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HOME LIFE IN MEXICO.

A Chapter Especially for the Ladies, Which Gentlemen are Expected to "Skip."

A Typical Mexican Case--Parlor and Bed-room, and the Furniture Thereof.

Court, Corral, Garden and Laundry.

Special Correspondence of THE BEE.

SALTILLO, ESTEDO COAHUILA DE ZARAGORA, October 4.—The wonder is that anybody ever gets married in Mexico. Not only are there the difficulties of courting "under the rose,"—of which I have told you—but marriage here means the expenditure of more money than the average youth can acquire till he has safely passed the age when most men care to brave the pains and perils of matrimony. In Mexico the prospective bride-groom must not only first purchase and furnish a house, but he must buy all the wedding trosseau,—even to the minutest small accessories of the toilet which may be needed for years to come, and is expected also to pay all the expenses of the wedding feast and subsequent festivities, and to make gifts to the bride's-maids, the bride's family, and all the immediate friends concerned. Fortunately for his depleted pocketbook there is no going off on wedding tours—the absence of railways having made that foolishness an impossibility,—but the married pair go directly to their new home on the wedding day and eat

THE FIRST CONNUBIAL

breakfast under their own vine and fig tree.

There is no such variety in the architecture and furnishing of homes here as in the United States, but one "casa" of the better class is almost an exact counterpart of thousands of others. Let us take a survey of this in which I am living, as it is a typical home of the well-to-do, substantial citizens. Like most others in this old city, our casa was built at least two hundred years ago, and its adobe walls, five feet thick, look capable of defying the storms of many centuries more. It has a great many rooms, built round and opening into the usual central court, which is paved (as they all are) with small, sharp stones that make us feel, when walking upon them like penetential pilgrims on the road to Mecca. In this court flowers blossom the whole year through—planted in adobe boxes elevated several feet above the ground. In the centre is the inevitable deep well, its adobe frame work draped with ferns and litchens,—and here too is generally an indescribable conglomeration of children and chickens, pigs and peacocks, cats and dogs, doves and donkeys, in vociferous confusion. Wooden floors are unknown in Mexico, all houses being paved either with large bricks, round or square, or with cement, which resembles polished stone. Woolen carpets are not much indulged in, except, perhaps, an occasional strip or rug. There is a native carpet, made from the fibres of the manguey, which resembles our hemp in texture, and which is painted after being woven, generally rose-pink, with dashes of purple and green. Strange to say, it delicate colors are fadeless. There is also a pretty and durable matting, an Indian manufacture, braided in large squares of shredded palm leaves and called

TAPALE.

But, really, these floors of polished cement, of a soft gray tint, or colored the usual strawberry red, are too beautiful to be hidden by unsightly stiff-figured Brussels or ingrain. Besides, the bare floors are more appropriate to this insect-breeding climate, and far more healthful and cleanly. But they have their disadvantages. The cement contains much saltpetre, which retains moisture eternally, and with the frequent abolutions these receive, are seldom perfectly dry. Mexican brooms are exceedingly primitive affairs, and a creada never succeeds without first deluging the premises.

However hot the days we have generally chilly nights here, and one feels like going to bed with his boots on rather than put his bare feet upon floors which are as cold as tombstones or the charity of the world. Every Mexican house has its "sala de recibo" (parlor) of more or less magnificence. It may not have much in it, but is always the largest room in the house, long and narrow. The artistic effect of the paved floors, with walls of either the natural grayish plaster left like "beauty unadorned," or painted, with dark frescoe outlines, is extremely pleasing to the eye. The Mexican housewife has other ideas than ours in the arrangement of her furniture. There are always straight rows of chairs and sofas, set stiffly against the walls all around the room. Although there are few occasions in life when so great a number of chairs could possibly be required, yet the family feels itself poor indeed who does not possess enough to reach in an unbroken line around the entire circuit of the sala. A triangular table is fitted into each corner, and in the center of the room is a larger one—round or oval—which has its lamp in the middle of a row of vases and china ornaments ranged at regular distances straight around the outer edges. This central table is generally covered with an enormous crocheted or knitted spread, which the lady of the house began when she was a child and finished for her wedding outfit, which represents years of patient labor, great expenditure of eyesight, and

