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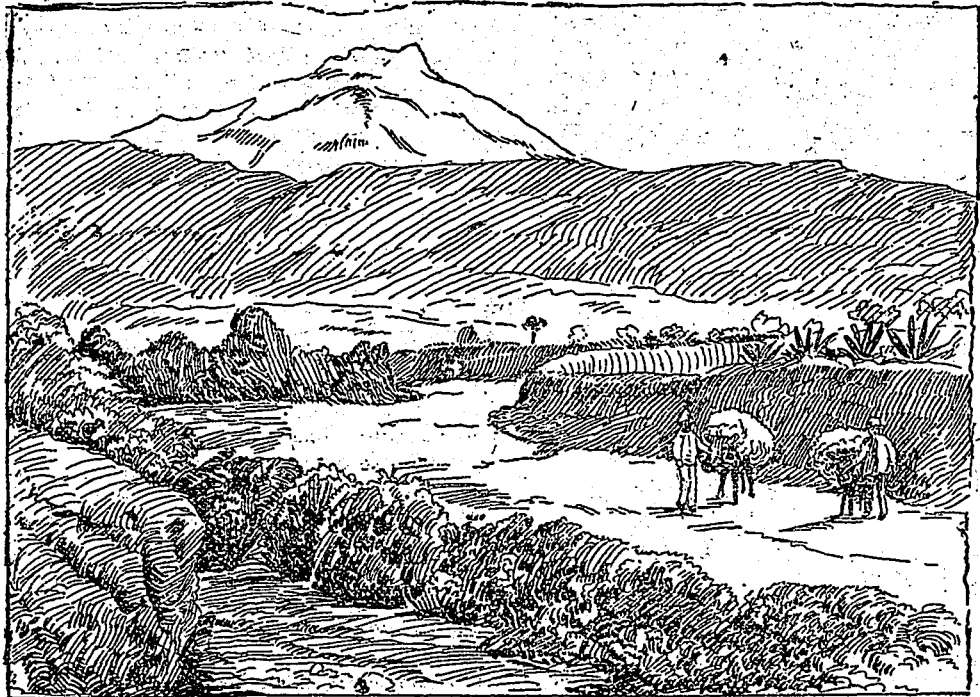
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Life in Mexico.

(Zella A. Dickson in the 'Standard.')

Crossing the bridge at El Paso, Texas, the tourist finds himself in the little frontier city, Ciudad Juarez, and realizes at once that it is no longer the United States, but the dominion over which waves the red, white and green flag of the Mexican republic. There is no gradual shading down from familiar objects to the unusual sights of a foreign land. The change is an immediate and a radical one. On all sides may be seen ranged along the narrow streets the queer, low, oddly constructed adobe houses or mud huts of the Mexicans. These abiding places are well suited to the climate, keeping out the cold winds in the winter and serving as a grateful shelter from the hot sun of summer.

It has been said that it takes two things to make a city in the United States, a post-office and a saloon. Now in Mexico it also takes two things to make a city, a church and a plaza, and go where you will in Mexico you will always find these two features, more or less beautiful in design, according to the size and wealth of the city. At Ciudad Juarez the church is a very old one, built in 1549, in front of which is the charming little plaza containing a statue of Benito Juarez. The plazas are about the only beautiful things in this country which are not walled in, and rightly so, for they belong to the people, are the property of every one, and made especially attractive and inviting that the people may come there in the cool of the evening and sit on the benches amid the profusion of flowers and birds. In the City of Mexico the markets are situated around the plaza. Going to market is one of the trips a tourist never fails to make, for it well repays the effort of early rising. Sunday morning is the great market day in all the cities and villages. Each trade has its own location, which you can readily imagine greatly sharpens the competition.



GOING TO MARKET.

