

probably the only perfect one of its kind extant. To get rid of the ugliness of three windows in a row, he has arranged sheets of dull iron on the walls, which look as if ripped back by shell to unfold the shaded yellow lights penetrating those windows, giving the idea of torn armour plate. The doors are treated in the same way, but the golden browns and oxidised greens of the whole effect make it artistic instead of heavy. Arms cover the walls, cleverly worked in with the designs. Mexican-lion, or leopard, skins are scattered over the polished floor, a couple of stuffed seats are made to rest upon old cannon, a weird animal's head forms the front of a writing-table, and in his huge mouth cannon-balls repose. The ingenuity and thought displayed are wonderful. Four large glass show-tables, raised on arms themselves, contain the chief treasures. Swords sent as presents from reigning sovereigns, pistols of all times, beautiful specimens of Toledo blades, ancient and modern guns and rifles. The President knows the history of each and all. Among them is a Maxim repeating gun standing in the middle of the room, sent by my old friend the inventor.

One fine sword ornamented in gold and studded with emeralds is a particular joy. It was given to General Diaz after his triumphal entry into Mexico City in 1876. He accepted this emblem of authority thirty years ago, and has not relinquished his authority yet.

"But where is your own sword?" I asked at last.

"It is not interesting enough to be here," he modestly replied.

"But it ought to be here, historically."

"Oh, no; it is not worth that, and besides, it is such an old and trusted friend that I like to keep it in my own dressing room."

But his son fetched it—a trooper's heavy sword, which had been worn by the General in all his great campaigns, just about as commonplace and cumbersome a weapon as could well be found; but its owner prized it, with all the enthusiasm of a born soldier.

He loves his pistols and his guns, his swords and his daggers, or rather those worn by other people, for he never seems to consider anything of his own is of value to anyone, but describes

how he acquired this or that particular treasure and its history, handling each with the true love of an old campaigner.

Later in the afternoon Don Guillermo de Landa y Escandon drove with me to call on the Minister of Finance to discuss the silver question, in the throes of which he was then engaged. Señor Limantour speaks for himself in the appendix to the volume on this subject, for silver is a matter of pure finance. The question of Mexico—the greatest silver-producing country in the world—being put on to a gold basis is of consequence to merchants all over the world, and the originator of this scheme has kindly given me his views on the subject.

Next to the President, Señor Don José Yves Limantour is the most prominent man in Mexico to-day. Although of French parentage, he was born in Mexico City, on December 26, 1854, and there he took his diploma in law in 1875. Señor Limantour is not only a delightful personality, a linguist, a man of reading and a traveller; but he is a remarkable financier. In appearance he is tall and thin, with clear-cut features, closely-cut white hair, and clean-shaven face except for a white moustache, but the most striking points are his lovely teeth, genial smile, and his courtly manners. Limantour is a born diplomat.

With his charming wife, who is the daughter of Senator Eduardo Canas, he lives in a house facing the gardens of the Alameda in Mexico City. It is a home of luxury and ease, for Señor Limantour inherited a fortune. He has two children living, one of whom, a daughter, is married to Señor Miguel de Iturbe, and is now residing in Paris. The younger, his son Guillermo, is not yet of college age.

To sum up in a few words what Limantour has done for Mexico is impossible. He has reorganised the finances of the country during the last ten years. Before he became Minister of Finance, fiscal years sometimes terminated with a deficit. Diaz was so punctilious in paying off foreign debts, he got into difficulties at home. It is as impossible for a Government as it is for an individual to allow expenditure to exceed income. By wise economy, by devoting his entire time to the one subject of finance, which Diaz with endless other calls upon him was no



longer able to do, by weeding out abuses, by modernising the fiscal system and ridding it of trammels inherited from the Spanish colonial *régime*, and finally by tireless industry and sustained effort, under which his health has at times broken down, Señor Limantour has accomplished what competent authorities, on the eve of his taking the portfolio of Finance, had pronounced impossible, viz., the conversion of a deficit into an annual surplus.

These recurring surpluses have now accumulated into a substantial reserve, which is still of goodly proportions, though the funds for great public works, and for the embellishment and sanitation of the capital, have been, and are still taken from it.

