving-van or a handcart, the cargadore is employed, and will trot up and down three or four flights of stairs with the greatest ease.

The apartment or tenement houses were frequently palaces or hospitals in the time of Spanish rule, and are now regular human beehives, the great chambers being subdivided into tenements of four or five rooms.

These places are like little villages all within themselves, sheltering shoemakers, cabinetmakers, dressmakers, weavers, carpenters and any other workmen one may have need of, even to an evangelist, or public letter-writer, all plying their trades in this building and using the large patio as a social center for man and beast.

It is here the occupants assemble to hear the news or gossip a bit about a new arrival. Every one takes a pride in the flowers in the patio, and every available space is used in which to set tin cans, pots or any receptacle in which flowering plants will grow. And they do grow luxuriantly and help to hide the squalor of the surroundings.

In the richer parts of the town this courtyard will be so gay with flowers that it will look like a painted Jesabel flaunting her splendors in the face of

the cool green palms and ferns, and on moonlit nights is like fairyland.

A family of seven will occupy a room less than eighteen feet square in one of these tenement-houses, and the father of the family will carry on his trade there. So there is little space left for entertaining company; hence the patio is also the courting parlor for those given to the tender passion—for to "play the bear" which is courting in Mexico, is only indulged in by the more fortunate middle class.

Young Mexican women of the better class are not allowed to go in the streets unattended, nor to receive visits from men except in the presence of the family; consequently reprobitious lovmaking is indulged in through the iron gratings of a window, and this is called "playing the bear."

But with the maiden of the tenement the grated window is often lacking, so other means must be resorted to. As love knows neither age nor condition, if the enamored one has not had the opportunity to take advantage of the rule of three, he or she seeks the public letter writer, who will put the love message on paper.

He is comfortably ensconced in a secluded corner of one of these patios, or in some quiet corner of the market. It is delightful to watch this custodian of love secrets from a distance, for he seems to put as much interest and expression into one of these billets-doux as though it were his own affair; and though the secret is safe with him, it is always wise to look about for eavesdroppers and teasing youngsters before confiding to him the name and address of the adored one.

The public newspaper reader is equally interesting, and more exciting. With the exception of the Far East, there are two conveniences no longer found. The public reader has all the shrewdness and cunning of his mixed Indian and Spanish blood and is usually a debonair, showily dressed chap who knows where most of the crowd is likely to assemble, and when there is a sufficient audience he takes his paper and, comfortably seating himself, begins to read.

First the latest news about a bull-fight, a little about the war, and then some interesting local items. After this comes an exciting human-interest story, the reading of which he accompanies with suitable action, and when he gets to the most exciting place in the narrative he will stop and pass his hat. If the amount received is what he thinks it should be, he will proceed.

But if it falls short of his expectation he quietly folds his paper, pockets the money and saunters away, leaving a curious, gaping crowd behind, with

the assured feeling that if there are any more centavos they will follow him to hear the climax.

In the markets of Mexico it is not difficult to get in on the ground floor on everything but the price of the article desired. But here the American will find an adversary worthy his steel, and the Aztec will take plenty of time, too, to make the bargain, for he is not in a hurry to get home—as he carries his home with him to the market.

There for the time being is his social life, as well as business, for when he leaves home in the morning he takes all of his household with him, including babes in arms, children, dogs, cats, donkeys, all go and make a day of it. The charcoal brazier is taken along, and the family meal is cooked right there, making with his neighbors one large dinner party, the menu consisting of one or two of the 700 varieties of peppers, frijoles or black beans, to which if he hail from the State of Tabasco, he will give additional piquancy by a dash of that famous sauce.

Then, if he is fortunate enough, he will wash all this down with a measure of pique—say two days old, and will feel that he has dined like the proverbial lord, and Epicurus has nothing on him.

These markets are practically the same today that they were in the time when that quaint 16th century writer, Bernal Diaz, described them. Then as now low piazzas of solid stone inclosed the market square, and were occupied by small shops and ground-floor stalls; the central part, or courtyard, is open to the sky, and it is there takes place the sale of burros, sheep and other animals on foot.