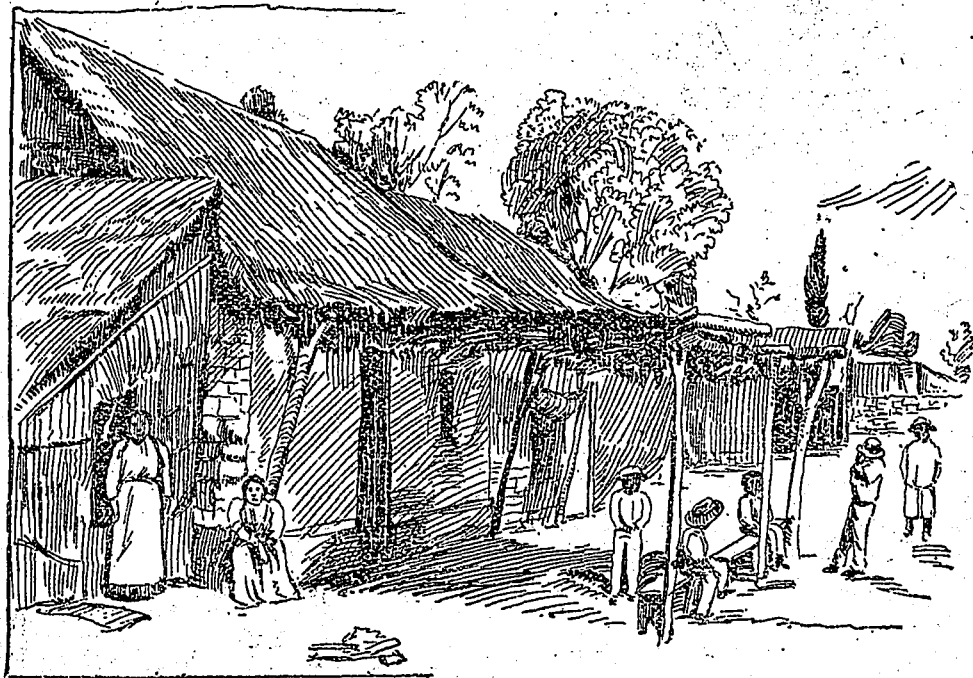
Such a confusion of tongues, such screamings and gesticulating while the bargains are being arranged is far easier to imagine than to describe. All street car lines begin and end at the plaza. This fact once mastered by the visitor greatly simplifies the topography of the Mexican cities. In the larger cities of the republic the plazas have on Sunday, as an additional attraction to the people, bands and military parades. One thing which never fails to strike the visitor from other lands as remarkable, is that the soldiers in marching never keep step with each other, even the members of the band, while playing first-class music, and playing it exceedingly well—for all Mexicans are natural musicians—systematically march out of step.

Another attraction of the plaza is the flower market, which is never far from it. Here flowers of all varieties are sold in large quantities for a mere trifle. Bright-eyed

native girls besiege the visitor, seldom in vain, to purchase their basket of flowers. Music and the love of flowers are the two strong emotions of the dwellers of Montezuma's land.

Travelling through Mexico from Juarez to the City of Mexico, stopping at Chihuahua, Zacatecas, Grapuat, Tula, Queretaro, the visitor has the opportunity of seeing most if not all the characteristics of the native manners and customs. In the City of Mexico time moves slowly, but it does move. Constant contact with tourists is gradually making the City of Mexico much like any other foreign city, but in the villages of Mexico there is no such thing as time, no past, no future, only the ever present today; customs which never change and fashions which never go out of fashion. At Zacatecas some enterprising Yankee brought to his building site some wheelbarrows for the Mexican laborers to use. No amount of Spanish could persuade them to wheel them as we do at home. After filling them each Mexican lifted his load, wheelbarrow and all, on his back, and carried both to the point where the material was needed. After the wheelbarrow was empty it went back again on the back of the laborer for its next trip. It seems to me Mexico might with some propriety be called the back country, so universally do all natives carry their burdens on their backs instead of in their arms—hay, bricks, fruit, babies, boxes, everything goes at once on the back as the natural way of carrying it to its destination.

A burro is the chief possession of every poor Mexican family, and holds the same place of honor in the Mexican household as the pig occupies in the Irish home. It is a common sight to see these sleepy little fellows carrying heavy loads, now of fruit for market, now of firewood for the railway, walking along the narrow streets with the master driver trudging by their sides. The milk-cart of Mexico consists of a little burro, always sound asleep, carrying strapped to either side a huge jar of goat's milk.



STREET SCENE IN A MEXICAN VILLAGE