These and other undertakings, which are doing so much for the progress and civilisation of the country, would have been impossible but for the conditions of financial prosperity which are the result of the unremitting and intelligent labours of Limantour. It is but just to add that in his great task Limantour has enjoyed the unlimited confidence and unwavering support of the President of the Republic.

Before bringing this chapter to a close, it will be of interest to give the opinion of well-known writers on the subject of President Diaz himself, they anyway are not biased by personal friendship.

The great English author and Positivist preacher, Frederic Harrison, upon whom both Oxford and Cambridge have showered distinctions, is a warm admirer of General Diaz. Many pleasant chats we have had together over Mexico and her ruler, the pith of which I have persuaded Mr. Harrison to jot down for the benefit of the readers of this volume.

Such words, such praise, from the author of those famous biographies of Cromwell and Chatham mean much, for Mr. Harrison is not a man lightly carried away, but one accustomed to deal with history and politics in a masterful manner, and therefore the following pages are of particular value.

Frederic Harrison speaks of General Diaz as "the great Dictator of the West." He says :

"The restoration of Mexico to prosperity, order, and progress within our own generation is undoubtedly one of the most extraordinary, and also one of the most encouraging phenomena of modern civilization. The American nation of mixed race and dark traditions, which during the greater part of the eighteenth century had been a scene of European domination, of incessant revolution, and of economic distress, suddenly produced at least two men of commanding character, one of them a man of rare genius for government. Under their direction, Mexico, within a single generation, passed into an era of profound civil order, attained material prosperity, and gave an example to Europe of wise and progressive reform.

"The era of foreign oppression was closed nearly forty years ago by the heroic defence of the patriots led by Juárez and Porfirio Diaz. And the basis of the civil reform had been founded by Juárez some fifty years ago, by his fundamental law of equality of civil rights which annihilated the odious exemptions from civil jurisdiction of the clergy and all their dependents. But the intervention of Europe and the fatal expedition ordered by Napoleon III. prevented Juárez from completing his beneficent reform. And it was not until the accession of Porfirio Diaz to the Presidency in 1876 that the regeneration of Mexico began in earnest.

"The school of Auguste Comte, both in England and in France, has always watched the revival of Mexico and the career of its great President with special sympathy and admiration; and their organs in both countries have constantly sought to direct the attention of historians and politicians to the astonishing success of the political system there developed. The Presidency of Diaz, in fact, is a perfect type of the normal government such as Comte imagined it—a government of eminent capacity freely welcomed by an enlightened people—equally removed from dictatorial oppression as from democratic restlessness.

"In an eloquent article on Mexico, in 1899, by Mr. S. H. Swinny, now President of the Positivist Society, the writer says: 'Mexico stands firmer than ever, stronger, more united, and



more prosperous. Long before Mr. Bryce, in 1888, wrote in his "American Commonwealth" some doubts as to Mexican Independence, the work of reformation had begun, and Mexico, *the sentinel of Latin America*, was awake.'

"The article then continues:

"There had been little in the early history of the country to herald a good issue to its troubles. It had passed from the dull repression of Spain to the licence of the war of liberalism. It had produced no great leader save in *pronunciamientos* and rebellions, it had no reputation if it were not for disorder and bad finance, nor was it easy to see whence salvation would come. The Church suppressed all freedom of thought, and the loss of political liberty was exploited by men who were incapable of aught but destruction. And yet, in the year 1818, before the Spaniards had been finally driven out, an Indian boy of twelve might be seen on his way to seek work in Oaxaca. Here in this boy, who did not even know Spanish, lay order, and freedom, and good government, for this was Juárez, the future saviour of his country."

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'He was succeeded by Porfirio Diaz, who still sits as President of the Mexican Republic; nor can it be aught but a cause of wonder that Mexico has produced two such statesmen in one generation. How many nations have prayed for but one such, and have prayed in vain? Yet the Mexicans have shown that they deserved their good fortune by recognising and rallying to their leaders. With the great Republic of the North on their borders they hold the post of danger; they have made it the post of honour.'

"The number of the *Revue Occidentale*, Paris, May, 1905, contains an eloquent article (translated) by Agustin Aragon, on the restoration of Mexico by Juárez, and the continuation of the same work and its vast development by Porfirio Diaz. This restoration may be treated under nine distinct heads:

- "1. The maintenance of order and personal security.
- "2. The maintenance of peace and national independence.
- "3. The control of the military order under the civil.
- "4. The separation of spiritual and temporal authorities.
- "5. Freedom of worship and religious toleration.
- "6. Free, unsectarian, and universal education.
- "7. Financial integrity and public credit.
- "8. Economic progress and material prosperity.
- "9. Development of internal industry, rural and manufacturing.

