

A LESSON IN SPANISH

How Tourists in Mexico Wrestle With the Language.

A QUEER RESTAURANT ORDER.

The Way an American Woman Shocked a Waiter With a Demand For a Dish That the Cook Would Not Prepare.

"It's no wonder that men who go from the States down to Mexico on business do not get along better," said a returned New Yorker. "They don't study Spanish as they should. In the clubs half of the stock stories are about these half educated Americans. "It was in a restaurant where only Spanish is spoken that a party of American tourists assembled. There were a woman and her two daughters and, of course, the attendant and patient papa with the wad.

"Let me order," said the mater. "I want to use my Spanish." And she proceeded to pull out a handy book of conversation. "Let me see," scanning the menu; "we want oysters, I'm sure. A small fry for each would be just the thing."

"Running her fingers through the leaves, she found that 'chiquita' means 'small' and 'frita' means 'fry.' Perfectly simple. 'Chiquita fritas' would mean 'small fries.' She held up her fingers to indicate four and said complacently to the expectant and polite waiter:

"Chiquitas fritas."

"The waiter's eyes bulged out, and his Latin politeness got a shock. "Oh, no, senora," he cried as he backed away; "no chiquitas fritas."

"Why not?" returned the patron. "Don't you have 'em?" for in her surprise she had fallen back on her vernacular. Then she remembered her role and consulted her book.

"Nothing doing. No end of gesticulations on the part of the waiter.

"Nice country where one can't get fried oysters," piped the woman, and she added, "I wonder why?"

"You can get 'em, ma'am," said a man's raucous voice at an adjoining table. He continued: "You ordered fried babies, and they don't serve 'em in this part of the republic. The word 'chiquitas' means babies, a term of endearment, but you're all O. K. as to the fritas. If you had asked for 'ostras fritas' the order would have gone through all right."

"And she ordered 'em, though she looked daggers at the stranger, who was a New Yorker and had lived in Mexico for twenty years.

"It was the same sort of woman," continued the traveler, "who tried to air her Spanish by asking the amount of her bill after she had taken her dinner in a restaurant in the City of Mexico. With a bland smile she addressed the head waiter with 'Como mucho?' intending to ask how much.

"Now, the word 'como' not only means 'how,' but also 'I eat,' so that the woman had remarked to the waiter, 'I eat a good deal.' This was as much as to say that the dinner was so good that she had eaten all or more than she ought. In fact, it was a compliment and such a compliment as is highly appreciated in any Latin country.

"With a deep bow the servitor expressed his delight that his humble viands should have found approbation in the sight of the most excellent senora. It was expressed in the choice phrases that so readily lend themselves on such occasions through the Castilian tongue.

"But my lady didn't understand a word of the lingo. She meant business, and she repeated in a louder tone: 'Como mucho? Como mucho?' She was sure of her correct Spanish, but somehow she couldn't get the waiter to do anything but bow and scrape and smile.

"The puzzle was solved when the proprietor, hearing the excited voices, entered and learned that the lady merely wanted to pay her bill. Had she known that not 'Como mucho?' but 'Que es la cuenta?' (What is the account?) is the correct expression she would have been saved trouble and mortification.

"Time and again United States consuls have set forth in federal publications the advantages of a real knowledge of Spanish to the business man. The need is growing more emphatic with every day, as our relations in trade are growing with Mexico daily. But I guess that federal publications don't hit the people at large as a general rule.

"One of the easiest ways to learn a foreign language is to read good novels in that tongue. You get so interested in the story that you just have to go on to the end to learn whether the hero and heroine come out all right.

"Students of Spanish don't adopt that method in New York. I guess, for you can't find any Spanish novels on the secondhand bookstore tables up or down or across the city. The only specimens I have found have been Spanish novels translated from the French novels. It is strange, too, for there are many excellent novels nowadays by Spanish writers.

"Of course an instructor is needed to obtain the correct pronunciation, but on visiting Mexico with a good, ready knowledge of the language you can soon acquire the needed pronunciation. In fact, you have to do it in order to get along."—New York Sun.

Any coward can fight a battle when he's sure of winning, but give me the man who has pluck to fight when he's sure of losing.—George Elliot.

HUMORIST'S ODD GRAMMAR.