HUNDREDS OF SPOOLS

of fine linen thread. There is a great dearth of brackets, easels, and the thousand and one little things which we delight in, but the corner stands are each loaded with lamps and empty vases, both of which are valued for ornaments rather than use. Artificial flowers sometimes enter into the decoration, but rare indeed is it to see one made by Mother Nature within doors. Chromos and engravings sparingly adorn the walls—for in these frontier States, owing to the enormous duties—a chromo which may be bought in New York, frame and all, for two dollars, is here almost as expensive as a decent oil painting. At the extreme end of the sala, farthest from the entrance, is invariably the same arrangement of furniture in every house—a rug, a square of carpet, with four or six chairs placed close together, vis-a-vis, upon it, looking like a little island in the sea of the big, bare room, bounded upon the one side by the sofa against the wall. When guests enter they are shown, with great ceremony, always to this particular spot, where the mistress of the house concentrates her forces, so to speak, as we understand the art of doing in spiritual seances and revival meetings.

The windows reach almost from floor to ceiling, are wider than doors, and always with wooden or iron bars before them. A comparatively few cases in Mexico luxuriate in window glass, but as the duty on that substance is simply outrageous, the vast majority dispense with it altogether. They have heavy inside shutters, like doors, not furnished with movable slats like ours, but open in the middle both ways. As Mexicans entertain the idea that windows were made to look in at as well as to look out of, the lower classes sometimes stand outside the bars and calmly look at you by the hour, and as curtains are not possible, the only way to secure the slightest degree of privacy is to close the lower half of the shutters when your household machinery is not on exhibition. The deep recesses these openings for windows form in the thick walls, afford ample room for placing chairs upon the ledges, and in them the family congregate in the cool of the day. In summer time all this is very pleasant; but when long cold rains come on (and they sometimes have a little snow in these higher altitudes) the absence of window glass is a great discomfort, for to close the shutters entirely means total darkness. In Saltello, Saletares, and other mountain cities, the winters are really cold, and how they bear them without any fires in their houses or protection from the outer air, is a mystery. There all the family, from oldest to youngest, wrap themselves in rebossas and zarapas, curl their feet up under them and

POSSESS THEIR SOULS IN PATIENCE,

for never having know any other mode of life, they do not dream of the possibility of making themselves more comfortable. Upon arriving in Mexico the first sight of these barred windows strikes the foreigner unpleasantly, and he is apt to feel himself in prison behind them, with the stone floor and iron bedsteads for suitable accessories. But in time he sees not only the convenience but the necessity of them, and by and by comes to feel an uneasy sense of insecurity if by rare chance he finds himself not thus protected. It must be remembered that the greater portion of Mexico is a land of perpetual summer, where of necessity the windows must be open both day and night. These iron or wooden gratings cannot be "picked" like locks, noiselessly, or cut like window glass, and the family may sleep with perfect security without closing a window. It is, however, well to remove one's effects from too close proximity, for the ladrones have a cheerful habit of throwing ropes, with hooks attached, between the bars, by which they dextriously draw out some of your garments—which perhaps gave rise to the vulgar phrase, "hooking things." It is no more than just to add that there is by far less thieving going on here than in the United States with all our spring locks and careful precautions to bring in even our doormats at night. I venture to assert that more things are stolen in New York in a single day than in all Mexico in a year.

I wish I could paint you right here a picture of the room which for many weeks has been my own especial sanctum. It is quite a grand apartment—for Mexico—and I have grown to love every article in it.

