north-east. The assault was delivered on April 2nd, and the position captured—a notable day for Diaz, for it was the anniversary of the storming of Puebla. Seven hundred prisoners were taken, and eighteen cannon. Seven weeks later he advanced to Icamole, and there defeated a larger force under General Fuero.

Thoroughly alarmed by the success of his vigorous antagonist in the North, Lerdo had despatched an army of six thousand men, under General Escobedo, to put down the rising. Its approach gave the victorious leader reason to pause and reconsider his plans. The difficulties of attempting to break through to the South were great. The sparsely-populated character of the country in which he was fighting, for Northern Mexico is practically all ranch land, gave him little chance of raising a force of sufficient strength to meet Escobedo in open battle.

Diaz acted with his customary resolution. Long experience in guerilla warfare had trained him to calculate his chances. His following was not strong enough. The only thing to be done was to get down to the South, where the revolution was making steady headway, and where his presence would prove an immense stimulus to the men whom he had led to victory on so many notable battlefields. He scattered his forces, and, retracing his steps northward through the country which he had traversed, made his way back almost alone to New Orleans.

The story of his return to Mexico to take supreme command of the Army of the Revolution reads more like a chapter from some boy's favourite book of romance and adventure than a passage from the life of the President of a great Republic. One day it is to be hoped that General Diaz will be persuaded to write the narrative in his own words. Meantime it can only be put together by relating what has been told by others. New Orleans at that time was swarming with exiles from Mexico, but so well had he disguised himself that he moved about unrecognised by men to whom he must have been well known.

A few days after his arrival Doctor Torres embarked at New Orleans on board the steamship *City of Havana*. This medical gentleman, of Cuban nationality, was on his way to Vera Cruz.

It was a pleasant voyage, and the ship stopped at Tampico. There the passengers, who so far had been a select company, found their comfort disturbed by a body of Mexican troops who were crowded on board. Part of these had been prisoners whom Diaz had captured at Matamoros, and afterwards had been compelled to release.

It needed but a few hasty glances, a few whispered conversations with a meaning look in his direction, to convince the Cuban doctor that his identity had been discovered. General Diaz, who had passed unknown among people of his own class, had been detected by men whom his military daring had brought into his hands. Here was a dilemma. A possible chance of safety lay on land. He would, of course, be in the enemy's country, but that he must risk. Nothing was more certain than that he would be closely watched and made a prisoner if he remained on the ship. Diaz was brave, but what good was there in throwing his life away?

The steamer was anchored far out from the shore. Little twinkling lights outlined the quays and the few low houses clustered around them. One method of escape was still open. It needed a desperate resolve, and he made it.

That night he came upon deck to breathe the cool air. No one was looking. Quietly he slipped overboard and struck out for the shore.

Not only tarpon but sharks infest the waters of the Gulf. Fortunately for Mexico they left her future ruler alone. Diaz was a man of nerve, but the stoutest swimmer might feel his blood run cold at the prospect of a long and exhausting struggle, with the chance at any moment of being snapped by the sharp teeth of one of these voracious monsters. He had not made many strokes when commotion on board the ship told him that his flight had been detected.

Then a boat was lowered, and pulled off towards him.

It was a desperate moment; he made a supreme effort. Diaz did his best, but no swimmer can hope to outdistance a boat propelled by the strong arms of sailors. He was overtaken, dragged out of the water, and brought back to the ship.

All attempt at disguise was now thrown off. The Lerdistas had got their redoubtable foe at last. He was made prisoner, and would probably be shot. A bright thought struck him. He claimed protection under the flag of the United States. The request was granted. He was free—until he arrived at Vera Cruz.

Some days were occupied by the passage. Diaz' quick wits were kept on the alert. He made friends with the purser, who was able to do him good service. On the night after his freedom was restored to him Diaz approached this officer, carrying a life-buoy in his hand. He asked his connivance, if not his active assistance, in making another attempt to reach the shore.

The two put their heads together. The purser realised better than Diaz himself that the chance of meeting death by drowning exceeded that of safely reaching the shore by swimming from the distance at which the vessel was then out to sea, and suggested an alternative plan, to which in all probability General Diaz owes his life to-day.

