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There are three Vogens—American, French, and British

Elizabeth Penrose—Editor of British Vogue
Michel de Brunhoff—Editor of French Vogue
Edna Woolman Chase—Editor-in-Chief of the three Vogens
NOT all Mexicans are picturesque Indians in big straw hats. There is actually a group of what, for want of a more pleasing term, must be called “society.” This always seems to come as news to the average American traveller who, on entering a drawing-room in Mexico City and finding it full of smartly dressed people talking much as people talk in all the drawing-rooms of the world, is invariably overcome with astonishment. “But how sophisticated!” he is sure to cry out in amazement.

As a matter of fact, it would probably be necessary to go to Vienna to find another group resembling what is left of the old régime in Mexico. There are innumerable analogies to be drawn between the two: most marked is the fact that, in Mexico City as in Vienna, the society is a small, tightly closed corporation with every one related to every one else. It is strongly Catholic and does not countenance divorce, so that any woman who leaves one husband to marry another is in for a bad time of it, unless, of course, she is a foreigner. Most of the people have known each other since childhood and, in any event, follow the Spanish custom of addressing social equals by Christian name and the familiar “tu.”

At one time, the Mexicans were as fabulously wealthy as Austrians; and they, too, have seen their fortunes wiped out by a revolution. Since they have difficulty in making ends meet, their life is curiously what could be called one mad round of gaiety. If people didn’t get married or die once in a while, things would be pretty slow, as weddings and funerals are the only two big social functions left.

In the days when they had money, everything was done on such a lavish scale that none of them have been able to adjust themselves to any simple form of entertaining. During the Centennial, for instance, Don Pablo Escandón thought nothing of building another room onto his house for one night, in order to seat fifty extra guests at dinner, and, quite as a matter of course, he bought a gold service for fifty to
supplement the one for a hundred that he already had. Having once thought in those terms, there is no way of convincing the average Mexican that it is possible to give a dinner for twelve people with no gold plate, only three or four courses, and less than six footmen. So they just don’t entertain.

They do give teas. Affairs that begin at seven or eight and last far into the night. The table is set in the dining-room with every variety of sandwich conceivable and all sorts of delicious Mexican dishes—roasted tortillas spread with alligator-pear, enchiladas, little cakes—which one usually eats while standing up in front of the table. Sometimes there is bridge of a very indifferent variety, and, at other times, the guests merely sit around talking or, on some special occasion, there may be a couple of guitarists brought in to play and sing.

The only other popular form of social gathering is the luncheon party, which begins any time between two and three o’clock and lasts until five, with the men of the household present. (A “hen” luncheon is unheard of.) The meal consists of at least six courses, some of which will be French, but there is always sure to be one dish of rice and eggs; a Mexican pièce de résistance such as mole, beans and cheese, with fruit pastes. But dinners are left for foreigners and diplomats to give. We can’t remember ever having been to a Mexican dinner-party. Like the Spanish, Mexicans have never liked (Continued on page 166)
SEÑORAS OF MEXICO

(Continued from page 109) — for there is no real gap between the two. If you are instantly received by open arms by Mexicans, you may be sure that these arms belong to the right people. It would not be exaggerating to say that, in the last thirty years, no more than 30 American women have been taken into the inner circle. Even the diplomats have to make good on their own merits. An official position is no open sesame.

Mexicans always feel constrained with an English or American person. It may be partly the language, partly the men speak English, because they have gone to one of the great English Catholic public schools, such as St. John's or St. Brannock's, but the women, although they do speak English, are not at home in that language and prefer to stick to Spanish or French. Any Mexican gathering is sure to be bilingual, especially nowadays when there are a great many people who have spent all their lives in France and just recently returned to Mexico because of financial difficulties.

