

Glimpses of Life in Mexico's Metropolis



PREPARING THE DAILY TORTILLA.



CARGADORS MOVING HOUSEHOLD GOODS.

CITY OF MEXICO, Dec. 16.—(Special Correspondence.)—The City of Mexico is nearly 2,000 miles further south than Omaha. It is about four times as large and seven times as high, being nearly 8,000 feet above the sea level. It has seen hundreds of years of history to Omaha's ten. Yet in many ways Omaha excels. While Mexico has many large, fine stores, they are not as up-to-date as those of Omaha.

After tramping around for half a day in search of some such simple articles as a ruling pen or 10-cent crash for kitchen towels, it would be a great comfort to step into some of the stores at home and find just what you want.

The City of Mexico, however, is indeed a city. With a population of over 400,000, many miles of electric car lines, its brilliantly lighted streets, it would compare favorably with any city of its size in the United States. Viewed from an aesthetic standpoint, there is but one thing lacking to make it a very beautiful city. Indeed, one cannot say that it is not beautiful, with its broad, clean, asphalt streets, its beautiful buildings, many of adobe, white or tinted in various shades; its hundreds of church spires that point upward toward the blue, blue sky. And on every side the towering mountains, some snow-capped, keeping guard over the city.

Yet the first thing one misses is the beautiful expanse of God's green and the lovely flowers—the "messengers of God"—that are so common in the home land and which one expects to find in abundance here in the tropics. Aside from a few very small parks, where one is never allowed on the grass, one never sees a green thing from the streets of Mexico.

Houses, which are never more than three stories high, are built straight up from the street, with never a porch or a foot of lawn. The nearest approach to a porch is a balcony on the second floor, which is built out a foot or two over the street. The windows on the first floor of the old houses are always protected by iron gratings, like a prison, which is a relic of the necessity of early days.

The family very seldom lives on the first floor, that is reserved for the servants and animals. One enters the house from the street through a great door onto the "patio," or court. This is paved and often made very pretty with potted palms, etc. The carriages drive right into this part of the house. To the back of the patio are the stables and servants' quarters. From the patio a broad stairway leads to the second floor, where are all the living rooms. These are all arranged around the



MEXICAN MOTHER WITH HER BABY, READY TO GO FORTH.

open patio and in the best houses are very pleasant. Sometimes there will be a beautiful garden back of the house inclosed by a high stone wall.

The common people, or "peons"—of which class there are so many—live in very different homes from the ones described. Their homes are dark, damp and cheerless, with many in one small room. They sleep there, but spend but little time there during the day. The father goes to his work very early in the morning. Mexico is known as a country of no breakfasts. They never eat more than a piece of bread and a cup of coffee. The mother straps the little one on her back with her "rebozo" and goes to her work, too. Often she has a little stand in the plaza where she sells

very uninviting looking cakes, tarts and pies. The baby is stowed away in a box under the stand, where he seems to be very contented. At noon the woman takes the dinner to her husband. She, with the children and her husband, sit down wherever they happen to be and spread out their dinner. Often it is on the pavement. The meal will consist of frijoles (kidney beans) cooked with an abundance of chili (red peppers), tortillas (a thin pancake of native cornmeal which the women grind themselves with two stones), and a pitcher of pulque, the common liquor. It is the fermented juice of the cactus and is the universal drink. They give it to their children from the baby to the oldest. The pulque shops are numerous.



"THEY OFTEN CARRY GREAT LOADS ON THEIR BACKS."

Living in such a manner as this, with such poor, cheerless homes, it is little wonder that one sees the plazas always thronged by the peons. It is a picturesque sight that one sees in the Alameda (plaza). The men, in huge sombreros, wear a sort of blouse, hanging loose in the back and drawn around to the front and tied in a knot; trousers which are made very tight down to the ankle, and from there flare out into a bell-shaped piece which is long enough to drag on the ground. These trousers are often made of two kinds of cloth and tucked in clusters of small tucks down each side. On their feet are sandals—that is, if they are not barefooted, which is often the case. In the morning and evening, when it is cold, they always have

their bright colored blankets around them. The women of this class never wear hats. They have their "rebozo," or shawl, around them always, and if it is cold they draw it over their heads. They are usually barefooted.

Often several women will sit in a group gossiping and enjoying their cigarettes with their babies in their arms. It is common to see a man and woman walking together, either or both smoking. Often the woman and not the man. Men, women and children all smoke.

There are dozens of little stands in the Alameda and along the streets where one can buy fruit, cakes and candies. Other more ambitious vendors carry trays around on their heads, crying out their various wares. It is as common to see women and little girls selling newspapers as to see men and boys. There are hundreds of persons of all sizes and sexes that peddle lottery tickets on the streets. The Mexicans are a great people to be always eating some little trifle, and no matter if the person has no shoes and the clothes are more patches than whole cloth, they stop at a stand and buy "un centavos" of "dulce."