Late that night a splash was heard by the watch from the ship's side. Commotion ensued, people were quickly on deck. Diaz was sought and could nowhere be found. Not only was he missing, but it was discovered that the vessel was a life-buoy short. A minute search was made by the sailors, which threw no light on the passenger's mysterious disappearance. The captain was persuaded that Diaz had gone overboard, and drew up a formal report to that effect. Some days later the discovery of a life-buoy thrown up on the sea-shore, bearing the words *S.S. City of Havana*, left little doubt as to what had been Diaz' fate.

On the arrival of the steamer at Vera Cruz the Commandante of the port, nettled at being robbed of so valuable a prize, ordered a further inspection of the ship.

This proved fruitless, but as a precaution, lest the slippery Diaz, though believed to be dead, might yet escape through his hands, a detachment of soldiers in boats were posted to keep guard round the vessel.

No one had thought of priseing open a sofa-seat in the purser's

cabin, within which for seven days and nights he had been cooped up and half stifled. The Lerdist officers had actually sat upon him when they accepted the hospitality of the purser's cabin for a hand of cards at night.

Diaz had escaped so far, but how was he to land when the ship was so carefully watched on mere suspicion?

He waited his opportunity, and eventually, by the aid of the devoted purser, came safely ashore disguised as a sailor. After further exciting adventures and narrow escapes from capture, he turned up again at Oaxaca. His reappearance put new enthusiasm into the movement.

The revolution went rapidly ahead. It was not long before Diaz had rallied four thousand armed men around him. Organising his forces in those Mexican States which were almost unanimous for his cause, he prepared for decisive battle.

General Diaz had every reason to feel confidence in the men he commanded, veterans largely recruited from his native State, who had fought with him at the storming of Puebla, the critical engagement at La Carbonera, and many another sanguinary encounter. They would follow their leader to death. In point of numbers the Lerdists had still the superiority. General Alatorre marched against the Revolutionists with an army larger than that which Diaz had yet been able to put into the field, and the rival forces faced one another at Tecoac on the 16th of November.

The fight was long and stubborn. The Porfiristas held their own against great odds until late in the afternoon, when the fortunate arrival of General González with reinforcements helped to relieve the tension. At a moment of crisis in the engagement General Diaz placed himself at the head of his men, and, addressing a few words to them to rouse their martial spirit, led them in person in an impetuous charge. The onslaught broke Alatorre's army in two. The day ended in a complete victory for the Porfiristas. Upwards of three thousand prisoners were taken. The defeated Lerdists hurried from the field, leaving in the hands of the conquerors all their baggage and artillery.

General Diaz struck at once for the capital. News of the

disaster to the Lerdists had reached Mexico City before him. Lerdo fled to Acapulco on his approach, taking with him most of his Ministers and all of the public funds that he could lay hands on. He made no further attempt at a stand, and left the country for the United States.

Iglesias thereafter endeavoured to make terms with Diaz. His overtures were refused, and he also went into exile.

Diaz continued his march, occupying Puebla on his way. Leaving General Contellene in charge of that city, he appeared before the Republican capital at the head of twelve thousand men on November 23rd, 1876. He drew up his army at Guadalupe, four miles out. Next day he made his triumphal entry into the city and rode up to the Palace, where he established himself, practically for life.

Three weeks later was the anniversary fête of the Lady of Guadalupe, the patron saint of Mexico. This is the greatest of all Mexican fêtes, and the turn of events gave to the present occasion especial significance. Great were the rejoicings when the twenty or thirty thousand pilgrims from all parts of Mexico learned of the triumph of their popular hero, and they mingled his name with their prayers. The Church of Rome gave permission for these festivals, and in 1754 a Papal Bull officially instituted and sanctioned the 12th of December as the feast day of the "Patron Saint of Mexico, the famous Lady of Guadalupe."

I had the privilege of seeing this wondrous sight in 1900. For days before the festival Indians arrive by train, though most of the pilgrims come on foot. Many of them have to cover hundreds of miles, and often carry all their worldly belongings with them.

It is a strange and weird sight. Here a beggar maid, accompanied by a little girl, both fragile and delicate-looking, who have tramped on day by day to pray at the famous shrine. There an old Indian, with wrinkled brows, leads a child by the hand, while he himself is bent nearly double by the weight upon his back. He carries blankets, the tiny basin in which to light his fire, a few pots and pans, some sugar-cane to chew, and a roll of matting or canvas which will be supported later on sticks,

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Mexican-Indian squaw and babe.

Photo by GARNAUT.]

Photo by GARNAT.]

Boyish cardplayers.

