

to do us, and how far he was to be trusted, a reply was sent to him proposing that he should hold a conference with me in the night. A spot called Las Pozas Zarcas, a distance of one kilometre out of Oaxaca, was selected for the meeting. We removed our forces capable of entering into battle with all possible secrecy, and stationed them at a distance of five kilometres from the village where we were then hiding in the mountains.

"I advanced to meet Montero at the place designated, and concealed myself in the shadow of an arch of the town's old Spanish aqueduct to watch whether he came alone.

"He did not arrive, but sent a messenger with a note, in which he said that his conduct was suspected among the garrison. This hindered him from coming. He also wrote that our movements had been observed, and the whole garrison was on guard. We could, however, secure the Convent del Carmen without bloodshed, and also the forces defending it, if we would follow his instructions. These were that a man chosen for the service would advance within two hundred yards of the front of the garden gate of the convent. Then he would describe an arc with his arm, holding a lighted cigar in his hand. This signal would be answered from the gate, where the guard of the 9th Battalion was posted.

"After all was found to be safe, he said, we could enter the gate with a column. He warned us, however, that on our entrance the guard might rush to the interior of the fort. This movement must not alarm us, because its object was to surprise a force which was within the convent, and was not in the secret. The convent enclosed a passage known as the 'Puerta del Carmen,' and the garden gate gave access to this passage.

"Afterwards I knew that this was all a treacherous stratagem on the part of Montero, who hoped to get our forces trapped and exposed to his fire when unable to reply; for the roofs on each side of the street that leads to the convent gate were covered with soldiers, who would have shot us down mercilessly as we passed beneath them. In the entrance to the convent he had posted a battery of guns, hidden by the porch.

"Suspecting that his overtures were more or less a plot, I was inclined to fall in with them; adopting them only that I might carry out a counter-plot of my own. If we could persuade the 9th Battalion posted at the gate of our intention to enter, Montero would, I argued, concentrate his forces there, and so weaken the other defences of the town. Accordingly, I told off fifty men for service at the Convent del Carmen, and ordered the main body of troops, numbering seven hundred men, to make a simultaneous attack in two columns on the Convent de Santo Domingo, which lay some distance off in another part of the town.

"If the event should prove Montero's treachery, then we, and not its author, had every hope to gain from it.

"After arranging this plan, I returned to Colonel Salinas. He was waiting for me with the troops formed up at the foot of the hill. Scarcely had they arrived when the rains descended in torrents. This quickly made the roads impassable, and left our men with only the refuge of the woods for shelter. Under the trees where we were camped the rain came down in sheets, literally soaking us to the skin, and ran off down the rocky gorges in rapid streams which soon were so swollen that it was impossible to cross them. The rain prevented our moving, and hindered us from making the projected assault on that night.

"On the following day, the 4th of August, 1860, we found that a march to the mountains would be very difficult. Our soldiers, excited by the prospect of an assault and having collected their families in the villages for safety, would not willingly return to camp. While the leaders were discussing the situation, a force of the enemy suddenly appeared and opened fire on us. We advanced rapidly towards them, forcing them to return to their base, and established ourselves at the hacienda of San Luis, about two kilometres distant from the town. We also occupied the hacienda of Dolores. In these farms we passed the night.

"About three o'clock in the morning a deserter from the enemy arrived, and told me that under cover of darkness the

Reactionaries had crossed the fields, and must be near. I ordered that this information should be communicated to Colonel Don Ramón Cajiga, who was quartered at Dolores with the Juárez battalion. The adjutant returned, and informed me that the enemy was already midway between the two places. I accordingly begged Colonel Velasco to engage the force that had intercepted us with half of his battalion. This happened at the first streaks of dawn, and as the light strengthened we saw that a strong body of men had taken up a position in our rear, which would prevent our return to the mountains. It was composed of one half of the 9th Battalion.

"I ordered Captains Luis Cataneo and Fidencio Hernández to attack this force, and they drove them back on the main body of the enemy.

"At this time Marcellino Cobos was repulsed in an attack he had made on the hacienda of Dolores. This success enabled Colonels Cajiga and Velasco to join me with their respective forces. We were also reinforced by Captains Luis Cataneo and Hernández. Thereupon General José María Cobos, with the principal body of his troops and three batteries of artillery—without waiting for the retreating forces from Dolores, who were making a circuit to join him—began a resolute advance on the positions which I occupied in the hacienda of San Luis.