They are also a little frightened by our free-and-easy ways and find it difficult to reconcile this easy manner with our passion for punctuality and social regularity. They are completely independent socially, accepting invitations with no idea of turning up, and it seems to them to be given a definite answer. Since the families are so large, most housewives start doing a meal less than two months, and it doesn't make much difference whether or not one person or more or less turns up. They just can't see why we take such a different attitude.

The average Mexican woman of society divides her time between home and church. Her one great amusement is the ball, and, during the season, she will never miss one. The same hosts and seats are subscribed for year after year just as they are at the Metropolitan in New York. Mexican women go to a polo game once a while, and a few play tennis.

The younger element has taken up golf with fervor. Thursdays, Thursdays, Saturdays, and Sundays, the golf club is crowded with all the young girls and men making a half madly around the course. Several of them have turned out to be top-notch players, even the dusky girls and men giving an non-stop opportunity to play. This enthusiasm may be due partly to the fact that it is the only chance that girls have of going out unchaperoned. For some reason, a golf course is considered a safe place for a girl to be alone a minute.

There is no after time, however, when a girl is not carefully chaperoned. Maids play alone in the arbor with their parents and in the room keeping a watchful eye on the proceedings, as well as putting a crimp in the play. (The mother still remains the most powerful force in most families. We have heard old boys of sixty say they couldn't go to such and such a place or such and such a party because "ma wasm" would not like it.)

Recently, things have become so "modern" that, at small parties in private houses, the mother will disappear after having greeted the guests, but only if there are no important presents in the form of a married or engaged couple or a brother and sister. Such a thing as a Beginners anywhere on the golf links is completely unheard of.

It is only lately that it has been considered proper for a young girl of good family to go out on the street alone. Now, she may drive her own car, or, if she hasn't one, transform a few dollars and go along without a chaperon. Even married women seldom go to night-clubs, and this last winter was the first time they ever saw a single girl in one. Of course, it was in a large party with plenty of uncles and aunts present, but nevertheless, it was seen during the day. Only five or six girls of what might be termed the "twice-married" families have ventured to do this, and that is only because a few years ago, Carmen Cornejo, a back in Mexico from Paris where she has spent most of her life, announced that she went to night-clubs abroad and saw no reason why she should not do so in Mexico. There were many her friends, much talking and singing, but she got away with it, and her hold is now being tightly followed by her friends.

Most of the girls get engaged when they are quite young, but that doesn't mean that they get married right away. Engagements go on for years. Being engaged in no way curtails a man's freedom; he sees his fiancee at her parents' house or at young people's parties, but he goes out on the town on his own. He grows tired of rowing wild oats or goes to the theater, and this last winter was the first time one ever saw a single girl in one. Of course, it was in a large party with plenty of uncles and aunts present, but nevertheless, it was seen during the day. Only five or six girls of what might be termed the "twice-married" families have ventured to do this, and that is only because a few years ago, Carmen Cornejo, a back in Mexico from Paris where she has spent most of her life, announced that she went to night-clubs abroad and saw no reason why she should not do so in Mexico. There were many her friends, much talking and singing, but she got away with it, and her hold is now being tightly followed by her friends.

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**SEÑORAS OF MEXICO**

(Continued from page 167) head of a family which has always stood for the top in birth, wealth, and culture. And the Duchess of Regla. Though these three are still alive, naturally they are no longer active roles in society, since they are all well advanced in years and remain at home.

The Duchess of Regla's son, Don Carlos Ricardo Gallardo, Marquis de Gualaporthy, Conde de Regla, Marques de Villahermosa de Alfaro, stands out as the grand seigneur of Mexico. Over sixty, he is still an enthusiastic hunter and is the head of the Charro Association (once the President's guard), which once in a while gives parades with Don Carlos leading in all the reeling and rolling of bulls and other feats. When he rides out in the morning, he usually wears the Charro uniform of tight leather trousers, short jacket, and enormous hat and is such a handsome sight that he is invariably followed by a hand of scouts mapping pictures.