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to make a sort of umbrella-like covering for his family. His squaw, in rags and tatters, follows behind, a baby of nine or ten months old hanging in a shawl upon her neck. Its little blue-black head reaches her shoulders, and its small feet appear below the blue rebozo (shawl), in which it seems to be sitting. They all look awfully, hopelessly poor; the wind is cold—as it so often is during December in Mexico City—nevertheless, these people only wear calico, and even that thin covering is torn and tattered. Watch them, however! They go up to a little booth before the church door and buy a couple of candles, one for the man and one for the woman. They do not even pause to rest or deposit their bundles, so great is their haste to reach the shrine. They enter the lower church—for here are two, as at Lourdes—and after dipping their fingers in the holy water and crossing themselves—particularly on the face, which seems to be an Indian characteristic—they proceed to crawl on their knees up the aisle to the altar rails. They are only doing what hundreds and thousands of their fellows are doing—what, in fact, is expected of them at the fête of Guadalupe.

What a curious spectacle it is! We went out to the shrine a couple of days previously to see the bulk of the Indians arriving. Such scenes as the above were being enacted every moment. Hundreds were already on the spot, some sleeping curled up in gutters; others dressing their hair, or otherwise employed with the zoology in their raven locks. More were gambling.

The whole scene was an anomaly. Outside the church were a dozen booths, containing gambling tables, where youth and age were betting their halfpence or their dollars. The love of gambling seems born in the Mexican, whether he be of Indian or of Spanish descent. It appears as essential to him as his dinner, more so, in fact. But what a fearful thing it is—what a curse to mankind. Look at those people's faces; see that boy gathering up his silver coins to go and get drunk on pulque. He has won more dollars in a few minutes than he ever saw in all his life before, and his newly-acquired wealth will be his ruin. See that old woman's shaky hand as she takes her cigar from her mouth and watches the roulette ball spin round and round; her last cents

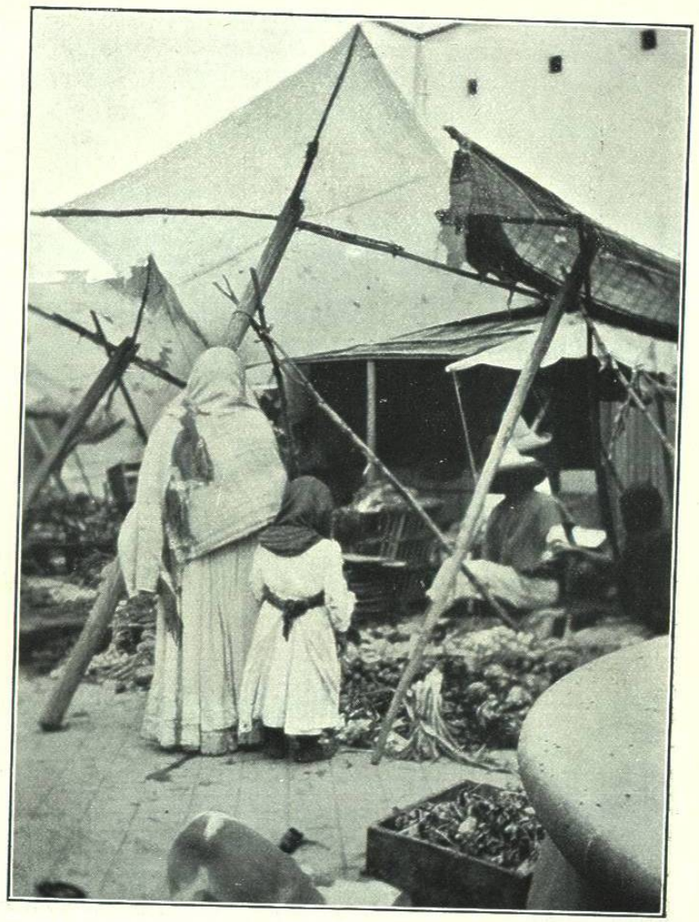
staked on the chance. Look at those two small children, who, instead of spending the few centavos given them for sugar-cane, are risking them on this game of hazard. The same anxiety, the same nervousness, is noticeable among these poor Indians that one sees in the bejewelled gamblers at Monte Carlo; but of the two, Guadalupe is the more horrible, for these folk have come on a pilgrimage to Heaven, yet turned aside enticed by Hell!

