

I once laughingly asked Diaz if he had a pistol in his trouser pocket, knowing what extraordinary ruffians he sometimes gives audience to. He laughed.

"Pistol? No. I have not had such a thing in my hand for years. They know I trust them."

It is this direct contact with the people that is of such inestimable value. No courtiers intervene, no wire-pullers work puppets for their own ends, no bias is allowed, for every man or woman who wishes to see Diaz can see him, and sees him absolutely alone, where *unter vier Augen*—as our German friends would say—personal matters can be discussed, and any and every subject sifted to the bottom by this all-wise President.

Anyone can see the President of the United States of America, an American will say. Can he? I doubt it. Present yourself any day at the Executive in Washington, an annexe of the White House, and see if this is so. Policemen guard the door; pertinent questions are asked as to your business, and unless some very good reason showing a possible appointment is vouchsafed, the American is not allowed to enter. Once inside he sits in an entrance hall with dozens of others, surrounded by officialdom. From out that motley crowd, which itself was sorted before even getting so far, two or three specially favoured see the President; the others wait and wait, and finally go away on learning "the President is sorry, but he will not be able to see you to-day."

That same story is repeated day after day, week after week.

One only in hundreds desiring to do so sees the President at Washington, and only a small percentage of these get anything more than a handshake and rapid dismissal. Of course, the argument will spring up that Mexico has a population a quarter the size of the United States. Granted. But, even then, nothing like the same proportion of Americans see their President as Mexicans see Diaz. And for argument again: the President of the United States has a vice-president, which means that two people minister daily to the wants of something approaching eighty millions. Only one man in Mexico ministered to the unruliness of nearly twenty millions, alone and unaided, for twenty-



*with good wishes from
Theodore Roosevelt
Dec 2d 1904*

Photo by BELL.]

The President of U.S.A.

five years, for the office of Vice-President was only inaugurated in December, 1904. Diaz has given ten or twelve hours a week listening to the personal affairs of his people, or those interested in his country's advancement, and he has been doing this for over a quarter of a century. Think of the hours of boredom all that must have entailed, boredom endured without a murmur; but, on the other hand, see what it has been possible for one man single-handed, so to speak, to attain.

He has a grievance put before him; that sore is laid bare and its depths probed; the wound is dressed until the sore heals, and finally becomes a healthy growth.

There is no red-tapeism in the matter, no official pigeon-holing, which merely means the dusty burial of important facts. The discussion is stopped, the papers thrown into the basket and honestly destroyed, or if the matter is worth considering at all it is considered from every standpoint, discussed with the Minister to whose department it pertains, and settled as quickly as possible.

It was interesting to see and talk to that interesting personality Mr. Roosevelt shortly after my visit to Mexico. No greater contrast is possible than these two Presidents.

Diaz—calm, quiet, reserved, strong, determined, thoughtful and far-seeing.

Roosevelt—impetuous, enthusiastic, outspoken, fearless, hasty in action and hurried in forming opinions.

Both remarkable men, very remarkable men, and both utterly dissimilar in character as in physiognomy. Each admiring the other in a perfectly delightful way.

When I was in Washington, the most beautiful modern city in the world, I again saw my old friend, Secretary Colonel John Hay, who gave me his photograph taken in December, 1904, and consequently his last. He looked ill then, but was so keenly interested in Mexican affairs, and spoke so eulogistically of General Diaz, that I ventured on my return to England to ask him if he would write a few lines for this book.

He had already started for Europe when the letter arrived,

but on his return to Washington three months later he wrote the following:

“Department of State, Washington,

“June 20th, 1905.

“DEAR MRS. TWEEDIE,—

“I have received your letter of the 14th of March, asking me to contribute something to your ‘Life of Diaz.’

“It would be a very great pleasure to me to have my name associated with yours in what I am sure will be a very interesting work, but I am obliged to decline all such requests, however agreeable and flattering they may be.

“I am, with many thanks,

“Sincerely yours,

(Signed) “JOHN HAY.”

Only a few hurried lines penned a week after his return to Washington from his last trip in search of health, when he must have been very busy, and delivered in London the day following his death.

Poor John Hay! America lost her greatest statesman, and the world probably the most able diplomatist of the day.

John Hay held the same post in America that Señor Mariscal holds in Mexico, viz., that of Foreign Minister. No more charming gentleman exists in Mexico than Mariscal. Diaz has no keener supporter. He has done much to foster and consolidate the good relations existing between his own country and other lands.

Like the President, Señor Mariscal was born in that queer old southern town Oaxaca, a few months before the chief he has served so ably. Like so many Mexicans he gained a degree in law, but his tastes were always political and on the Liberal side. For his views Santa Anna, when Dictator, banished him from the capital. He followed Juárez through the War of Reform. He was made a judge, served Mexico in Washington, was Secretary for Foreign Affairs (1863), besides having a hand in routing the French troops of Napoleon III. in the days of Maximilian.

This kindly, benevolent, courtly gentleman was given the post of Secretary of Justice and Public Instruction in 1868, by Benito Juárez, and at one time was Minister Plenipotentiary to England.

