

PORFIRIO DIAZ

SEVEN TIMES PRESIDENT

OF MEXICO



FONDO
 FERNANDO DIAZ RAMIREZ

INTRODUCTION

Mexico, November 24th, 1904

Dear Mrs. TWEEDALE—

As the book you published, entitled "Mexico as I Saw It," is not only a proof of the versatility which has distinguished your publications, but it also contains a description of the people, places, and races with which your next book will deal, I have no

INTRODUCTION.

It may seem strange that I, an English woman, should write the life of the President of Mexico, so a word of explanation is advisable. In 1900, I looked up the map of the world for a good subject for a book, and Mexico seemed to offer all I wanted—history, romance, picturesqueness, beauty.

Armed with introductions, six delightful months were spent in that country. From north to south, from east to west, I penetrated, and when journeys into wild parts where white people were practically unknown might prove dangerous, General Diaz kindly gave me an escort of soldiers—usually supplemented by officials, members of the Senate, engineers, and friends who seized such an opportunity to explore the country. On one occasion a party of forty soldiers, twenty-two gentlemen and myself rode for ten consecutive days through the mountains, visiting ancient Aztec temples, and stopping at large coffee, sugar, or tobacco estates by the way.

"Mexico as I Saw It" was the result; it had considerable success both in England and America.

In the autumn of 1904 the prospect of some delightful visits tempted me back to the United States, and while there a telegram from the President of Mexico drew me further south.

Longing to write his biography, at last one day I broached the subject. At first his modesty said "No," for General Diaz thinks too humbly of himself, too highly of his neighbour. Finally, with Madame Diaz' kindly persuasion added to my own, he agreed to my doing so before I left his capital, and wrote me the charming letter translated on the following page, confirming that permission:

Mexico, November 23rd, 1904.

DEAR MRS. TWEEDIE,—

As the book you published, entitled "Mexico as I Saw It," is not only a proof of the veracity which has distinguished your publications, but is also a good guarantee that the same conditions will exist in the forthcoming description of the people, places, and races with which your next book will deal, I have no hesitation in placing in your hands documentary facts demonstrating the progress of this country, and also those which appertain to myself, which may be made public through the medium of your intelligent and facile pen.

With my most sincere thanks for the devotion you have shown in this undertaking,

I remain,

Your most sincere

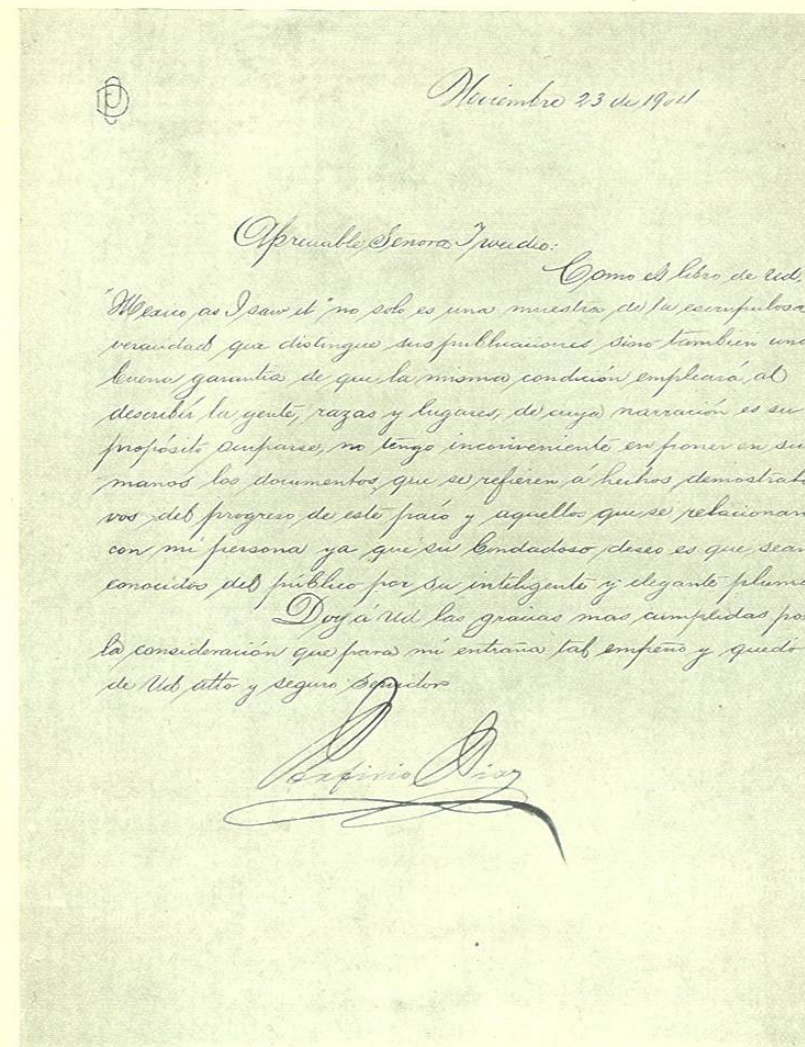
PORFIRIO DIAZ.