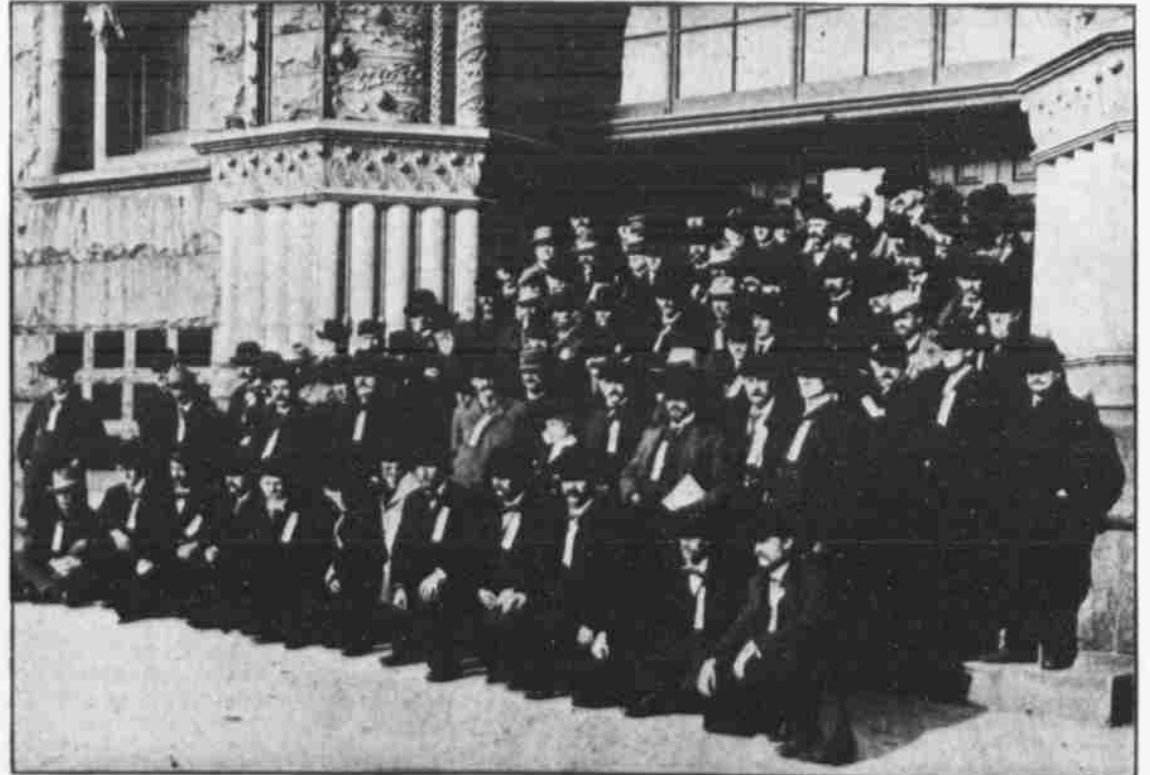
From childhood the men are trained for strength in their necks and backs by having stones strapped on them. When grown it is amazing to see the strength they possess. One man will carry enough for a wagon load. The "cargador" of a furniture house will carry a large-sized refrigerator, a mattress and several other things on his back at one time, and seem to enjoy it. They support these immense loads by means of a strap which passes over their foreheads and practically all the weight hangs from the head.

On Sundays and Thursdays the band plays in the Alameda. On Sundays the peons are not allowed there between the hours of 10 and 1 o'clock. Then it is that canvas is stretched for a long promenade, with awnings over it, and rows of chairs at each side. Crowds don their best attire, the women often dressed elaborately in silks and satins—some as for evening—and promenade in the Alameda. This is the only time when the plaza is not thronged with peons, and consequently the only time when one sees the better class of Mexicans. Some of the women are very beautiful. They are very fond of bright colors. Even tiny babies will be dressed in red and yellow. Children of 2 or 3 will wear dresses of bright colored silks made after the fashion of women. Thus the scene presented on Sundays is in marked contrast to that seen on a week day.

CORA CHAFFEE BABCOCK.



From Left to Right—Vice-President G. G. Wallace, Omaha; President James Conkling, Franklin; Vice President Lew Tibbets, Hastings; Vice President J. A. Slater, Minden; Vice President Willis Caldwell, Broken Bow; Secretary J. F. Hanson, Fremont; Stenographer O. E. Anderson, Fremont. OFFICERS NEBRASKA REAL ESTATE DEALERS' ASSOCIATION—Photo by a Staff Artist.



DELEGATES TO THE CONVENTION OF THE NEBRASKA REAL ESTATE DEALERS' ASSOCIATION, ASSEMBLED ON THE FRONT STEPS OF THE OMAHA CITY HALL—Photo by a Staff Artist.