He is not only a lawyer and a politician but a scholar and an excellent linguist, French and English coming to him as easily as Spanish. For many years now he has been Secretary of Foreign Affairs, and has conducted the business of his portfolio so well that Mexico is at peace with all the world. He lives in an unfashionable quarter of the town, where he has more repose and leisure than he would have elsewhere, and where the home is very homelike, for his wife, a charming woman, was an American. Many Mexicans of note have married American wives, and a few have chosen Englishwomen.

Mariscal, speaking of America, said to me :

"We are on the best terms with the Government of the United States of America, and our northern neighbours show as much admiration for our President as confidence in the solidarity of peace and the reign of law in Mexico. Their confidence has been made manifest by the investment of five hundred million American dollars in this country. The basis of our diplomatic relations is mutual respect and complete justice.

"When the two Governments fail to come to an agreement they may submit the issue to arbitration. This Mexico and America did when the International Court of The Hague was set up, for the first international claim ever submitted to it came from these countries. On another occasion an umpire was appointed to sift a contested claim under Article XXI. of our old Treaty of 1848, which established arbitration for most cases of controversy between the two nations. Very recently we have accepted the proposal of the United States to negotiate a special treaty of arbitration similar to the arrangement signed between England and France in 1903."

But to return to Porfirio Diaz—it is a charming apartment wherein he sits daily with his Ministers. The Council Chamber, a large handsome room, has lately been decorated in dark moss-green and gold. A long table fills the centre, round

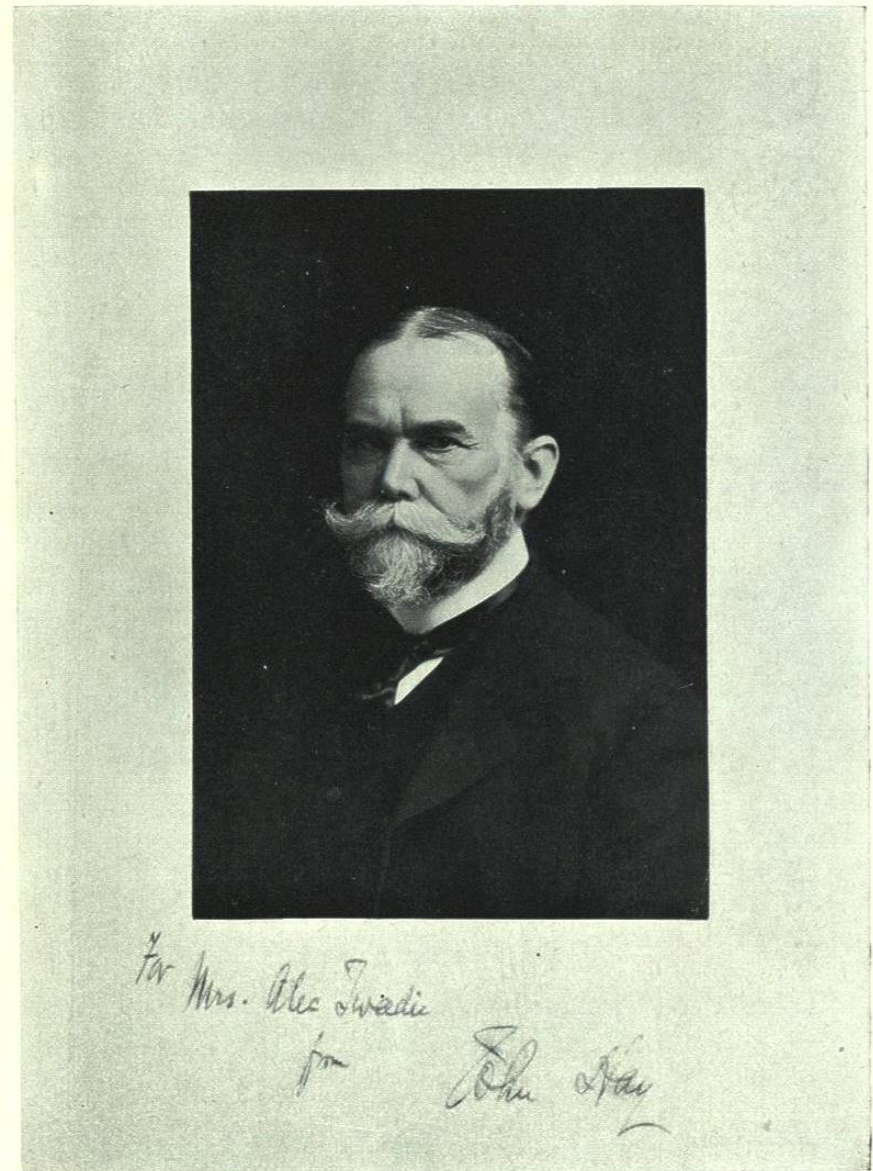




Photo by MORA.]

Señor Ignacio Mariscal, Minister of Foreign Relations.

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which are the Ministers' chairs. General Diaz sits in a more ornate chair with the arms and the emblem of Mexico worked in brass over the head.

