

Smaller rooms are used by the family informally.

The table linen, of finest texture, includes cloths with monogram elaborately embroidered at either end, and napkins for every possible use, many representing the talent, industry, and ingenuity of the women of Mexico, being hemstitched, embroidered, or ornamented with that original lace—the drawn-thread work—for which they are famous.

While on the subject of needle-work, I must mention that I was shown about thirty of the most elegant bed-spreads on which my eyes ever rested. They consisted of velvet, silk, satin, plush, lace, crochet, with various kinds of embroidery as center-pieces; all quite adequate to arouse feelings of lively admiration. The sheets, of snowy linen, are hemstitched and embroidered, sometimes several inches in depth. The pillow-cases correspond in style, the whole forming a collection of rare needle-work which seemed to amount to thousands of pieces.

The sleeping apartments, in addition to every article of luxury and ease, are furnished with single brass bedsteads, over each of which is suspended a canopy of delicate lace, caught up with flowers and bright ribbons, forming a veritable bower.

The *sala grande* bears evidence of an immense expenditure, every thing being of European importation. In size it corresponds with the dining-room. The carpet is shaded from pale pink to bright crimson; the furniture in frames of gold, upholstered in the same shades of the carpet. Grand chandeliers costing thousands of dollars are suspended from the ceiling; mirrors and sconces are arranged on the walls, and lace curtains of daintiest weft shade the windows. In this apartment I again encountered the beautiful hand embroidery of Doña Josefina, the noble and lovely wife of General Palacio, in the chairs, ottomans, and hassocks, all executed in the finest Japanese designs, some of which she told me had occupied her time for six months.

I must also mention the ceilings of this mansion. Some 30 feet in height, they rest on heavy beams of wood, laid crosswise of the room, each one perhaps 18 inches in depth, the whole giving an effect of massive grandeur. The beams are tinted to correspond

with the ceilings and walls, and ornamented with lines of gold. These lines also panel the walls, and outline doors and windows.

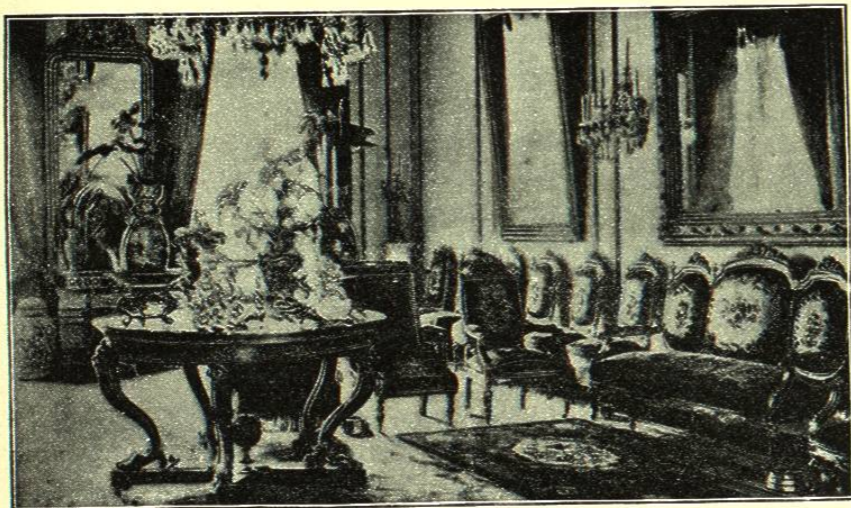
The *azotea*, a notable feature in the architecture of the Aztecs, still adorns these square-topped buildings. At the capital they are constructed of brick, and form a delightful promenade at all seasons. As the houses are joined together, one may walk over the entire square, as I had the pleasure of doing.

The study of General Palacio contains, perhaps, one of the finest collections of books and manuscripts in the republic. He possesses a large number of the original documents of the Inquisition handsomely bound; also a valuable foreign library, comprising books in many languages. The door of the case containing the books of the Inquisition opens over a winding stairway, and the carpet is fitted to a nicety over the semicircle which opens and closes with the door, giving ingress and egress to the private study below. When the General opened the door of this case, I came near going headlong below, and the thought flashed through my mind that I was verily descending to the vaults of the Inquisition, not knowing that the door of the book-case was also that of the dark stairway. I was, however, rescued by my friends, and made the descent in the usual way. I would here remark that these spiral stairways are a prominent feature of Mexican architecture.