AS ONE CHAMBER

is a fair type of others, let me describe it to you. Its two ancient doors, guiltless of paint and garnished with enormous iron hinges and staples like those of a barn—open, one into the Sala de neibe and the other into the "hall," if we may so call the main entrance of a Mexican house, through which carts, donkeys and window looks out into the flowery court and is an object to delight the eye with its picturesqueness—the pale gray of its unpainted wooden bars relieved by a few wires clambering up outside, and a fine-leaved mesquit branch trailing carelessly across. I am blessed with the rare luxury of two yards of carpet, which my sole appreciates, I assure you between my slippers and those cold bricks. Here are chairs enough to seat the whole Mexican army, ranged in funeral rows against the walls, the usual corner tables loaded with lamps and vases and several quaint articles of furniture in solid mahogany which an antiquarian would long to possess. But the chief treasure, which would shine in any collection of ceramics in a y land, is the great water jar and bowl, of water pottery from Guadalahara—dark red, with strange figures painted upon them which it would be no sin to worship, they being not "in the likeness of anything in the heavens above or the earth below, or the waters under the earth." My little brass bedstead, whose slender frame work is polished till it glitters like gold, is draped and canopied like a French woman's, guiltless of springs, and with a matress to which a good soft bead would be a blessing. We have no quilts or blankets in Mexico, but a single counterpane of gorgeously flowered damask, fringed all around, and carefully disposed so as not to conceal the fine linen sheets which trail far below it, reaching to the floor. The pillows are not fat, square and soft, as ours are, but flat and narrow, each exactly as long as the bed is wide, like bolsters. Their crimson ticks are stuffed with cotton and the cases are the especial pride of the housewife, of the finest linen, with wide strips of crocheted or lace insertion set in at the sides and running the length of them, and much dainty needly work and lace ruffling at the ends. Over the various species of animals who occupy that couch conjointly with myself and dispute its possession—often gaining the day, or the night rather—it is well to discreetly

DRAW THE VEIL,

merely remarking that in this tropical clime other creatures than "the wicked flea" abound "when no man pursueth." Very sensibly trunks in this country are never set flat upon the floor and left to the tender mercies of mice and cockroaches, but are elevated upon racks made for the purpose. Every room in every case has its reminders more or less numerous of Catholicism, in crosses and pictured saints, and generally somewhere about the premises is a family altar with a wooden image of the Virgin and an exceedingly bloody and lugubrious Christ in perpetual crucifixion.

The chief beauty of this "home, sweet home," and of hundreds of similar ones in Mexico, is in its garden, though one would never mistrust its existence without a guide to first find it out. Past numberless other rooms, the kitchen and dining room (which we shall visit later), others for storage and Heaven knows what, through an arched passage and barred door, we emerge from the court into the corral. This big, bare yard, which answers all the purposes of a Yankee barn, is surrounded by an adobe wall as high as the house itself, being really a continuation of it. Here are greenish pools of mud in which swine are wallowing, the goats which supply us with milk, and stalls for the donkeys are arched into the wall at one side. No sign of

OUR BEAUTIFUL GARDEN

here; but climb some adobe steps, open a couple of heavy doors, wander through another walled passage, and presto! the scene is changed as if by magic! The garden is large enough for a small ranche, with acres of roses in perpetual bloom, the greenest of verdure, and old apple trees like those at home, under whose branches one might almost forget the dreary miles that lie between did not growing oranges, figs, bananas and alnacates remind one of "stern realities." Within those silent shades one is completely isolated from the world, and finds it hard to realize that all around lies a city which was hoary with age before our trusty infant, the United States, was born. No sound of human life or labor penetrates here; only the ringing of the cathedral bells falls softly upon the ear. Between the branches we catch glimpses of various church towers, each pointing with uplifted cross the Catholic's route to heaven, and mountain peaks which present ever-changing pictures of light and shade. In one corner of the garden is a large circular stone tank, five feet deep, which serves the triple purpose of bath, laundry and irrigating reservoir. Pipes and ditches conduct the water all over the grounds, and the overflow forms a shallow pool, beside which stand the small wooden trays piles of *amole* (the root used instead of soap), which are all the furnishings necessary for a Mexican laundry. FANNIE BRIGHAM WARD.

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BLONDE AND BRUNETTE BASE BALL.

A Spirited Game, in Which Back Hair, the Rules of the Game and the Young Ladies' Hose Became Demoralized.