This delightful historian says: "The

meat markets were stocked with fowl, game and dogs." He adds: "Vegetables, fruits, articles of food ready dressed, salt, bread, honey and sweet pastry are sold, and many gewgaws for the adornment of the savage person."

The wares are spread out on white cloths on the cobblestones of the market, and there will be found peppers, tomatoes, beans—or, to be more accurate, there will be a sea of beans of all kinds. Black beans, white beans, brown beans and yellow beans; all with a different flavor.

The man from Boston may think he knows something about beans, but if he should go to one of these markets his knowledge would pale into insignificance and the Boston bean-pot would look like a rabbit.

We who buy a bushel, peck, half or quarter peck measure at a time gaze in wonder at the small patchwork of vegetables displayed; a pint cup of potatoes or onions, two or three tomatoes, a teacup of peppers and other like vegetables, all laid out in little heaps ready for the customer.

Another stall in the market—and a large one, too—is devoted to the sale of tortillas, the national corn flapjack of Mexico. These, with beans, constitute a large part of the diet of the Mexican of the poorer classes, but are indulged in by all. And when crisp and hot are deliciously appetizing.

They are the staff of life of the Mexican soldier, who has an advantage

over other soldiers in that he is privileged to dine with his family every day while following the fortunes of war, for his women and children accompany the army, carrying the cooking paraphernalia, and help him to forage.

While he is on the firing line his wife will take the corn from the lime water where it has been soaking, grind it on a stone and, mixing it with water, have it ready in a jiffy to bake on the hot stones.

At Orizaba the flower and fruit markets are things of beauty, with a picture-queeness of arrangement and color that would make the futurist and cubist painters green with envy. Such a riot of color could only be seen in a tropical country. Masses of flaming passion flowers, luxuriant oleanders, roses, exquisitely delicate bay blossoms, and magnolias—great bunches of them for a mere song—and the vander croons the song while one waits.

Everywhere the train stops in going through this stretch of country large bouquets, as big as a half bushel basket, of camellias are thrust into the car windows, and 5 or 10 cents is the price asked. Camellias, such as are bought here for 50 cents a blossom, are put in a corsage bouquet of violets.

But of all the Mexican antiquities and ancient customs, there is none that can surpass a public laundry such as seen in Mexico City, and in use today. At just what period the oldest one was built is not positively known. As the memory of man runneth not to the contrary, a voluble guide will say in the 14th century; so one must believe him and leave the rest to the archeologist.

The large room with vaulted ceiling is more like a baronial hall than a place for washing soiled linens. The

rows of laundry tubs have the appearance of a miniature Chinese wall, so solidly are they constructed, and from the water side of the pool or lagoon around which they are built they have the appearance of a Roman causeway.

The water is conveyed into them by means of a pan or earthen water jug in the hands of the laundress; and though this would seem an endless task to one accustomed to modern conveniences, the Indian woman and all of her ancestors were used to this method and she knows no other way.

These tubs have withstood the wear of centuries, and if Mrs. Montezuma could return she would find them just as she left them several hundred years ago. Even the laundresses could speak to her in the pure Aztec tongue and their faces would have the hallow mark of the genuine article. The same intelligence, astuteness and passive dignity which years of subjugation have not been able to erase are visible on these faces. They are questioning and suspicious, but they show an inexhaustible patience.

There are steam laundries in Mexico, run by American men—and patronized by American people, too, for their charges for an average size wash does not appeal to the frugal Mexican, and excites some surprise in their own countrymen.

"Sixteen dollars Mex." which is about \$8 American money, for a dozen pieces none of which are elaborate, seems very high; but after a visit to one of the antique laundries one is more reconciled to the "sixteen." For the big flat stones slanted in the tubs and used as washing boards are not the best things in the laundry line for dainty lingerie.

And if one of these fine garments is poked into the drain pipe as a stopper—and it is likely to be—there is not much left of it.