In the room below there is a handsome case containing the swords of General Francisco Xavier Mina and Vicente Guerrero; the feathers—pink and white—worn by the Emperor Iturbide on his hat when entering the city in 1821; a bronze cast of Napoleon; and the original sentence of Picaluga, who betrayed Guerrero into the hands of his enemies, besides many Indian curios and bric-à-brac. In another room were the chair of Hidalgo and the saddle that Maximilian rode the day he was captured.

Some idea of the immense collection of books, manuscripts, legal documents, and literary works of General Palacio may be gained, when I say that eight handsome rooms in this grand house are devoted exclusively by him to his scientific and literary pursuits—the large

study upstairs, from which we descended by means of the winding stairway, and seven rooms on the ground floor, running from the front windows on the sidewalk, along the *patio*, far to the rear. On the opposite side is the family theater, capable of seating two hundred persons, beautifully arranged and decorated. The drop-curtain and scenery are painted from native subjects. In the season a select company occupy the boards—sometimes varied by amateurs—and play to crowded houses of friends.



THE SALA GRANDE IN THE PALACIO HOME.

In the rear *zaguan*, a carriage is ever ready for the drive, while immediately behind this is an exquisite fairy-like grotto, with its fountain, creeping tropical vines and gorgeous flowers, distinctly visible from the sidewalk through the open doors. On one side are various baths, and still beyond, sewing rooms; while on the other are the numerous servants' rooms, all neat and well kept. Beyond these is the vast laundry, then the stables containing stalls for many horses, all sleek and shiny, with vehicles of various kinds, the premises extending until halted by the rear street.

It may be interesting to know that the number of servants con-

stantly employed is thirty-five—among them three housekeepers—to say nothing of many extra ones who come in on special occasions. The family to be waited upon by this array of domestics consists of, at most, six members.

Externally the mansion presents the semi-feudal appearance so often seen here—a mass of solid, gray stone, indicating little of the extent and magnificence of the interior.

The love of music permeates all classes, and is cultivated equally by both sexes. Thoroughness is the rule, and memorizing is always required; the most difficult and prolonged recitals being rendered with brilliant execution without the score or a break. When asked to play, the musician complies at once, and if the guest expresses pleasure, will continue playing indefinitely.

On marriage the beautiful art is not given up; on the contrary, is practiced quite as much as before. In some delightful homes I have been agreeably entertained for hours at a time by the choicest musical duets rendered by an elderly man and his wife, the sons and daughters, and even the grandchildren, taking their places alternately at the piano.

I heard but little classic music, but the opera is popular and understood by all. In this, public taste is quite critical, Italian opera taking precedence. Opera bouffe is regarded as highly immoral, although the ballet is universally popular, and introduced between the acts of grand opera. English opera is regarded as a compromise between them. A young Mexican friend of mine quaintly classified Italian opera as *blanca* (white or pure); English, *color de rosa*; and opera bouffe, *muy colorado* (highly colored).

An enterprising manager, not a great while since, attempted to present on alternate nights grand opera and opera bouffe. On grand opera nights every seat and box was filled with the wealth and fashion of the capital, while on opera bouffe nights they sang to almost empty houses. If any laxity of morals exists in private life, immoral and corrupting plays are certainly discouraged on the boards.

The native airs breathe a passionate sweetness, uniting with the

tender minor tones the high staccato movement and the short, quick rest—a style to be observed both in the voice and instrument.

A marked difference may be noted in the melodies of the plains and low country and those of elevated and mountainous regions—the former being soft and pathetic, while the latter breathe the exhilarating spirit of the hills.

The finely attuned national ear for music assists greatly in the acquirement of foreign languages, for which their aptness is remarkable. I have been in families where English, French, and Italian were spoken quite as fluently as the native tongue. In this respect they excel our own country people. Their linguistic culture is practical, while our students generally neither have nor make opportunities for speaking in foreign tongues.