Fifteen hundred people witnessed the game of base ball between two teams of girls at the Manhattan Athletic club's grounds in New York. There were eight girls on a side. One side was composed of brunettes and the other of blondes. The costumes were bathing dresses of the ancient and honorable order, the loose body had a long, flowing skirt, which reached below the knee. Stockings of the regulation style, base ball shoes, and white hats completed the outfit. The dresses were neatly but not gaudily trimmed with white braid. The hair was either coiled tightly at the back of the head or worn in in long plaits, tied up in ribbon of a color that pleased the wearer's fancy. Miss Williams, the blue pitcher, rejoiced in a natty blue and white cap, which gave her a business-like appearance.

These young ladies, as the management of the affair announced, were selected with a tender solicitude from 200 applicants, variety actresses and ballet girls being positively barred. Only three of the lot had ever been on the stage, and they were in the strictly legitimate business. One of them Miss Daisy Muir, short stop of the blondes, once played Eva in Uncle Tom's Cabin, and also once won a prize offered by a Philadelphia paper for the best reply to an offer of marriage. Most of the others were graduates of Sunday schools and normal colleges. They were of assorted sizes and shapes. Some were short and stout, some were tall and thin, others were short and thin, and still others were tall and stout. Four of the girls had become expert—for girls. These were Misses Evans, P. Darlington, Moore and Williams, comprising the batteries. The others, however, had original ideas. They realized the fact that when they got hold of the ball they ought to throw it, and they threw. They didn't stop to wonder where the ball was going, for they were sure that it would not go too far. Each one just raised her hand to the level of her ear and then sent it forward with a push from the elbow. The ball didn't seem to mind it much. At they bat the most of them preferred to strike at the ball after it passed them. Then it generally passed the catcher. First base was hot made oftener than fifteen times on three strikes. It was made just about as often on called balls. The girls displayed an alarming fondness for making home runs on three strikes, too. It was original, and excited rapturous applause. One thing was certain, they all knew the rules of the game. The blonde umpire, a young man, with a black hat which had a gaudy red band, did not rejoice in equal knowledge, and appeared somewhat disconcerted when a stentorian voice in the crowd demanded that a dress be put on him.

When the blues went to the bat, Miss P. Darlington, pitcher for the reds, who stood about twenty feet in front of the striker, proceeded to tie her black hair a little tighter. Then she put another hair pin in her hat, seized the ball recklessly, drew back her right arm, and let fly viciously. Miss Moore responded gracefully, by whacking a little grounder to first base. The first basewoman made a wild grab, but did not touch the ball, whereupon the runner got around to third, while the other side pegged the ball all over the field. Finally Miss Williams went to the bat and hit a daisy cutter to short stop, who promptly threw it as far as she could into the right field. Miss Moore ran home. The next striker, Miss Myers, made a one-base hit, which brought herself and Miss Williams home, owing to the futile attempts of the entire opposing nine to pick the ball up from the ground. The next three strikers were put out, and the brunettes went in. Miss Evans, who rejoiced in bright brown hair, was the genuine ball player of the party. She warmed one to right field and made her second. Then Miss P. Darlington went in and hit a fly to the quondam Eva, Daisy Muir. Daisy looked up at the bright blue sky, the wicked ball came down and hit her on the little finger, and a look of premature old age spread over her countenance. She picked up the ball and threw it away. Miss Darlington ran home. Miss Stanton and Miss Fenton made base hits, the latter getting around to third.

Then Mrs. Temple, the belle of the organization, came to the bat. She was tall, graceful, and had handsome dark eyes and a wealth of black hair. "Oh, Daisy!" "Oh, you darling!" "Oh, you sweet thing!" Such were her greetings from the crowd. She regarded them not, but, with her soul full of hope, poked away with the end of her bat at the first ball, and made first base on a masterly fumble by the pitcher. Miss Elliott then came up, and was accidentally put out on first. In the meantime Miss Fenton had run home on a foul and run back to third, and then finally scored. The determined manner in which the brunettes staid in seconded to sadden the blondes; but, after a series of surprises, they were put out. Score of the first inning: Blondes, 3; brunettes, 16.

