

President of Mexico, the chosen second of the Nationalist party, to take up his duties for the first time in the capital. It would be interesting to lift the curtain ten years ahead and see what has happened to Mexico and her rulers.

As I sat pondering over my interview with a man of whom so much is expected, and as yet so little is known, a marvellous effect appeared on the prairie. It was midwinter, and the sun set about five o'clock. The effect lasted only for a few minutes, for twilight there is none.

We had neared the mountains round Camacho when the heavens assumed the most gorgeous hues, while just below the purple of the hills a vast flaming lake appeared. The foreground of prairie disappeared into hazy opalescent reds and yellows. A gauzy haze floating over a vast sheet of water. Behind rose those rugged hills the last of the spurs of the Rocky Mountains chain, and above that glorious fiery sky. I did not remember such a vast field of water existing at that part, and neither did it. It was a mirage, and the cattle that stampeded away from the train could not quench their thirst within its basin. But these old prairie cattle are wiser than the *gringos* (foreigners), know exactly where to find real water, and do not tramp off to encounter disappointment in a mirage.

In summer the cattle require to go every day to water; but in the cooler weather they do not drink for two or three days at a time; especially if they get prickly pear, a form of cactus which is the salvation of prairie cattle in times of drought. It is very juicy, being eighty-seven per cent. water.

To encourage the cattle to eat sufficient prickly pear to live on in times of drought, the ranchmen cut it off the stem, make a fire, and burn off the worst of the prickles, which they do by holding the leaves over the flames for a moment. The animals eat the cactus, including all the prickles and thorns—they are real prickles and thorns—and sometimes their mouths get so full of them that when they are killed it seems wonderful they could have managed to exist under the circumstances, for the back of the tongue looks like a cushion stuck full of pins. The wildest animals will follow anyone about in the tamest manner



Photo by The AUTHOR.]

Horses on the prairie.



Photo by The AUTHOR.]

Mules on the prairie.



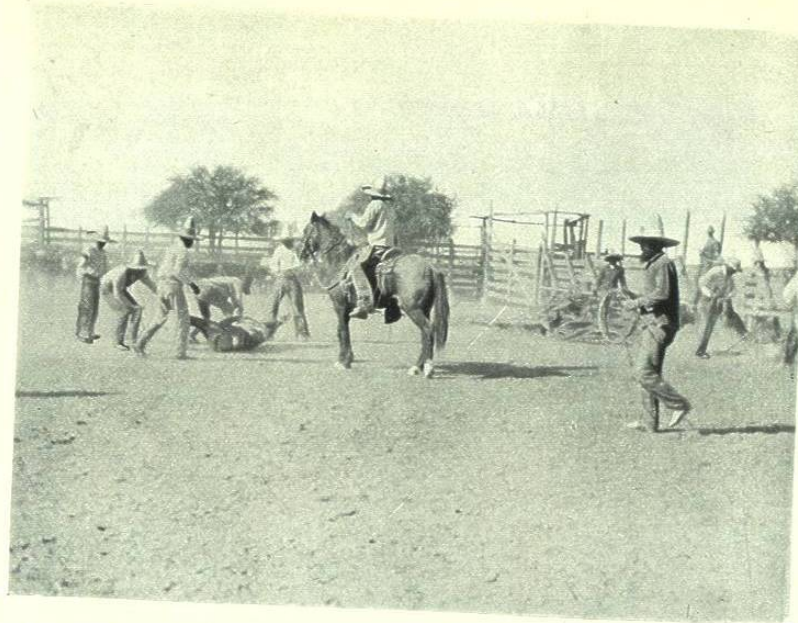


Photo by The AUTHOR.]

Six men to one calf !