Closely connected with music and languages is the poetical faculty, which seems equally inherent. It comes out on any occasion, with surprising readiness, in little tender sentimental effusions, or graceful compliment—tone and gesture having added emphasis in delivery.

Diminutives are universally employed, and the *cita* never sounds so sweetly as when murmured by infant lips in *mamacita* and *papacito* (dearest or darling mamma and papa). The names we are accustomed to use in a formal manner sound sweet and pathetic in their simpler adaptation, as heard in Mexican homes. Aunt Julia, in our prosaic idiom, becomes Julita—pronounced *Hulita*, little Julia—*tia* (aunt) being entirely omitted. Everybody is called by the Christian name, regardless of age or position in society.

Nothing is more melodious in Mexican homes than the terms *te* and *tu* (thee and thou). The pronoun you, *usted* (written *V.*), is not used in the family, nor with intimate friends, *te* and *tu* being expressive of confidence. I have been corrected by heads of families for thoughtlessly addressing some of them as *you*, instead of placing myself in their inner circle, sharing its most sacred privileges.

In the endearing expressions, "*Tu me quieres á mi?*" ("Lovest thou me?"), "*Yo, te quiero á ti*" ("Yes, I love thee"), the pronouns are repeated for emphasis.

Another way of putting it is, "*Me queres tu?*" ("Lovest thou me?"), "*Si, te quero*" ("Yes, I love thee"). Still other loving expressions which are heard in Mexican homes every day are, "*Luz de mis ojos*" ("Light of my eyes"), and "*Idolo mio*" ("My idol"), "*Mi corazoncito*" ("My heart's treasure"), and "*Vida mia*" ("My life"), all having an added zest by the speaker's tender manner.

In the baby language of mothers, nothing is sweeter than these



CORRIDOR IN THE PALACIO HOME.

expressions. Intonations vary in different localities. At the capital the rising inflection is generally heard, the voice running on an upward sliding scale—the marked rising inflection—as *nō*, *Buēnō*, with pleasing effect.

Great delicacy is always exercised in speaking of ages. In one part of the country, one a little advanced in years, or even quite old, is called *viejito* (a little old). In the choice society of the capital this term is considered wanting in good taste; *un poco grande* or *grandicito*

(a little large) is usually employed, but the phrase carries conviction with it.

One highly commendable trait is, that Mexicans will not say disagreeable things to you, either on their own account, or repeating what others may have said. I have been told that the women are much given to gossip; but if true, I have not heard them, as they are careful never to speak unkindly or slightly of their countrywomen in the presence of strangers. The possible failings of their own people are carefully held in reserve; and the most critical remark I heard one woman make of another was, that she was "*muy buena, pero para pura buena no serve*" ("very good, but to be purely good, and no more, was of no value"), a nice discrimination between negative and active goodness!

"*Muy Mexicano*" ("Very Mexican") is another phrase used in the same way, referring to something slow, or out of accord with the feelings and sentiments of the speaker.

"*Muy mal criado*" ("A very bad servant") expresses great contempt. Sometimes, however, it is used humorously, as when a child teases its mother, or a friend insists on the conferring of some little favor at an inconvenient season.

In the arts of the toilet the señorita is fully up with her Anglo-Saxon sisters; indeed, it may truthfully be said she is ahead of them. Paint, whitening lotions, and dentrifices are used freely. But no women excel them in the care of the hair, that "glory" of woman, and its wonderful length, its silky, luxuriant softness, amply compensate them for their pains.

Houses built before the days of modern conveniences are not provided with baths, but comfortable and luxurious public baths—warm and cold—for all classes exist everywhere. It is here the señorita, at least once a week, uncoils her lovely tresses, and washes thoroughly both hair and scalp, then, with towel pinned around her shoulders, and hair flowing in unconfined ripples from crown to tip, goes through the streets to her home with no more concealment than if returning from church.

Señoritas are universally known in plain English as chickens. If very young, they are *pollitas* (little chickens). If twenty or more years, the graver and more prophetic term *polla* (grown or big chicken) is applied.