It was a discouraging lead but the blondes did not weaken. They went in and by determined efforts succeeded in scoring two. They would have made a great many more, but Miss Evans, the brunette catcher, was a mean thing and would not indulge in passed balls like the other catcher, Miss Moore, who was a real nice girl. The best played inning for fielding was the brunette's third, in which their opponents allowed them to score only one run. Toward the end of the game the girls began to show symptoms of sadness and weariness, and doggedly refused to run from one base to another, until it became morally certain that the other side was hopelessly tangled up with the ball. Often, when the fielders could not stop the ball in any other way they sat down on it. This was at once effective and picturesque, and never missed gaining a great howl of applause. Once Miss Evans threw to second and put out Miss Brown. Then the crowd informed her she was a "dumpling" and a "corker." She looked as if she believed it. When five innings had been played and the back hair and brains of the girls appeared to be in a hopelessly demoralized condition, with a tendency on the part of their hose to follow suit, the game was called. The girls heaved long sighs of relief, started for the dressing rooms, and, "like a substantial pageant faned, left not a pin behind." The score was 54 to 22 in five innings in favor of the brunettes.

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Curious Immigrants to the Sandwich Island.

San Francisco Bulletin.

John Tucker, manager of one of the large plantations on the island of Hawaii, of the Sandwich Island group, arrived from Panama Thursday on the Pacific Mail steamship Colima, bringing with him thirty-six pairs of that curious and useful animal called the mongoose. Mr. Tucker was sent by the planters of Hawaii to Jamaica to procure the animals at a cost of about $1,500. The mongoose is similar to a weasel, and has proved of incalculable service in the island of Jamaica in ridding it of rats, which are so destructive to sugar cane. It has freed that island from the rat pest, and has also acted as a modern St. Patrick, and has destroyed every snake. One of the growing troubles in the Hiwaiian Islands is the rat pest. Cane is destroyed in the fields and great losses are entailed on the planters. Nothing seemed to be able to put a stop to this wholesale destruction, and it was determined to import the mongoose. Ten of the plantations combined, and Mr. Tucker was sent to Jamaica. In that island the mongoose had multiplied to such an extent that they are to be seen everywhere. They run across the roads, swarm in the fields, and are found everywhere. They are caught in box traps, as squirrels are, and are sometimes taught when young and tamed. The tame mongoose lives around the house like a cat. They are about the size of an ordinary rat, with a longer body and a tail similar to that of a cat. The untamed animals are savage little creatures, having a large and ugly mouth filled with sharp and listening teeth. They are fierce fighters, and their movements are like a lightning flash. When two of them are fighting in a cage it looks as though they were simply a shadow flitting about within.

It is said that whenever their teeth meet in flesh they cannot be made to let go their hold until either they or their prey is dead. The are the natural exterminators of rats, entering every rat hole and killing its inmates. They then make the rat's abode their own, never preparring a shelter for themselves. They live on animal food, and in Jamaica, now that the rats are gone and they have also exterminated many of the othey pests, they are killing manp of the negro's chickens. Mr. Tucker obtained 106 animals in Jamaica and put them in cages, in each apartment of which were placed a male and a female. He lost twenty of them before he left Jamaica through their proclivities to fight among themselves and to suck each other's blood. On the Panama railroad the employes treated the cages and their occupants as if they were cast-iron, and several more were lost. But seventy-two were got aboard the Colima, and since then none of the animals have died.

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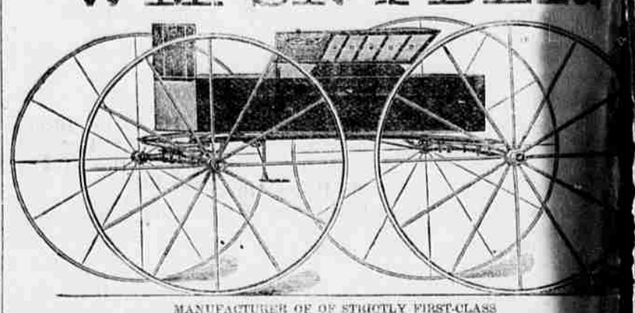

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