Captain Derby Provided Literally For Figurative Expression.

Among the pieces which made up the quaint output of Captain Derby, whose too early death deprived America of one of the most original humorists, was one entitled "A New System of English Grammar." It seems never to have attracted much attention; but, though there are in the volume containing it articles more broadly amusing, there are none in which wit and wisdom are more fully blended. After the lapse of years the exact words and the particular illustrations employed escape me in part, but the line of reasoning adopted will not vary materially from what is about to be given.

The humorist proposed to have all descriptions and epithets marked on a sufficient scale of comparison—not the beggarly three to which we are now limited, but to a number large enough to indicate every variation of character in the object under consideration and every possible degree of human conception in regard to its nature. The lowest conceivable amount of any human quality consistent with its being at all would be indicated by 1. Its maximum would be represented by 100. Here, then, would be a wide range between the perfection of the idea expressed by the one number and its bare existence merely implied by the other, as well as the feelings of the speaker about it, in which all shades of thought and feeling would be fittingly represented. By prefixing to each epithet a figure between 1 and 100 the precise truth in regard to it as it appears to him uttering it would be conveyed to him hearing it. For example, you are asked about your health. Instead of replying pretty well, tolerably well, very well or some other ambiguous expression, you would say, bearing in mind that 100 indicates perfect health, I am 15, or 50, or 75, or 90 well, or any other number, as the case may be. By this means the inquirer learns definitely what he wants to know. He has not been put off with formulas of speech whose general applicability to different conditions of bodily health conveys nothing precise to the mind. The moment this method of expression comes into general use we shall speedily become exact, mathematical, truth telling in the highest degree.

How well the rule would work can be best illustrated by the narrative of a simple incident of news communicated by a man to his friend in some such words as these:

"On a 76 fine morning I was 55 slowly walking down the 33 clean avenue when I chanced to meet the 22 young and 85 charming Miss Smith, about whom you ask. We at once exchanged the 91 usual meteorological observation. 'It is a 76 beautiful day,' I remarked. 'Indeed, it is a 95 beautiful day,' she replied, 'and I am 97 glad to have met you, for it is a 99 long time since I have seen you.' I felt 77 flattered by words like these coming from a 79 lovely girl, but proceeded to make the 71 usual inquiries about her health, for I knew that on that point you had been 89 anxious. She told me in reply that it had been 78 poor, but she was 100 glad to say that it was now 87 good."—Professor J. E. Lounsbury in Harper's Magazine.

A Large Salary.
Mr. X., a prominent lawyer of Philadelphia, was much addicted to the habit of lecturing his office staff, and the office boy came in for an unusual share of admonition whenever occasion demanded and sometimes when it did not. That his words were appreciated was made quite evident to Mr. X. one day when a conversation overheard on the elevator between Tommy and another office boy on the same floor was repeated to him.

"Whatever wages?" asked the other boy.

"I get \$10,000 a year," said Tommy.

"Aw, gwan!" ejaculated the other boy derisively. "Quitcher kiddin'."

"Honest, I do," said Tommy; "\$4 a week in cash and the rest in legal advice."—Harper's Weekly.

Blenheim.
A very "famous victory" was that of Blenheim, which is our corruption of Blindheim, the village on the upper Danube where John Churchill won his dukedom, his magnificent palace in Oxfordshire and his yearly pension of £5,000. This is still enjoyed by his heir, the present Duke of Marlborough, who annually places a French fleur-de-lis flaglet over the bust of his ancestor in the guardroom of Windsor castle, the condition of his tenure of the estate of Blenheim.—London Answers.

The Comparative Method.
Theodore had twice been sent to wash his hands and was now returning for the second inspection.

"My child," said his mother, comparing the two hands critically, "your right is just as dirty as your left. What have you been doing all this time?"

"Why, mamma," explained the youth, "last time you said that my left hand was cleaner than my right, so I tried to make them even. I'll go again."—Youth's Companion.

Her Regret.
The Nobleman—You bought me—bought me as you would buy a hat. The Heiress—Yes, and what I'm sore about now is that I neglected to wait for my change.—Cleveland Leader.