Just as now, the same scene was enacted on that day of rejoicing at the success of General Diaz, but there was one exception. Then the purses of the people and the pockets of the soldiers were empty, and gambling was accordingly limited. It went on, of course, for Mexican blood must gamble, but it took more the form of barter, a hat for a belt, a pot for a rosary, and so forth.

Booths are everywhere at Guadalupe; queer pottery, coloured handkerchiefs, fruits or dried meat, baskets, candles for the shrines, even bottles of sacred water, just again as at Lourdes, and pilgrims purchase pictures of the Virgin to decorate their bamboo huts, or to hang above the sacred altar in their humble dwellings.

They have wonderful faith. The only thing they love and dread is their religion. They are powerless in the hands of the priests, who rule them by fear.

The most interesting part of the festival was undoubtedly the night before the chief ceremony. When we reached the Zocolo, or Plaza Mayor, in Mexico City, about half-past six, it was to find every tram to Guadalupe crammed to overflowing. Some of the pilgrims who had arrived late were expending their few cents in an electric tram-ride out to the famous shrine. After walking hundreds of miles with shoeless feet, the Indian availed himself of the advantages of modernity, and completed his journey in an electric carriage. Yet another of the vagaries of Mexico. It was really a wonderful sight to see hundreds of people trudging along the road on foot to the Guadalupe festival; rows and rows of carts of every shape and form, all heavily laden, crawled along in solemn procession. A number of burros (donkeys) were ridden, in many cases pillion fashion, by the more wealthy folk. On the left-hand side was a series



Primitive booths.

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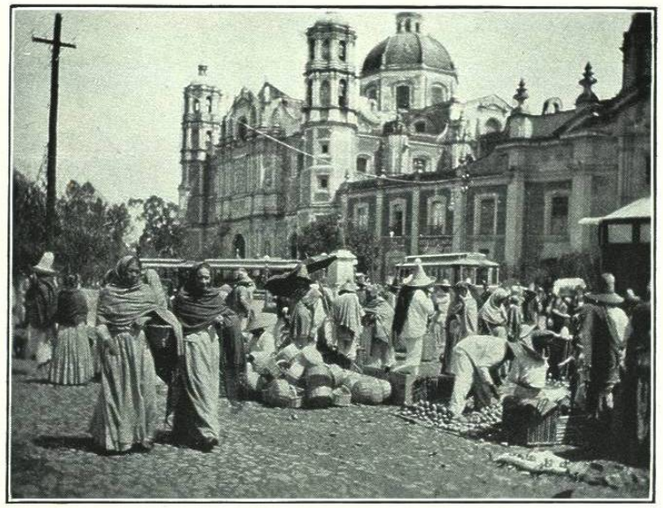

Photo by COX.]

Guadalupe pilgrims.

Photo by The AUTHOR.]

Modern Indians in ancient dress.

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of shrines where the pilgrims stopped to pray, as the soldiers had so often done when marching to the capital. In many respects that procession of humanity reminded me of the crowd arriving at Oberammergau to see the Passion Play.

It was a perfectly dark night, and the lights from Indian fires shed strange shadows and illuminations on the scene. Many groups were seated round small earthenware pots, about the size of a soup-plate, in which a few knobs of charcoal were burning. One of the party was wont to kindle the tiny flame with a fan made of plaited grass. When it was properly ignited, she would put her flat tin on the top, and warm tortillas for the evening meal. By way of extra luxury a little honey was spread over the tortilla, or a few scraps of goat meat rolled inside with a chili. The Indians had the quaintest way of illuminating the scene. Three sticks, a couple of feet long, were made into a standing tripod. On the top of these a stone, brick, or piece of tin was placed. A few shreds of wood were then loosely scattered upon it, and when ignited, made a brilliant blaze.

The Indians were sitting around on their heels, sometimes cross-legged like the Arabs, but always in what appeared uncomfortable positions. The weird flames of light, the colouring of the serapes, the white cotton shirts, and the dark skins of the people, made a strange and wonderful picture.

In front of the basilica was a blaze of light, all the more strange in the general gloom. The towers of the church were illuminated from inside with Bengal lights, coloured red, white and green, to represent the flag of Mexico. It all added effect to a remarkable scene, for the towers of flame rose high in the air, with the darkness of night for a background, and below was that queer medley of humanity with its small bonfires and funny little trestled lights.

At 7.30 the service in the church was to commence; the fires were extinguished a few minutes before that hour, bags and bundles collected, and into this vast and sacred edifice the greater portion of the assembly proceeded.