An opportunity was given me of hearing an amusing adaptation of the term:

A number of ladies were arranging to give an entertainment for a charitable purpose. All had stated what they would contribute, save one, who had remained silent throughout. But when a lull came in the conversation, she quietly remarked she would bring the *pollas y pollitas*. The merriment spread like contagion, for she had three marriageable daughters.

On another occasion, at a fashionable dinner party which I attended at the capital, Guillermo Prieto was also a guest.

The venerable poet sat at the extreme end of the long table beside a blooming señorita, who was evidently entertaining the old gentleman to the best of her ability. A charming, middle-aged señora sat near me, and when the conversation flagged, she turned and said, naïvely, "*Oye! oye* (hear! hear)! Guillermo! You like those *pollitas* much better than the *pollas*!" To which he replied, "*Naturalmente* (naturally), there is nothing prettier or sweeter than a *pollita*!" An expression of taste which could not be described as national.

But these lovely *pollitas* never experience the pleasures of our *débutantes*. From thirteen years of age they may be candidates for matrimony, but such an event crowning their entrance into society as a winter in Washington would be as foreign to their ideas and impressions of real young ladyhood as their Romeo and Juliet love-making from the balcony or barred windows to our young ladies. So they are always out, and yet never out!

*Solteras* or *doncellonas viejas* is the term applied to old maids. While no derogation attaches to this position, yet often much sport is made at the expense of those who may in any way render themselves odious and disagreeable. "*Muy fastidiosa*" ("very fastidious," or "a little difficult to please") is politely applied; or "Very

good to dress the saints," meaning, that they are always at church, and, having nothing else to do, dressing saints is a proper occupation for them.

Thirty years are allowed a señorita ere she is launched on that monotonous *soltera* journey; and they are to be found as often in wealthy as in plainer families.

Bachelors are quite common, and they also have their special names. Sometimes *solterones*, at others, *solterones perniciosos* (bad or pernicious unmarried men). A Mexican lady said to me, "Life to the *solterones* is never bleak nor desolate. They keep up their houses and have everything about them that contributes to their happiness!"

Young marriageable men are called *gallinos*, older ones, *gallos* (young and old roosters). And those tireless, idle young men who stand on the streets habitually, watching the señoritas on their way to mass or to shop, are called by the appropriate name of *lagartijos* (lizards), because they are always in the sun.

Foreigners are not long in sorting these out from the multitude, as they make it a rule to stare one out of countenance.

They compare with the idlers of all countries, and are not a whit behind them in deportment and dress—even the eyeglass is not wanting.

A natural and, it would seem, national source of pride to the Mexican, is his small and elegantly formed foot, and, not satisfied with its original graces of slender form and arched instep, he compresses its size by wearing tight-fitting, high-heeled, and pointed-toed shoes.

Apropos of this little display of personal vanity, shared by both the sexes, I may repeat what a lady of great culture and refinement told me in plain words, that while her husband was handsome, good, and kind, yet, had he not possessed the most perfect foot she ever saw, never would she have married him!

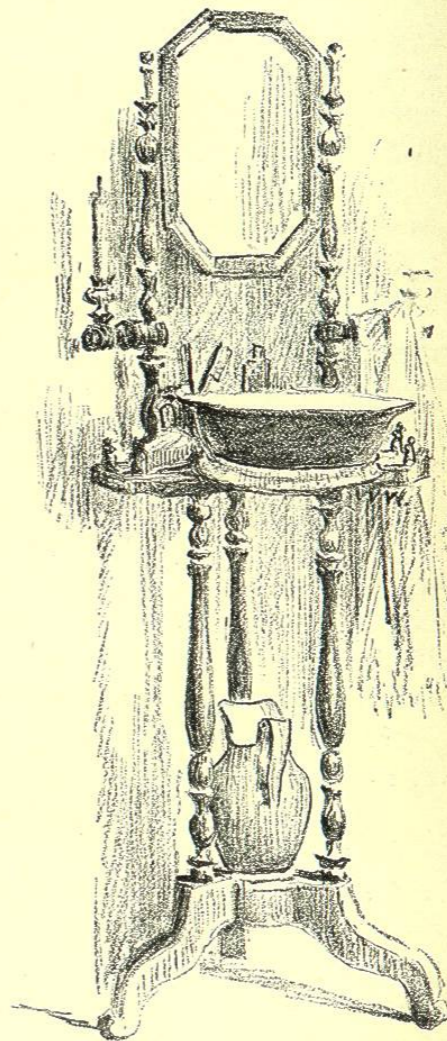
The women are by no means migratory in their habits. Indeed, with few exceptions, they do not travel in their own country. They

have no seaside resorts nor watering-places kept solely for recreation; the change to a hacienda or to a quiet village being the chief portion of their knowledge and experience in that line.