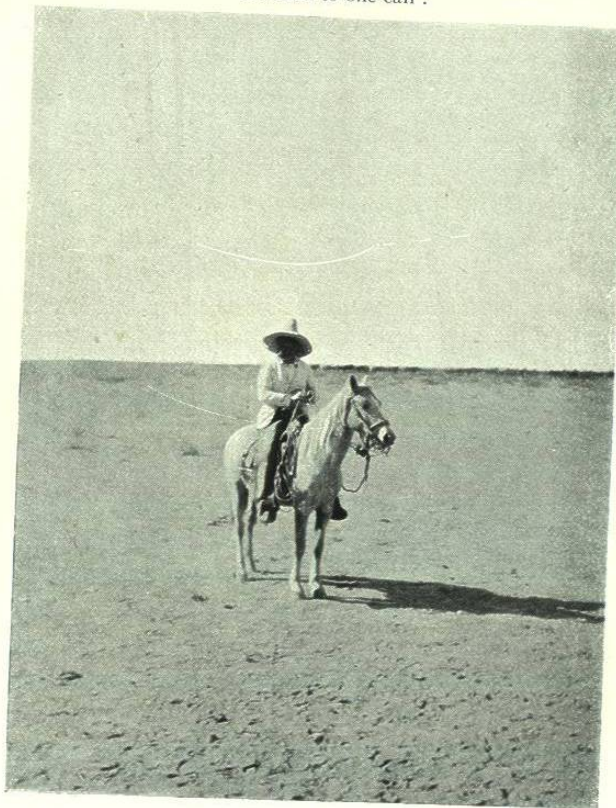


Photo by The AUTHOR.]

The loneliness of the prairie : a Caporal.

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to obtain the specially-prepared prickly pear delicacy, which often goes far to save their lives. A train of Mexican carriers, who travel about with perhaps forty carts of goods and half-a-dozen oxen yoked to each cart, feed their animals entirely on these shrubs. The species abounds, and good jelly is made from the fruit. The flower, too, is pretty.

The real wild cattle, which still exist in parts of Mexico, especially in these districts, are weedy and small, with enormous horns. They live on the prickly pear and grass, never seek water like the ranch cattle, and never drink at all except when it rains and they find a puddle. They are fast dying out ; indeed, ranch owners shoot them whenever they get a chance. Sometimes the cowboys rope, and neck or yoke a wild beast with a gentle one, hoping to tame the monarch of the hills, but as a rule this does not answer, the wild animal generally dying of a broken heart. He simply lies down, sulks, kicks, and dies. It is found better to kill them at once, for otherwise they cause great trouble.

Darker and darker grew the purples, more hazy and indistinct the golds and reds, and then, as if a veil passed over the sky, mirage and mountains disappeared into the mysterious shades of night.

Oh, the poverty of the Mexican Indian as sometimes seen from the train. For instance, look at that village. The houses are made of sun-dried bricks without straw, known as *adobe*. They have flat roofs, no chimneys and no windows. The open door admits all the light and ventilation that is necessary in the day-time, and when closed keeps the place warm at night. These folk are too poor to afford much oil, and they go to bed when it is dark and get up when it is light.

Law necessitates the Indians being clothed. The poorer ones do not even wear sandals, although the richer natives do, and are proud of them. A man has four garments, a shirt, a pair of white linen trousers, a large flannel blanket *sarape* which he wears when it is cold and rolls himself up in at night, and his huge felt or straw sombrero.

Corral comes from that vast district of Northern Mexico known as Sonora, through which I was steaming, now well known for



its mines and cattle ranches, but formerly the home of famous Indian cave-dwellers and the wild Apache tribes.

Alas ! The Indian languages and customs are dying out. The native devil dances, the skeleton weddings and the weird music, are gradually disappearing, although superstition is dying hard, for it is part and parcel of the people.

Those people of the North who lived in caves knew nothing of masonry, and yet the people of the South were magnificent workers in stone. No finer examples of early stone ornamentation exist than the Zapotec Temples at Mitla, or the Aztec-Toltec Fortress at Xochicalco.

Mexico possesses every kind of climate, for it is nearly two thousand miles from north to south. Almost every flower, fruit, and vegetable known to man may be found within its boundaries, and practically every mineral this world produces has been discovered in the Republic.

Half a century ago there was probably no spot on earth more corrupt than Mexico. Corruption was born in the blood ; the love of gambling, coquetting with chance, was inherent.

The Senate was corrupt, politics were even more so than in the United States. Presidents were constantly changing, each with his own friends and his own interests ; but they could not all together do as much as the one President who has retained his seat for twenty-six years.

Gradually, and only gradually, has the influence of General Diaz been felt. He refused to be bribed, he discharged anyone beneath him who allowed backsheesh ; so to-day (1905) in spite of all the great schemes afloat, for harbours, mines, manufactories or public buildings, bribery is almost unknown.

If political morality in the United States is at a low ebb, as many assert, the honesty of the American public itself is on a high plane.