Chagrin.
Louie—Uncle, what's chagrin? Uncle—Well, it's what a stout man feels when he runs and jumps on a car that doesn't start for half an hour.—Chicago News.

Success is the child of safety.
Disraeli.

LEGAL WORD SPECIALISTS.

Have to Know Exact Shade of Meaning in Words and Phrases.

"Some people seem to think that an important legal document can be drawn up by a lawyer in the time it takes his client to smoke a cigar," remarked a gray haired law clerk the other day. "It takes time and the most scrupulous care to get things just right. If lawyers were not careful the Lord only knows where the clients would land.

"Why, I know a man in one of the great law offices who is a specialist in the exact shade of meaning of each word or phrase used in a legal document. Nothing goes out of that office without being submitted first to him to pass upon. Sometimes he will give a week to the study of but one short but very important paper, theorizing as to the possibilities of its meaning being construed this way and that. When he gets through with a document, however, and has submitted every word of it to the acid test there is practically no chance of its not being exactly right, as to its verbiage at least. In some cases, too, it is deemed desirable by clients to becloud the meaning of a contract so that there is a loophole for its being construed in another way in the event of certain contingencies occurring. That is where the services of an expert word juggler are indispensable.

"The biggest case that I ever heard of in this line was when one of the great corporations wished to issue some mortgage bonds against its property. A long contract had to be drawn, and the wording on the back of the bond had to be decided upon. The matter was so important that, after the attorneys themselves had decided on the forms to be used, it was turned over to two of these experts in verbiage.

"They looked up the dictionary meaning of practically every word used in the two documents and made innumerable changes and suggestions. Before the papers were finished thirty different drafts of each of the two documents had been made, and there was not a word used in the final form of the papers that had not been considered carefully, not only as to its individual meaning, but also as to its individual relation to the other words of the phrase or sentence containing it. It is safe to say that these two documents are never likely to be assailed successfully in a court of law and that they mean exactly what the corporation and its counsel wished them to mean."—New York Press.

ABOVE THE LAW.

Courts Have No Jurisdiction Over Foreign Ambassadors.

The chief of an embassy is an august being and one who boasts some remarkable privileges. It may be mentioned to begin with that in the land in which he is officiating an ambassador ranks immediately after the princes of the blood royal.

The ground on which an embassy stands is in theory as well as in practice the territory of the nation to which its principal occupant belongs. Even if a criminal were harbored in an embassy the police could not enter the premises without permission.

An ambassador is above the law of the country to which he is accredited. The courts have no jurisdiction over him, and, strangely enough, his subordinates and even his domestic servants are also inviolate. The humblest employee in the embassy if he committed a punishable offense could not be arrested without the consent of his master, nor can an embassy official be imprisoned for debt.

Ambassadors are to be envied most of all perhaps for their freedom from the burden of taxation. They disburse not one penny in taxes, either directly or indirectly, and, as for the custom house, it is nonexistent so far as they are concerned. No duty whatever is charged in respect of wines, cigars, cigarettes, etc., that are consigned to them.

Again, their excellencies need not bother about taxes unless they please. That they do so is purely an act of grace on their part. They are not legally exempt from these tantalizing demands on the purse, but if they declined to meet them there would be no means of enforcing payment.—Cassell's Journal.

If All Candidates Wore White.

The word "candidate" is from the Latin "candidatus." Literally it means white robed, and it was thus called because in Rome those who sought office wore a glittering white toga. Fancy, if you can, all our modern Americans dressed in accordance with their political ambitions. In some sections there would be no such thing as a dark suit of clothes. Washington would simply be a shining center of universal whiteness.—Saturday Evening Post.

Costs Sometimes.

"Politeness costs nothing," said the one who had been so kind.

"I guess," answered Mr. Cumrox, "that you never had any experiences with these cafe waiters who regulate their politeness by the size of the tip."—Washington Star.

Net at a Loss.

Miss Azure Hose (from Boston)—Is your doctor's strong point diagnosis? Mrs. Jones (from Plainville)—No, I guess it 'tain't. Leastwise, he don't never prescribe it much.—Baltimore American.

Diplomacy.

Maud—Do you mean to say that you actually proposed to him? Belle—Yes; but, my dear, he was so dreadfully rattled I made him believe he did it himself.—Boston Transcript.

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