

who had a bushel basket in reserve, even agreeing to pay her for the basket; but she only shook her head, and wagged the forefinger, saying, "*No, señora, no puedo*"—"No, madame, I cannot"). A woman held in her hand a corn husk, which she waved continuously up and down. On examination, I found it was butter rolled up snugly, which she assured me was "*fresco sin sal*"—"fresh, without salt". A new revelation, but in the course of time I learned to appreciate this primitive method, and that in this climate salt was a hindrance to its preservation for any length of time. At last I became convinced of the perfect and complete fitness of things, and of their self-vindication.

In making the *tortilla*, the corn is first soaked for several hours in a solution of lime-water, which removes the husk. Then a woman gets down upon her knees and beats it for hours on the *metate*. Small pieces of the dough are worked between the hands, tossed and patted and flattened out, until no thicker than a knife-blade, after which they are thrown upon the steaming hot *comal*, a flat, iron affair something like a griddle. They are never allowed to brown, and are without salt or seasoning of any kind; but after one becomes inducted into their merits, they prove not only palatable, but they make all other corn-bread tasteless in comparison, the slight flavor of the lime adding to the natural sweetness of the corn.

There were *tamales* rolled up in corn husks, steaming hot and sold in numbers to suit the hungry purchasers. I found that this remarkable specimen of food was made, like the *tortillas*, from macerated corn. Small portions of the dough were taken in hand and wrapped around meat which had been beaten to a jelly and highly seasoned with pepper and other condiments. The whole was then folded snugly in a corn husk and thrown into a vessel of boiling lard.

When I witnessed this operation, the woman whose enterprise it was, began singing in a cheery voice and making crosses before the fire, saying, "If I don't sing, the *tamales* will never be cooked."

In my market experiences nothing imparted a greater zest than watching the multitude of homeless poor taking their meals all around the border of the market. All the compounds they ate were complete

mysteries; but before going home I had secured many of the various receipts from the venders. I found plain *atole* much the same in appearance as gruel of Indian meal, but much better in taste, having the slight flavor of the lime with which the corn is soaked, and the advantage of being ground on the *metate*, which preserves a substance lost in grinding in a mill.

*Tortillas*, likewise, lose their flavor if made of ordinary meal. *Atole de leche* (milk), by adding chocolate takes the name of *champurrado*; if the bark of the *cacao* is added, it becomes *atole de cascara*; if red chili,—*chili atole*. If, instead of any of these *agua miel*, sweet water of the maguey, is added, it is called *atole de agua miel*; if *piloncillo*, the native brown sugar, again the name is modified to *atole de piñole*.

The meal is strained through a hair-cloth sieve, water being continually poured on it, until it becomes as thin as milk. It is then boiled and stirred rapidly until well cooked, when it is ready for the market. As served to the wretched-looking objects who so eagerly consume it, one felt no desire to partake, but in the houses, there is nothing more delicious and wholesome than *atole de leche*.

All the stews, fries, and great variety of other edibles were patronized and dispatched with the greatest eagerness. *Barbacoa* is one of the principal articles of food known to the Mexican market—and is good enough for the table of a king. The dexterous native takes a well-dressed mutton, properly quartered, using also head and bones. A hole is made in the ground, and a fire built in it. Stone slabs are thrown in, and the hole is covered. When thoroughly hot, a lining is made of maguey leaves, the meat put in, and covered with maguey, the top of the hole is also covered, and the process of cooking goes on all night.

The next morning it is put in a hot vessel, ready to eat—a delicious, brown, crisp, barbecued mutton.

As the process is difficult and tedious, it is not generally prepared in the families, and even the wealthiest patronize the market for this delicacy, ready cooked.

From Pancho's manner I am sure he felt as if his vocation were gone, by the way I had overleaped the bounds of custom in finding out things for myself. Nevertheless, he managed now and then to give some of the venders an account of our house, its location, and my singular management. But though looking mystified, he never left me for a moment, no matter how long I talked, or asked explanations.

We went into the stores, Pancho keeping between me and the crowd. The shopkeepers were as much surprised and as curious as the people in the streets, to see me marketing. But when the crowd of idlers closed up around me, they were polite and solicitous to know if the "procession" annoyed me.

The arrangement of the merchandise and the method of trafficking elicited an involuntary smile from me at every turn; so, if the merchants, clerks, and the "procession" found fun at my expense, I was no less amused at theirs.