In Mexico things are reversed. The politician is beyond bribery and corruption ; the peon gladly accedes to both, and is at heart a thief withal.

That America, a great and wonderful country, should allow statesmen to condescend to trickery is remarkable, and should



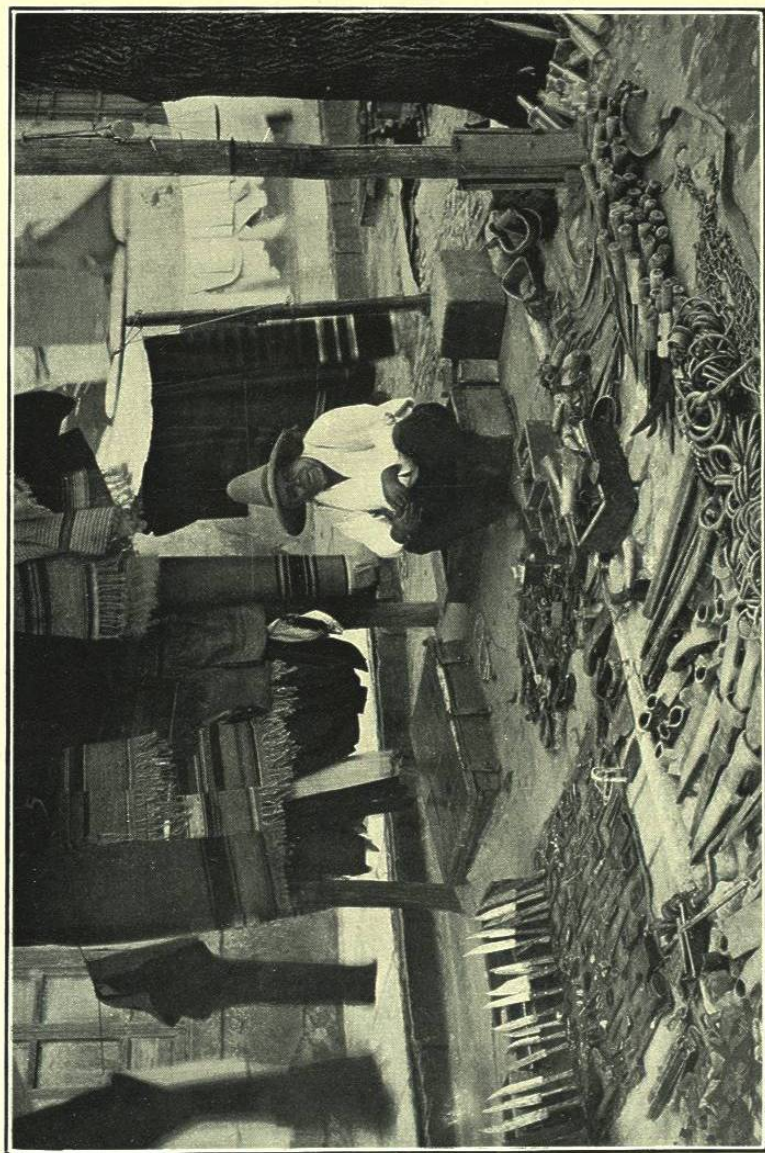
Pitch pine dealer (poverty).



Photo by The AUTHOR.]

A village church. Silver altar and rails (wealth).





The cutlery market.

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be easily cured, for they are educated men, although peeping into the Senate, where wealth has bought its seats, one soon finds that the education of American politicians is not always of a high standard. On the other hand, the peon is an Indian, or a half-bred with little education or moral strength, and such material is more difficult to train.

Trade indications in Mexico are all good; railway traffic shows improvement, and there is a generally hopeful feeling. There is bread and work for all industrious people. Idlers and the shriftless, the constitutionally incapable, must suffer as they always do, even in times of prosperity; but everywhere the public schools and the increasing body of trained teachers are doing their work in preparing the rising generation to take its place among the hosts of industry. There are more young Mexicans acquiring technical knowledge than ever before; there is a growing pride in honest work. There being a perfect condition of political tranquillity, the mind of the nation is bent upon the things that are vital to the general prosperity.