"These ends, almost all of them equally necessary and vital, have been persistently pursued by the actual President over a period now of nearly thirty years. None of them have been neglected. But the most valuable of all have been order, peace, tolerance, and education. The most extraordinary feat of all was the formal suppression of the old usurpations of the Church, which, under obsolete laws of Spain, exempted the household, and it seems even the concubines, of a priest from liability to an action for debt in a civil court. In the words of Dr. Gabino Barreda: 'In effecting the complete separation of Church and State, in emancipating the spiritual power from the degrading control of temporal authorities (*i.e.*, in freeing the Church from tyrannical abuses and the State from interfering in religion), Mexico has taken a step more advanced than that of any other nation in securing an era of true civilization and moral progress.'

"The first Presidency of Porfirio Diaz, 1876, was mainly occupied with extinguishing the last embers of domestic revolution, and with the very difficult and delicate task of restoring diplomatic relations with the European and American powers with which Mexico had become embroiled. Owing to the state of internal and financial chaos in which Mexico had been involved since the War of Independence, she had been in military and diplomatic conflict for generations with almost every power in Europe or in America, great or small. The United States, the South American and Central American States, France, Britain, Spain, Germany, Italy, had all been public enemies or hostile creditors. It was a triumph of diplomacy to restore peaceful



relations with jealous neighbours and angry potentates. But it was done; and for five-and-twenty years the foreign relations of Mexico have been tranquil and satisfactory.

"The peace and honourable independence of the country being secured, Diaz has devoted almost the whole of his seven terms of office to internal reform and industrial progress. Mexico has a population about one-third of that of the United Kingdom with an area five or six times as great. Its total expenditure on its army and navy is about one million and a half sterling. And that in a country the very existence of which has been menaced by all the Powers in turn for more than half a century. Happy is a nation of thirteen millions\* which is content with a budget of six or seven millions sterling, almost entirely devoted to its internal administration.

"For twenty years the annals of Mexico have been uneventful and peaceful. What was one of the most wildly turbulent and insecure of all lands has become as safe and orderly as any in Europe. The finances have been placed on a sound basis, and the national credit has been restored. Foreign investments are easily obtained at rates similar to those of public undertakings in the United States. The extension of railways and other industrial works has been carried on with great success. New modes of agriculture and improved manufactures have been stimulated by the wise regulations of the Government. It has been truly said that, under President Diaz, the history of Mexico has been mainly that of economic and intellectual development. Can any judgment be more honourable to a ruler—or to the people which profits by his counsels?

"The most striking and most original part of President Diaz' task has been the suppression—the peaceful and legal suppression—of the clerical domination under which Mexico had groaned for centuries. The disestablishment of the Church, the suppression of the monastic houses, and of the odious clerical perquisites and exemptions, were all carried out with less acrimony and less disturbance than in Italy or in France, and all of them have been accomplished far more effectually. The Catholic

\* Probably about 20,000,000 in 1905.

religion has not been in any way prejudiced, and it is left to use all its spiritual forces undisturbed, whilst it is prevented from usurping the powers of the civil arm. Liberty of thought, liberty of worship, is completely guaranteed to all, whilst no religious community is suffered to claim a monopoly of privileges in the matter of marriage, burial, birth, or education.

"The system of public instruction in Mexico is one of the most liberal in modern States. It is free, secular, and compulsory, and it is worked without friction. In a race so mixed and so backward in culture, with its long traditions of Clerical obscurantism, the establishment of a system of popular secular education was a task of extraordinary difficulty. But Mexico happily possesses a body of enlightened savants and professors who have thrown themselves with enthusiasm into the work. The scientific, historical, and philosophical culture of Mexico is not behind that of Europe and the United States. The followers of Darwin, Auguste Comte, and Spencer, form an even larger proportion of the educated class.

"The triumphant success of the practical dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz is a signal proof of the power of a great statesman to revivify and regenerate his country. And it is also a proof that it is possible in a modern Republic to establish the unquestioned ascendancy of a great man along with the intelligent acceptance and the grateful support of a free people."