The increased facilities for travel do not offer sufficient inducements to them to leave their homes.

One charming woman, whose acquaintance I formed at Morelia, said to me that she had never been ten miles beyond Morelia but once in her life. This was a trip to the capital after her marriage. Then she only remained one day, which was spent in weeping so violently, and in entreating her liege lord to take her home again, that he was only too glad to do so without delay.

The boarding-house, as it is known to us, is entirely unknown in Mexico, so that in cases of financial difficulty or other misfortune, ladies do not assume the care and management of such establishments. I only know of one instance where a lady, suddenly reduced from affluence to poverty, had recourse to this method of gaining a livelihood. Now and then one may encounter a *casa de huéspedes*, where furnished rooms are rented, but this is the extent of such business by women. And it is safe



WASHSTAND IN A MEXICAN HOUSE.

to estimate that scarcely one out of ten thousand señoritas has ever found herself inside either a hotel or boarding-house.

Indeed, so deeply rooted is the feeling against any kind of publicity in the domestic life, that it is not considered etiquette for a lady, married or single, to visit in hotels.

Foreigners are attracted by the tender, kindly manner of the señoritas, and frequently choose their life partners among them. But, though loyal and devoted wives, as is well known, the fewest instances are on record where they have been successfully transplanted to another soil. They will not quarrel to carry their point, but sooner or later they will and must return to their native land. The women of other countries may fill a wider sphere, but there is no climate nor customs like their own.

A parallel is found by transplanting the American woman to Mexico, and the Mexican woman to the United States. The one sighs over her lack of freedom, while with the other, the excess of freedom is an untold burden. No charm or attraction can exist for her beyond the barred window and the circumscribed limits of the promenade, accompanied according to custom, by some female relative or servant.

The foreigner who contemplates seeking the hand of a señorita, should first arrange all business matters in his own country, bid adieu to kindred and friends; for when the event takes place linking his fate with that of the object of his affections, he must become in word and deed a Mexican, and be one of the family in every relation.

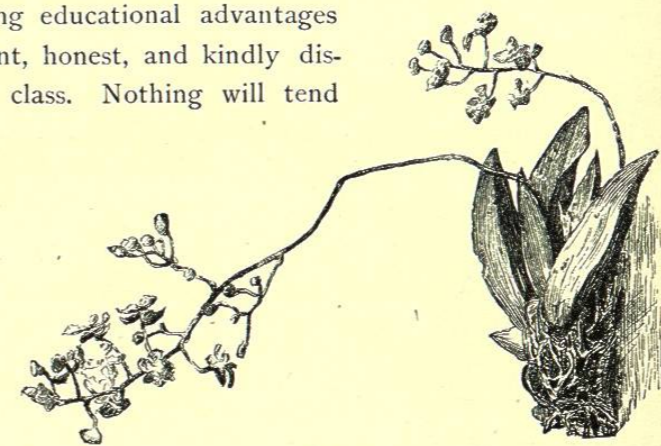
One noble trait is exemplified in the life of the Mexican woman who shares her worldly goods with either a foreigner or countryman. He may bring into his house his parents, his aunts, and his cousins, even as remote as the twenty-ninth cousin, and his wife will feel it only her duty and pleasure to be kind and tender, dividing with them her worldly possessions.

According to law, a girl is eligible for matrimony at fourteen. She is then as fully developed as an American girl at eighteen. Maturing thus early, marriage takes place, and from twenty-five to thirty-five, the

piquancy of youth waning, they arrive at a faded and premature age. The dearth of intellectual pursuits and the climate do their part in the metamorphosis.