Besides these already mentioned, the crème de la crème is made up of people bearing the following names: Garcia Pimentel, Mila y Cervantes, Bautero de Tererco, who have the title of Marques de San Francisco (these titles are all Spanish); Campeo, with the title of Marques of the Apatlana; Duke of Villamal, Linarro, Serrano, Luna, Cuenca, Fernandez del Castillo, Martinez de la Riva (Donalina's Riva's first husband was a member of this family); Reke, Fernandez de los Valles, Abad, Eleazar, Algar, Amor, de la Torre, Fernandez, Castelli, Osio, Yrube, Yrube; (the head of this family is not, as appeared in a recent article in Mexico, a descendant of the Emperor of that name. The Emperor had no children).

A great many Mexicans have married abroad. Ordinarily, they marry either in France or Spain, although Bektine Ame.

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**SEÑORAS OF MEXICO**

married Count Celani, while her sister is Princess Poniatowski. Pope Lucio is the husband of Virginia Wilkes, Lucinda is Mrs. William Leslie; Piedad Yurbe married Prince Max Egon Hochshold-Langenberg; and Rose Guerber, who will be remembered here as the beautiful Madame Natico, is now Madame de Moreschal.

In Spain, Don Pablo Escudero's sister married the Duke of Monteleone, this brother was the Marques de Villa Vereda; Madame Vereda's sister's daughter is the wife of Count Teja, who is the son of the Duchess of Santalla and a nephew of the Duke of Alba; Maria Campere became the Duchess of Huete; and Francisco Yurbe married the niece of the Duchess of Battice. In France, Mexicans have married into the Polignac family; and Coiffar de Lamy, Baron des Bordes, d'Erlanger, Sabo, Villeneuve are a few of the other French families that have become related to Mexicans in marriage.

These connections probably account for the fact that, among all Central and South Americans, the Mexicans have been taken into French society. Instead of belonging to the cafés and night clubs groups, they have actually become a part of the Fauveau-Saint-Germain, and one meets Yurbe, Almar, Lutin, Martinez, Castelli, Lamas, and Regev in all the French homes.

There was a time when most Mexicans of wealth lived in Paris, but lately they have had to return to Mexico to salvage what was left of their fortunes. The big ranches where they used to give weekend parties of thirty and forty guests have, with one or two exceptions, been confiscated by the government, and, with these sources of revenue gone, life abroad has become financially impossible. Under the circumstances, it isn't surprising that there is no love lost between members (Continued on page 170)
ŞENORAS OF MEXICO
(Continued from page 109) of the old regime and those of the new. One of our ambassadors did have the bright idea of inviting political notables and members of society to the same dinner-party. No one spoke to any one else, and all the social guests departed immediately after dinner, never to set foot in the embassy again as long as that ambassador was there.

By the same token, there isn’t much of what one might call cozy companionship between society and the artistic element headed by the Riveras and the Covarrubias. Their studies, however, are the Mecca of foreign visitors, who all want to meet the great mural painter and see his beautiful wife, Frida, in the native costume she affects. (She can be seen wearing Indian dress in the photograph on page 106.) Miguel Covarrubias, Vogue’s distinguished Mexican artist, and his wife spend only a few months of the year in Mexico, where Selena Covarrubias also takes to native dress for wear at home. (She is shown on page 107 in the garden of her house in an adaptation of the Tehuantepec costume.)

But the day may yet come when these various facades will become just one great, happy family. Economic necessity has already brought about a great many changes in the Mexican May fair. The men have had to go to work and, since many of them were not trained to any job, have taken what they could. In the old days, it would have been unheard of for a lady to be seen speaking to a bull-fighter, yet, today, Chacha Solerano, one of Mexico’s most popular matadors, is a cousin of the Yurislews, and one of the Cervantes is a professional pelota player. It is now probably only a question of time until the whole society becomes modernized or ceases to exist, but, at the moment, it is still something belonging to another age. A 1938 conversation piece.

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