

Six Months In Mexico.pdf/67



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large dictionary. It is not likely there exists a Mexican who is not an adept in the sign language. Courting is too vulgar a word for them, so they call it—translated in English—playing the bear.

You would naturally wonder how a girl who never leaves her mother's or chaperon's side, who never goes to parties, who is watched like a condemned murderess, would ever get a lover; but notwithstanding all this strictness they number less old maids and more admirers than their sisters in the States. Perhaps while out driving, at the theater or bull-fights, they see a man they think they will like. He is similarly impressed. He follows



his new-found one home, and she knows enough to be on the balcony awaiting his arrival with the shades of night. He may play the bear with her for a year and she not know his name. He has the advantage, for he can find out everything about her family, and thereby determine whether she is a desirable bride or not.

Sometimes they play the bear for from seven to fifteen years—that is, if the parents are very wealthy—and even then not get the girl, for with all their passionate love they number many flirts. Often one girl will have two or more playing the bear at the same time. If they chance to meet they inquire, fiercely, "Whom are you after?" If the answer demonstrates the same girl, one will request the other to step aside. If he refuses a duel follows.

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