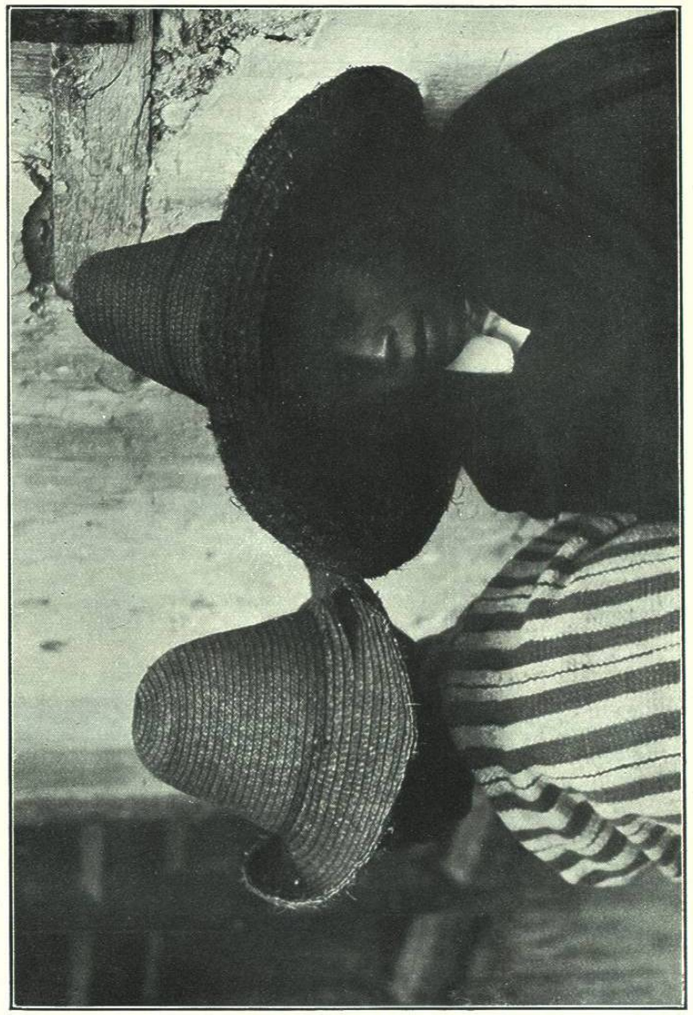
Mexican Indians are most terrible thieves; such thieves, in fact, that they actually steal amongst themselves, and thus it

is that man, woman and child had to convey into the church all their worldly belongings. These generally consisted of a blanket, sombrero, little wooden tripod for the fire, perhaps a couple of pots, and possibly a handkerchief in which tortillas were tied in a bundle. Not only did they take all their worldly goods and chattels to the service, but their dogs, or an occasional parrot, accompanied them, and that Mass was certainly one of the strangest and most weird celebrations that could be imagined.

The cathedral is a handsome edifice. It represents wealth and splendour. The massive balustrades are of solid silver; the candelabra hanging from the ceiling are beautiful, and on this occasion some thousands of candles shed a lurid glow on all around. The priests in gorgeous robes, the decorations of flowers and palms, the quantities of incense giving a cloud-like mysticism to the scene, told of wealth unbounded, while kneeling upon the stone flags in various stages of poverty and abject rags were the Indians. Oh, how poor they were!

I noticed that these people invariably laid their hats upon the stones, and the brim being eight or ten inches wide, they knelt upon that, evidently preferring the soft plaited straw or felt to the hard flags. Many of them took their bundles off their backs, and calmly placed them in front, settled their dog beside them, and, having prepared for their comfort during the service, proceeded to cross themselves, and begin their devotions.

The enthusiasm of these people was extraordinary. Rags and religion were on every side. Some folk said their prayers with their arms outstretched, evidently an extra penance. Others crept up to the chief altar upon their hands and knees. But the absorption and reverence of all was marvellous. Amongst them were some wonderful types of Indians—exactly the class one sees in picture books—dark of skin, fine of profile, and yet with a sort of wicked devilment about them that denoted ill. Many of the women wore the old Indian dress consisting of two articles, a sort of scarf used for a petticoat wrapped round the body, and tied in a knot at the side, leaving an opening through which the limbs could be seen, and a square kind of cloth with a hole in the middle (called *gaban*,



Types of Mexican Indians. [*Page* 260.

Photo by RAVELL.]