"We went out to meet Cobos, repulsed him, captured his heavier guns, and obliged him to retire to Oaxaca. I then intimated to Colonel Salinas that I would seize the chief square of the town while he marched against the fortress of La Soledad. After strenuous resistance in the streets through which I had to pass to reach the plaza, where I lost many officers and men, and was myself wounded by a ball which disabled my right leg, I succeeded in driving the enemy from the 'Plaza de Armas,' from the Palace, the Cathedral, and the Convent de la Concepcion, finally leaving to them only Santo Domingo and the Convent del Carmen.

"Unable to pass through the streets in consequence of frequent firing and the wounded condition of many of my men, I determined to cut through the walls of two houses, cross the inter-

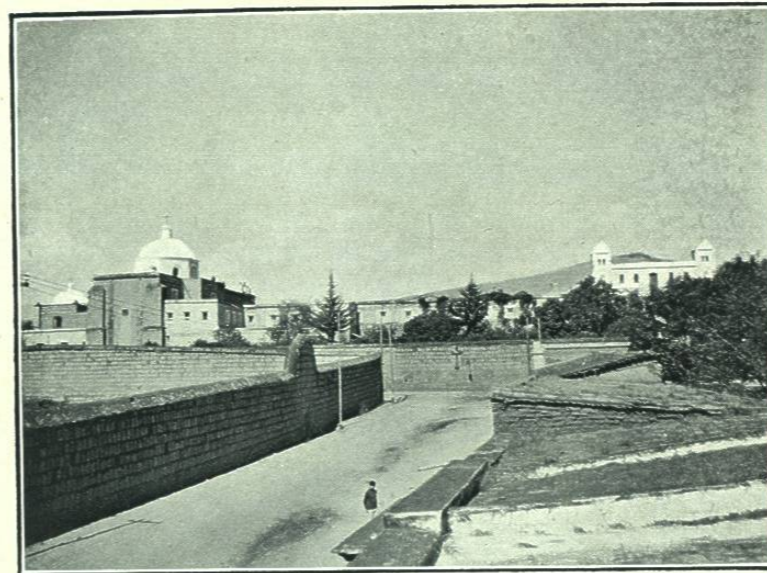


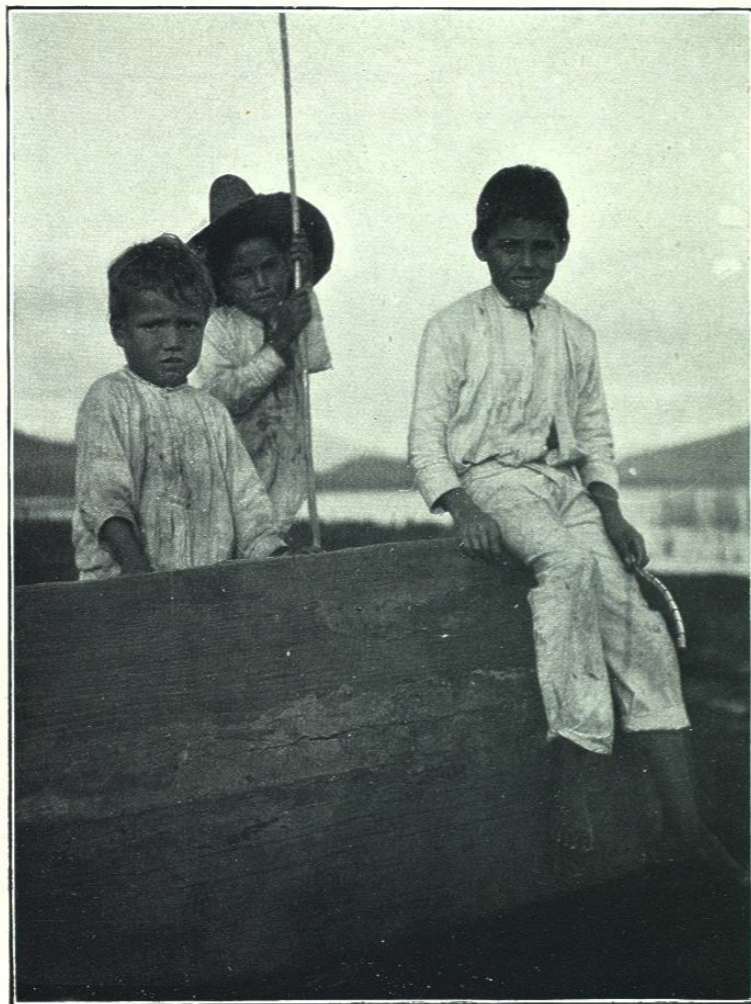
Photo by CONSTANTINE RICKARDS.]