"Why this kindness?" people may ask.

Simply because he thought I had done something for his country in "Mexico as I Saw It," and because I did not want to be commissioned or paid for my work—but undertook it as an independent person, and a friend. Simple reasons, but they won his heart, and I can only regret my own inability to draw his character more dramatically for the world. He deserves the pen of a John Morley, who has so graphically given us the characteristics and personality of a statesman in his "Life of Gladstone," whom in some ways Diaz resembles. He resembles him in his quiet simplicity, the charm of his home life, and his keen interest in many varied subjects.

By the hour, day after day, during my visit, the President, Madame Diaz and I talked. They knew I could not remain long in Mexico—not six months as previously—and they gave much of their time to help me.

When I could not trust myself to follow technical matters in Spanish, she translated glibly, and this three-cornered conver-



sation went on with ease. He took the trouble to speak slowly and distinctly, as he invariably does with foreigners, and his wife knows English so perfectly that she could transfer his thoughts with great rapidity. There we sat, we three, he a great ruler, the maker of a nation, just a fine, strong, handsome man, short of stature, broad of build, with his warm, clear, healthy skin, his short-cut white hair, and deep, dark, penetrating eyes. Just a simple, honest, kindly, homely man in a black cut-away coat, a pair of grey trousers, and white silk tie.

He spoke with great emphasis and force, but unlike most Spaniards he sat quite tranquil, rarely moved his hands to gesticulate, and never shrugged his shoulders. A man of iron will, determined grit and complete master of himself.

A gentleman in every sense. Although raised from the people, Diaz has the manner of a Prince. A calm, quiet dignity, a force, and withal a manner that inspires love as well as respect.

Just three years and a half had elapsed between my saying "Good-bye" to Mexico and my stepping from the train at Mexico City again, November, 1904.

Three years and a half is not long in the making of a nation, yet during those one thousand two hundred and seventy-seven days marvellous reformations had been accomplished by that wonderful man who steers the helm of Mexican affairs.

That President Diaz was the greatest man of the nineteenth century is a strong assertion, but those who read these pages will, I hope, think so too.

For any mistake in the volume I alone am to blame. Although General Diaz honoured me by handing over long extracts from his diaries, and told me many personal stories of his life; although I was present with him at many public functions and private parties; although he gave me a mass of figures and facts about Mexico to write from, in addition to which I know the country from end to end, these pages have been compiled in London, seven thousand miles away from the President of Mexico, and errors may have slipped in which he would have corrected had there been time and opportunity. From his

charming letter my critics will see he reposed considerable confidence in me, and I only hope the result may not be unworthy of his kindness.

He hopes to visit the United States and Europe shortly, when readers will be able to judge for themselves whether my description of the man tallies with their own impressions. Whenever he comes, or wherever he goes, General Porfirio Diaz and his talented wife are sure of a warm welcome.

E. A. T.

London, Christmas, 1905.

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went about unarmed. He strolls alone in the neighborhood of his summer castle at Chapultepec, cares nothing for pomp in his daily life, and plays to perfection the rôle of a simple home-loving citizen. It is not a rich man, but a richly happy man from the point of view of a statesman, a man who has done his duty to his country.

PORFIRIO DIAZ,

SEVEN TIMES PRESIDENT OF MEXICO.

CHAPTER I.

BEGINNING OF A GREAT CAREER.

ONE of the most remarkable traits in the character of Porfirio Diaz, President of Mexico, is his modesty, and yet he is the greatest figure in modern history.

Egotism is the prevailing sin of success. This is not so in his case, for he does not appear to think he has accomplished anything. His aims are so high; he feels that he has never reached his goal.

Porfirio Diaz was born September 15th, 1830, so that when I first saw him in his own capital in 1900, he was seventy, but he appeared years less, and on my return to Mexico in the winter of 1904, I found him looking even younger. He is a marvellously juvenile veteran, all the more surprising in a land where youth is short, old age is long.

His position is absolutely unique in the world's history, for although President of a Republic, he has *reigned* for a quarter of a century. His will is all powerful, as great, in fact, as that of the Tsar and Pope combined. He is a monarchical, yet a democratic, ruler. He controls millions of people with a hand of iron; still they love him. Some say he is a despot, but his is a despotism tempered with justice, and at the same time he leads the unassuming life of a private gentleman. He walks or rides unattended in the quieter parts of Mexico City, where only a few years ago no ordinary individual dared go alone, and few