Kansas Editor's Wit and Wisdom in Paragraphs

Thousands of newspaper readers to whom the words "Atchison Globe" appended to a newspaper paragraph mean a bit of unusual humor will be interested to learn that Edgar Watson Howe, for 34 years owner of the Atchison (Kan.) Globe and author of some of the most widely-quoted newspaper paragraphs in the United States, is just 60 years old, having been born in May, 1854.

Four years ago, when his paper was making him \$60 a day net, Mr. Howe turned it over to his son and quit. Nowadays he is living on a country place which he calls Potato Hill, drinking buttermilk, listening to the wolves howl and publishing "E. W. Howe's Monthly," devoted to indignation and information. "The old dog," he says, "having been a long time out in the world, knows that little of interest is going on and spends much of his time sleeping in the sun."

Here are some of Mr. Howe's characteristic paragraphs printed in the Atchison Globe. They are taken from "Country Town Sayings," Crane & Co., Topeka, Kan.

MART HORLEY will probably be heard from next year in state politics. Heretofore he has been hampered in his reform work, as he was compelled to clean the lamps in his wife's boarding-house, but natural gas having reached town he will now be prepared to give his entire time to uplift work.

A man should be taller, older, heavier, uglier and hoarser than his wife.

come a teacher said today: "I am not becoming a teacher to do good, but for the pleasure of whipping the boys!"

It seems to be natural to men to advocate big reforms. But it never was natural with us. The only real reform we ever advocated with spirit is letting the schools out two hours on the morning of a circus parade.

Somehow everyone hates to see an unusually pretty girl get married. It is like taking a bite out of a very fine looking peach.

In the days of long ago the Indian walked ahead and his squaw followed him, dragging a tent pole. When they approached a settlement he didn't take the pole from her; she continued to drag it until their destination was reached. Nowadays when a woman carries a heavy burden her husband is apt to step back and relieve her when they reach a place where people may see them. This is civilization.

If the women had money how well they could get along without the men! There is nothing so well known as that we should not expect something for nothing, but we all do and call it hope.

About aprons: The average woman wears out six aprons a year. As soon as the aprons are worn out they are

used for rags and new ones made. A woman has two or three aprons in the wash every week. It is a saying among women that a woman who does not wear aprons is a slouch. When a woman's six aprons are about worn out and she is preparing to make new ones, she says she "is all in rags." There are dozens of different kinds of aprons; some of them require six yards of gingham in the making and some only two. Gingham for an apron costs from 20 to 40 cents.

So far as is known, no widow ever eloped.

We have always had a morbid curiosity to taste a cake baked by a school-teacher.

The more worthless a man the more fish he can catch.

A really busy person never knows how much he weighs.

Much of the clamoring now going on has a tendency to make industry and honest achievements almost disreputable.

When a woman is on her last legs she starts a boarding-house; a man starts a fire insurance agency.

People are never old, according to their talk; they are only "getting old."

Every day thousands of people exclaim: "I can't stand it!" But they do.

Horses do not seem to appreciate good treatment any better than men. The horse that is well taken care of and has a groom of his own seldom trots as well as a livery horse that is pounded over the roads by whoever sees fit to hire him. We can take a fairly good livery horse from any of the stables and pass any horse in town that has pads on his legs. And what is more, a livery buggy never rattles as a family buggy does.

Sometimes I think that I have nothing to be thankful for, but when I reflect that I am not a woman I am content. Anyone who is compelled to kiss a man and pretend to like it is entitled to sympathy.

You hear many strange things told of life. Many of them are exaggerated, many of them are untrue. There isn't a great deal in life that is really strange. It's the same old story, and only wonderful to the young.



Edgar W. Howe.
is your standing in the community in looks depressed, his wife thinks of which you live.

Watch the flies on cold mornings; that is the way you will feel and act when you are old.

Overheard at the Wharf. (Washington Star.)
"Which is dis new river an' what boats run on it?"
"Dar ain' no boats runnin' on it. Dat river were put dar jes' foh 'covery."

What people say behind your back now? Whenever a man sits still and