Convent of El Carmen, Oaxaca.



Photo by The AUTHOR.]

Indian wigwams.



Indian types.

[Page 61.]

FIGHTING FOR THE JUÁRISTS.

61

vening passages in the direction of the Convent de Santo Domingo, and thus bring my troops to a position, sheltered from the enemy's fire, from which I could make an assault on the convent. I intended to sally out with my men from the houses opposite the convent, and to superintend the attack from the roofs of these dwellings. This passage-making lasted all day and part of the night. Colonel Salinas meantime had joined me, and all the manœuvres were made with his approval.

"Our work was so well advanced that we were in a position to make the assault at daybreak next morning. Then we learnt that the enemy had broken down part of the garden wall of the Convent de Santo Domingo, and were escaping by that means.

"We almost feared frustration of our plans. I had been wounded since nine o'clock in the morning of the preceding day, and through loss of blood and weakness was unable to walk. Much of the time I had been on horseback, and I was scarcely able to sit up, much less to fight, in consequence of the inflammation of my leg. Colonel Salinas and the other leaders, unable to count upon me further, moved off with our troops to the Convent de Santo Domingo, as I thought to pursue the enemy, but they did not do so, for reasons of which I am still ignorant.

"The fighting on these two days, which resulted in the taking of Oaxaca, secured for me promotion to the rank of colonel in the permanent army, which was sent to me from Vera Cruz by President Juárez."

And so he was made Colonel. He, the poor son of a widow, the little boy of Oaxaca, at the age of thirty had actually obtained the summit of his childhood's dream.

But was he satisfied?

No; ambition had entered his soul; his horizon had extended; he had walked or ridden the length and breadth of the land—which is two thousand miles long, and in some parts nearly half as wide—he had seen destitution and misery, had lived amongst conflict and strife. Now began to dawn a new vista

of hope, and he felt he could not stop; he must go on; he must do something great for his country—a country crying for help, a land of sunshine and wealth, now dreary and sad and penniless.

Yes, he must be up and doing. Revolution must be stamped out if the land was ever to attain success, if the children were to be fed and the coffers filled. Then it was ambition began to enter his breast, and he felt he must take his part in the saving of Mexico.

Diaz was still nothing but a soldier, a keen one 'tis true, and blessed with a splendid constitution; but as yet he was merely the rough and ready fighting man. He knew little of politics. Diplomacy meant nothing to him. He had never travelled outside his own country, and even Spanish was still somewhat of a foreign language to him, his own Zapotec-Indian coming more glibly even at that time to his tongue.

CHAPTER IV.

MEXICO'S STRUGGLE FOR REFORM.

It is interesting to note how simple and direct General Diaz' diaries always are. He states facts. He makes no comments. He neither praises nor blames. He does not enlarge or enthuse on any event, any action, or any victory.

These diaries are truly characteristic of the soldier. He is a man of few words. The bald truthfulness of his sentences is so like himself that one can really see the man photographed in paper and ink.

From this it must not be inferred that Diaz is only matter-of-fact, brisk, hard, and calculating, for he is just the reverse in many ways, and, as said elsewhere, he is two men in one. The romantic, warm-hearted, affectionate, loving creature on the one hand; on the other, the stern, grave ruler of a people. He is strangely complex.

These diaries, with which the following pages deal somewhat fully, were often written under great stress, jotted down at odd moments either on the eve of action, or immediately after, and although some passages have been enlarged later, the simple, direct style, the absolute faithfulness to detail minus all attempt at embroidery remain.

Political considerations made it indispensable after the victory at Oaxaca that Salinas should remain at the head of the troops. It was not thought prudent at that stage to promote Diaz to the command.

Driven out of Oaxaca, Cobos withdrew his forces towards Zimatlán. Realising that by following this route he would be