The fine physical development among the women is particularly noticeable at the capital. Their beauty, however, grows upon and impresses one by degrees; their glorious soft eyes, glossy black hair, exquisitely shaped hands and arms and small feet are more admired the longer we observe them.

It is a pleasure to chronicle the fact that the government is now thoroughly aroused to the importance of giving educational advantages to the excellent, honest, and kindly disposed middle class. Nothing will tend more to make Mexico strong in herself and the sooner place her in the foremost ranks among nations, than the disposition she now man-



AN ORCHID.

ifests of being deeply interested in the education of the masses, and especially in that of the women. Industrial and normal schools and colleges are now in successful operation at many central points. In these they receive not only a practical education, but also instruction in the various branches of art by highly qualified masters.

Treated heretofore more like dolls, or ornamental adjuncts—and in a state of dependence—now, without fear of misconstruction, they may enter such avenues of art and industry as will support them independently. Every latent talent is being fostered and encouraged by the administrators of the law. Poor young girls, as well as boys, are pensioned by either their own State or the federal government, and

only a few years more will witness an upward and onward progressiveness heretofore unknown.

At home, also, their range of accomplishments is extended. Where formerly señoritas employed themselves in lacework and embroidery, they now cut, fit, and make their own dresses with taste and skill, copying closely European and American fashions, and taking much pleasure in the selection of the various styles.

During my sojourn at the capital, one young señorita graduated in dentistry. She began at once assisting her father, who was a dentist, in his office, the fact being announced in all the leading daily papers.

Happily the class which most needs this aid and encouragement is the one most benefited by it—the excellent, faithful, and hospitable middle class.

It need not be inferred that husbands interdict their wives from sharing intellectual enjoyments. Yet one—a distinguished man of letters—remarked to me that it was all very well for American women to walk along with the men in science and literature, but it would never do for Mexican women to know any place aside from the home, with its relation to husband and children. If so, they would at once grow unhappy and discontented.

A Mexican gentleman, who had lived a great deal in the United States, and appreciated the Americans as a people, freely admitted to me that he had made the “double mistake of marrying two American women.” If this remark savored of a lack of gallantry, it bore, however, a general truth, for the races are not, as a rule, suited to each other conjugally.

But some of the most majestic old dames it has ever been my fortune to know are among the Mexican women. They step as if descended directly from Montezuma, and the manner in which they uphold the dignity of their homes is something well worth seeing.

In neither sex is the slightest effort made to conceal age. Even young ladies on the shady side of an “uncertain age” do not seem aware that the least derogation attaches to that fact, but with a quiet unconcern state the exact number of their years.

Having so many servants, the lives of the women are much easier with regard to household labors than with us. There is no hurry—no necessity for it; but, though custom yields to *négligé* in the mornings, sacques and skirts, loose low shoes, and no corsets, hence no inconvenience as from the more formal toilet of our women, their maladies are quite as numerous. The lack of exercise, and excessive indulgence in rich, highly-spiced peppery food, may account for many ailments.

Children sum up, generally, ten, twelve, and sometimes as many as fifteen to eighteen in number, many not reaching maturity. In few instances do the mothers nurse their babes, the wet-nurse being “the power behind the throne.”

I was agreeably disappointed, however, to see so few instances of personal deformity. Near-sightedness is prevalent all over the country, and is accounted for by the excess of light outside and its deficiency, with lack of ventilation, in both homes and schools.

Mexico is an earthly paradise for children. The little monarchs hold high sway in the affections of the people; and from the moment they see the light it is a long hey-day of enjoyment and child-play. Expressions of the tenderest love are lavished on them without affectation, whether in the street, the house, or the shop, and, regardless of how many may have preceded him, the new baby is hailed with delight, and takes superior rank in the household.

No country can produce more marvelously beautiful, brighter, or more precocious children. They are happy by nature, and, though indisposed to quarrel with each other either in the house or street, yet somehow they manage to assert their rights.

The childish prattle in the sweet baby Spanish is melody itself, coming from these winning and most lovable little creatures. Beautiful Alfonso, the baby boy of Señora Calderon—a little more than two years old—came tapping at my door one day.

Opening it, I asked, “What do you want, precious one?” Taking my hand and looking archly in my face, he said, with baby incorrect-