Mexico can well afford to leave politics alone; it had decades of political unrest and disturbance. Now the best brains of the country are busy with practical things, finding out how to make money and win assured comfort. The weak and indolent are being relegated to the rear, and the thoughtful and planning section of the people is winning its way in the world. The middle class, which is a producing and a consuming class, is growing rapidly.

On December 1st, 1904, General Diaz took the oath as President for the seventh time. That is a record for any man to be proud of, and must he not have felt pleased as he remembered the bankrupt state of Mexico when he first stepped into office, and her financial success to-day when her Government Bonds are above par.

What a different scene was the day in 1876, when he first took the oath in grave anxiety but buoyed up with hope, to what it was in 1904, when peace and prosperity reigned on every side.

At ten o'clock in the morning, the nation's idol and hero became the President for the seventh time, and on this occasion



for a term of six years, and with a Vice-President to aid him. Those who had formerly fought against him voted for him that day. Moderate Republicans, Radicals, Clericals, and former Imperialists, all were ready to be guided by the master mind of this democratic leader.

The ceremony took place at the Chamber of Deputies, Alfredo Chavero, Speaker of the House, receiving the oath.

The night before, the following military orders were issued :

"Inasmuch as, to-morrow, in the Chamber of Deputies, the oath of office will be taken by the President and Vice-President of the Republic, who have been elected for the term of six years, which will terminate on November 30, 1910, the military commandant, acting under instructions from the Department of War and Marine, is pleased to order that the regiment of Zapadores and the third, tenth and twenty-fourth infantry regiments be drawn up at 9.30 a.m., from the portico of the Chamber to the door of honour of the National Palace, forming a double line along the following streets : Factor, Vergara, San Francisco, Plateros, Portal de Mercaderes, and in front of the City Hall.

"The said forces will be subject to the immediate orders of Brigadier-General Telesforo Merodio, whose staff will consist of Major Melchor Rodriguez and Lieutenants Ignacio Gamiochipi and Enrique Gómez. The Gendarmes del Ejercito will furnish an escort.

"The regiment of Zapadores will provide a guard of honour with flag and band, composed of forty men, commanded by a first captain : the said guard to station itself at the entrance of Congress and to incorporate itself with its regiment when the supreme magistrate withdraws.

"The troops on duty at the Ciudadela will fire a salute of twenty-one guns at the time of the taking of the oath of office. When the salute is fired the flag will be hoisted on all barracks and military edifices and will be hauled down when the salute is at an end.

"At 3.30 the superior officers and officers of the army will assemble in the Department of War and Marine, in order to proceed in a body to congratulate the President of the Republic."

The city was in gala attire, throngs of people cheered on every

side. The military were in force, the salute was fired, and everything denoted a great festival.

The streets along the route which the President was to traverse in an open carriage to the Chamber to take the oath presented a scene of animation. The pavements were packed with people, and the balconies and windows could not have contained a larger number of spectators.

In the meantime not only members of both Houses of Congress, but the representatives of foreign and friendly Powers, nearly all in uniform, and many ladies and gentlemen of the best classes of society were arriving at the Chamber.

Madame Carmen Romero Rubio de Diaz, wife of the President of the Republic, arrived in her carriage with her sister, Señora Maria Luisa Romero Rubio de Teresa, Señora Amada Diaz de la Torre, and Señora Luisa Raigosa de Diaz, wife of Captain Porfirio Diaz. Don Manuel Cuesta Gallardo gave his arm to Madame Diaz and escorted her and her party to the box reserved for them.

Señora Amparo Escalante de Corral, wife of Vice-President Corral, a handsome woman, also came to see her distinguished husband take the oath of office.

The diplomatists were received by Don Luis Torres Rivas, Introducer of Ambassadors, in full dress uniform, glittering with decorations.

The box apportioned to the Corps Diplomatique presented a brilliant appearance with its array of bright-hued uniforms, ribbons and decorations, ranging from the gorgeously embroidered Oriental silks of the Chinese Chargé d'Affaires and Attaché to the heraldic blazonry of European monarchies, maintaining all the trappings and picturesque accoutrements of mediæval chivalry.

In the box were General Clayton, American Ambassador, in his military uniform, and Messrs. McCreery and Hoefele, first and third secretaries of the Embassy ; Monsieur Camille Blondel, French Minister, whose array of decorations was particularly imposing, and who was accompanied by the Vicomte de la Tour, Secretary of the Legation ; the Marquis de Prat,