

Tehuana, boy or man, to be found between the oceans.

But the woman—the Tehuana woman—is the wonder of the land. From Kamooon right around to Tills, I have never seen her like. The Circassian women have more lustrous eyes, it is true, and the Cingalese are a whit more willowy of figure; but Miss Tehuana of Tehuantepec, take her by and large, combines more physical attractions than any other woman that I know. When I have said that these Tehuana women combine the figure of an Annette Kellerman with the face and features of a Ruth St. Denis and the dignity and carriage of a Mary Garden, I have need to say but little further in their praise. Mesdames Garden, Kellerman, and St. Denis are, in fact, the ones who may feel complimented by the comparison.

They are olive-skinned, are these Tehuana women, with a soft rose showing through; their eyes are big and dark and sparkling—just such eyes as the Dolores should have who swings in a hammock under the palms; their features are perfect, and so are their teeth, which are kept as clean and white as though they were intended for a tooth-powder advertisement. Of statuesque build, but of little more than medium stature, with great masses of blue-black hair, exquisite limbs, and smallest feet, they seem made for artists' models. If these women were to mate with Cretan men, we should have a race of demigods again. And this is saying much for Mexico, a country where one becomes discouraged and no longer looks at the women, so few are the pretty ones and far between.

In the market place are many pretty girls, and so Oriental is the colour you

heavily embroidered, low-necked and sleeveless and revealing superb arms of bronze, sometimes of copper, moulded on splendid lines, and at the waist a few inches of brown skin. Lastly there is the jupil, or headdress, a huge affair of lace, stiffly starched and with a wide flounce, a silky material of gamboge or apple-green forming the centre.

Jupil is the native for an embroidered chemise, which is worn by most other tribes in the usual way; but these particular jupiles have undergone a peculiar evolution, having developed into purely ornamental garments, and from continued one-sided use having long since lost their original capacity of being put on over the body. The whole thing is starched, and worn in several ways. For going to mass and for festal occasions the rim of the neck is fastened round the face and tied under the chin, so that the starched neck-frill frames the features like an exaggerated Elizabethan ruff, while the waist-frill rests upon and covers the shoulders, bosom, and bare arms down to the elbow. When walking in the street, they wear it with the neck portion resting upon the shoulders, the waist being turned up over the head to form a pretty and effective sunshade. Sometimes, again, it is worn hanging straight down the back, and then it recalls the trailing war-bonnet of a Comanche chief. Perhaps the strangest head-dress in the world, it wants only a pretty face to set it off, and that, as I have remarked, takes little seeking among these tropic queens of Tehuantepec.

If the Treasurer of the United States should ever have occasion to call in his gold coins, he would find a most amazing quantity of them bedecking the persons of these Isthmian belles. British sovereigns and French Napoleons are not desired, but a big premium will be paid for the eagles, half-eagles, and double-eagles of Uncle Sam. Every centavo a Tehuana woman can beg, borrow or earn goes into her fund for purchasing gold pieces, the gorgeous necklace with its rows of shining, tinkling coins making a showy and not unattractive ornament. As the financial and social standing of a Syrian is denoted by the amount of cloth in his trousers, so is that of a Tehuana by the number of coins on her necklace. I heard of one Tehuana heiress who has, it is said, a necklace valued at one thousand pounds.

Strangely enough, none of these gorgeously dressed women can be persuaded to wear shoes or even sandals. Clad in all her finery—jupil, magna, necklace, and smile—she will appear barefooted—a strange anomaly. Without shoes she will dance over a stone floor, or even a dirt, gravel-bestrewn surface, with a grace which violates all the rules of the Isadora Duncanian art. There is scarcely beginning or end to one of these Tehuana dances. It consists of repetitions of some simple figure, danced to the music of an Indian harp, a guitar, and a fiddle; and this accompaniment, as well, is but the ceaseless recurrence of a simple rhythmic phrase. Dance and music are both chiefly interesting because they are among the few survivals of that strange Zapotec race which, with the exception of these few people, has disappeared from the land as mysteriously as it came.

Woman dominates the city on the torrid Isthmus. Here her rights are recognised and undisputed. The women run the place and do ninety per cent. of the business. A striking characteristic of



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these Tehuana beauties is their commercial enterprise. In the market place, where most of the bartering is done, they reign supreme. The wife owns the property, she holds the family purse-strings and she must even vouch for the husband before he can obtain credit. Not only are the women the power in the district, but they are fully aware of it; they delegate all of the menial work, save the cooking, to the men, and devote their energies to trade, which is so fully in their hands that all commercial transactions in Tehuantepec are done by them or require their sanction. They are Tehuantepec—they in their barbaric colours—treading the earth as if it were theirs, while the little men shamble about with the dogs, the one as degraded as the other.

One hears much of the morals of Tehuantepec. The Tehuana woman is reputed a tropical Delilah. The Isthmus, very naturally, is provided with a true Isthmian code of morals, but it is no flaunting abode of sin, as some would have you think. There is no gilded vice

in Tehuantepec—not so much as a glitter. Amid the dreariness of mud huts and palm shacks and frontier hotels, how should there be? The vice of places is always exaggerated for that matter, Tangier, Port Said, Raku—I have known them all in their prime, but they all fell far below their reputations. The conditions which we hold to be immoral in Tehuantepec could only be called amoral. In any event, they are

Continued on page 52.



THEY ARE TEHUANTEPEC—THEY IN THEIR BARBARIC COLOURS—TREADING THE EARTH AS IF IT WERE THEIRS.

might imagine yourself east instead of west of Suez. For these are the hot lands, and children of the sun the world over love the splendour of crimson and scarlet and gold; even the birds wear brighter colours. The lower part of their daily costume is a magna, or skirt, of cherry or scarlet cotton, striped with white, black, or yellow as the fancy of the wearer dictates, held close about her by a vivid sash. The upper part of the body is covered with a zouave jacket,

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