There are eight Ministers—

Ramón Corral, Vice-Presidente y Ministro de Gobernacion.

Lic. José Yves Limantour, Finance.

Lic. Ignacio Mariscal, Foreign Relations.

General Manuel González Cosío, War.

Lic. Justino Fernández, Justice.

Blaz Escontría, Comunicaciones.

Ingeniero Leandro Fernández, Fomento, or Encouragement.

Lic. Justo Sierra, Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes.

The first two, as just mentioned, have three private audiences a week in this room, the others two, unless something of importance intervenes. It is a delightfully comfortable place, and the handsome green and gold curtains, with their "R. M." (Republica Mexicana), and the old gold brocade of the walls give it a cosy look. Here all the business of the State is accomplished. When the Constitution is at stake, then both the President and Ministers are responsible before Congress, which acts as a sort of grand jury.

Beyond this Council Chamber is the President's private library—a snug room with books and carvings of a business-like nature, and beyond are suites of apartments, for the palace is a big place, and more handsome and imposing than one would imagine from the outside.

The day's work over, General Diaz enjoys his supper at home between eight and nine, followed by a game of billiards with an intimate friend, or some reading, and bed about eleven in the usual order of events. Probably no ruler in the world leads such a simple, happy, domesticated home-life as the head of the Republic of Mexico. He loves his family and finds amusement in his books.

Dinner at the President's is a delightful meal. Let us take one as an example.

Diaz had just arrived from the Palace, and his equerry was driving home as I entered. The porter below smiled and waved

his hand with a request to go upstairs. This said porter allows no one to pass, unless he has had orders. As I walked up the marble stairs lined with flowers, and passed the fine carved modern figures of animals which form the bottom of the balustrade, a bell tinkled. That was the porter announcing the fact from below that someone was on the stairs.

The usual two men in livery were supplemented by a third, who bowed and waved me along the gallery of the patio to the salon. The doors were open, and forward stepped Madame Diaz with her ever delightful welcome. It was only a family party, just the daughter, Madame de la Torre, who had given the splendid party a few nights before, Captain Diaz and his pretty little wife, Don Guillermo de Landa y Escandon and his handsome spouse Sofia, Madame Diaz' widowed sister and myself—nine in all, with the President and "Cármelita." All but two spoke English, a language Madame Diaz, Captain Diaz, his wife and Don Guillermo all know perfectly. Does that not show how universal English, with all its faults, really is? They spoke French, too, but not so well.

It so chanced that I had said a few days previously that I liked some of the Mexican dishes, and so, after a delightfully French *déjeuner*, the wife of the President had kindly ordered various *tamales* of chicken, sweet peppers and *chiles relenos*, i.e., green peppers stuffed with cream cheese. These peppers look almost like green figs, and although terribly hot, have a nice flavour, but as they are not spicy enough to suit the Mexican palate the inevitable chili sauce was dashed over them likewise. Last came another national dish, namely, *frijoles*, or beans. Served with thick brown sauce, parmesan cheese, and crisply-toasted tortilla (native maize pancake used as bread), they were excellent.

Everything belonging to Madame Diaz is delightful, her table is perfection. Pretty cloths of drawn thread, for which the Indians are so famous, English white china-figured bowls filled with forget-me-nots and roses in December, the most charming Tiffany silver plates, Salviati glass from Italy, dainty French coffee cups—everything has an air of taste and refinement, and

yet she has never been to Europe, and hardly knows the United States at all. But she has patterns and samples sent from everywhere, and the result is quiet, dignified, ladylike perfection. Like our Queen, too, she is never *outré* in her dress, and knows that the art of being well dressed is to be suitably attired.

Dinner announced, the President offered me his arm, and we proceeded past the flowers in the gallery to the dining-room. He was in the best of spirits—he always is, at any rate at home. Sometimes he may be severe at the Palace, but at home he is always gay—and young too. If something which he wants, such as a photo or letter, is mentioned, up he gets and fetches it. Age does not seem to have deprived him of his agility or his spirits.

He is a simple man in his tastes, rarely touches wine, which he gave up at a time when he used to suffer from headaches; and he never smokes nowadays, which for a Mexican is remarkable, as the men smoke cigarettes everlastingly.

Dinner over, the President again offered me his arm, and we went to the dear little Chinese room for coffee, which Madame Diaz dispensed herself.

Beyond is the billiard-room. The French table is covered by a marvellously embroidered cloth, which is the work of his eldest daughter, and he shows it with great pride.

Then comes a dear little boudoir, and beyond in the new house which they have just bought and connected, the most interesting room of all. It is a *salle d'armes*. General Diaz is a true soldier, and he had gathered arms of all sorts during his life, until he had made such a collection that he did not know what to do with them.

Madame Diaz did not approve of rows and rows of guns, pistols, and swords lining the rooms and passages, and so they made a compromise, and decided to ask Señor Fabres, the head of the Academy, if he could suggest anything in the way of decoration for a room. The result is perfect. Señor Fabres has made the walls of dull metals, copper, bronze, silver, or iron, and arranged the shields so charmingly with designs of nails that it is one of the most original rooms I have ever seen in my travels, and