Dozens of *mosos* bought from them, in my presence, a table-spoonful of lard, which the agile clerk placed on a bit of brown paper for transportation; three or four lumps of sugar, a tlaco's worth of salt, the same of pepper, were all taken from immense piles of these articles, near at hand, wrapped and ready for the purchaser.

Dainty china tea-cups hung closely together by their handles on the edge of every shelf, and up and down the walls in unbroken lines; but not a saucer was in sight, nor could a dish be had at any price.

Anticipating that I would take a tlaco, medio, and real's worth, like the *mosos*, the clerk took in his nimble fingers a few of the little packages; but my extraordinary announcement despoiled him of his ordinary sales.

Every eye was upon me when I had the temerity to ask for twenty pounds of sugar, ten pounds of coffee, and a gallon of vinegar. Sugar and coffee were abundant, but the vinegar was in bottles. He handed me one with a flourish, saying, "*Vinagre de Francia*. We have no other." I began to feel that far-away France had become my ally, having, like me, made an invasion on the "costumbres;" the

only difference being, that the vinegar bottles were jolted on the backs of meek burros, or in carts, a thousand miles, and I had arrived, safe and sound, by diligence.

I asked: "Have you ham?"—"No hay" (pronounced *eye*), ("There is none").

"Pickles?"—"No hay."

"Powdered sugar?"—"No hay."

"Crackers?"—"Tampoco" ("Neither").

"Salt?"—"Si hay" ("Yes, there is some").

"Coffee?"—"Si hay."

"Frijoles?" (beans)—"Tambien" ("Also").

"Candles?"—"Si hay."

"Potatoes?"—"Ya no hay, se acabaron" ("They are finished—all gone").

Going to market, a matter-of-fact affair in the United States, resolved itself into a novel adventure.

The heterogeneous assemblage of goods, and the natural and artificial products of the country, astonished me equally with the strange venders. There was so much that was at once humorous, pitiable, and grotesque, all of which was heightened when I reached home, and observed quite a number of the "procession" in the rear. Once over the threshold, Pancho slammed the door in their faces, saying, "*Son pobres todos, y sin verguenzas!*" ("They are all poor and without shame").

Every day the strange enigma unfolded itself before me, with accrued interest. My lot had been cast among these people, when in total ignorance of their habits and customs. My aim and purpose, above all things, was to establish a home among them on the basis of the one left behind. The sequel will show how well I succeeded. But while endeavoring to cope with the servants, and comprehend their peculiarities, I found nothing more amusing.

Our Mexican friends made daily visits to the house, and were always ready to enjoy with me the latest humorous episode furnished by the servants. I was often assured by these friends that the oddi-

ties of their *mozos* and other servants had not occurred to them, as so striking, until my experiences, together with my enjoyment, had presented them in a new light; and that for them I had held the mirror up to nature. This was only possible by keeping up an establishment, and making one's self part and parcel of the incidents as they occurred. From this and the two succeeding chapters, it may seem that I was constantly involved in annoyances and disagreements with the servants; but such was not the case. Inconveniences more than can be named, were mine in the Sisyphean task of establishing an American home in Mexico, but if the reader can picture a perpetual treat in noting the strict adherence of the *mozos* to inbred characteristics, surely that privilege was mine.

As time goes on, and I no longer come in actual daily contact with them, in gay retrospect I see moving about me the phantom parade of blue-rebozoed women and white-garbed *mozos*.

Variety of scene and character was never wanting. If the interior workings of the household failed to interest me, I had only to turn and gaze through my barred window upon the curious street scenes.

On Saturdays, beggars were always out in full force, and on these days my time was mainly occupied in conversing with them, thereby obtaining many threads in the web I was hoping to weave. A very old man, stooped and bent with age, applied to me for alms, when I asked his age. "Eleven years," he replied. "Oh!" I said, "that is a mistake. Why do you think you are only eleven?"—"Because I was a little boy when the Americans came." From that date—as I understood it—life was over to him and mere existence remained; added years had accumulated, but he was still a boy. I soon found that this class dated every notable event from either the cholera, the advent of the French, or the coming of the Americans.

An American negro was a welcome sight on one of these occasions, and his, good old-time familiar darky dialect, together with the sight of his kinky head, was refreshing. He stopped in front of my window, saying: "Well, now, mis', what is you a doin' heah? 'Marican white ladies neber likes dis country; dey isn't yo' kin o' people."