A glance at the history of the other Republics of the world will show that it is not only in his own country that General Diaz' position is considered unique.

Writing of the United States in his "American Commonwealth," the Rt. Hon. James Bryce says:

"The Constitution prescribes no limit for the re-eligibility of the President. He may go on being chosen for one four-year period after another for the term of his natural life. But tradition has supplied the place of law."

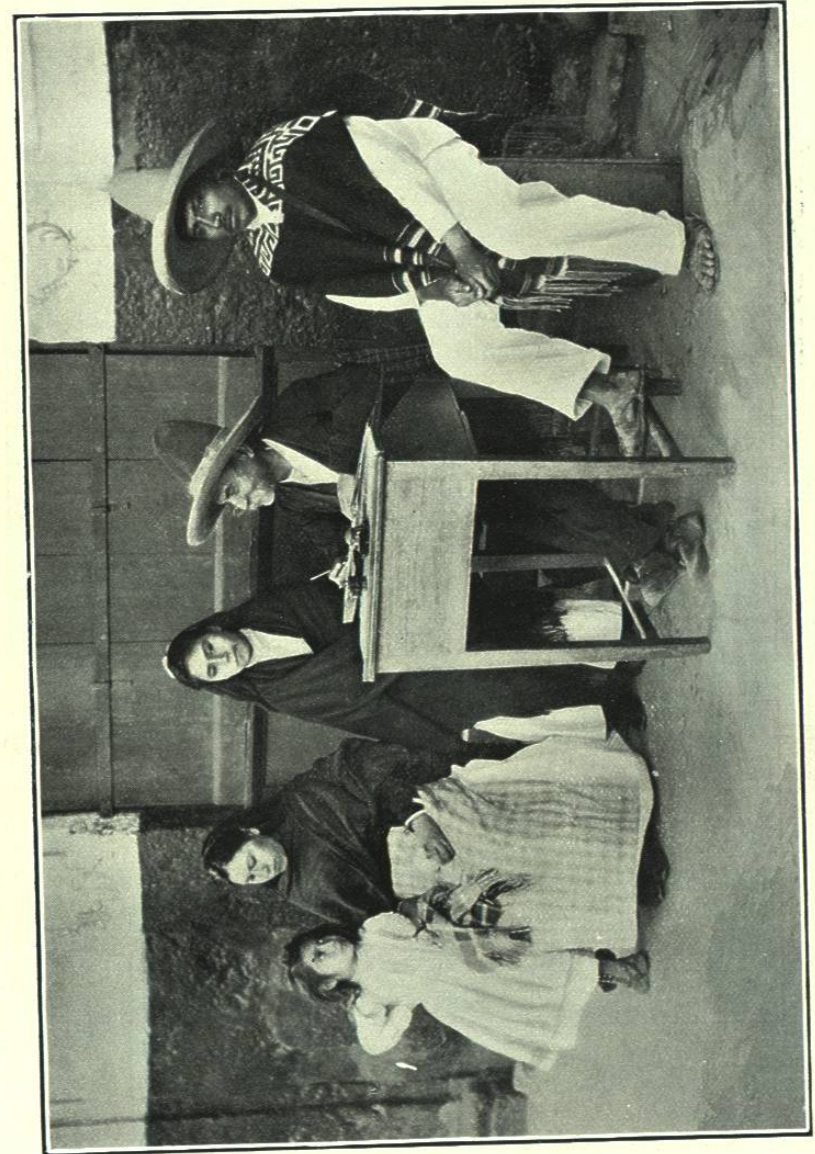
Washington, Jefferson, Maddison, Monroe, and Jackson each served two terms of four years, and Grant also held office from 1869 to 1877, but in 1880, when an attempt was made to place



him in the Presidential chair for the third time, it was defeated, and Professor Bryce remarks :

"This precedent has been taken as practically decisive for the future, because General Grant, though his administration had been marked by grave faults, was an exceptionally popular figure. A principle affirmed against him is not likely to be departed from in favour of any aspirant for many elections to come."

Therefore it is all the more remarkable, as this feeling against re-election exists so strongly in the sister Republic, that Diaz should have been so repeatedly brought back to power.



A public letter writer.