

spent several years as a planter in the District of Soconusco, State of Chiapas, where these conditions prevail, I saw the practical workings of the peonage system. It was not possible to obtain there a laborer, either as a domestic or a field hand, without first paying the debt of from one to five hundred dollars that he had contracted with his former employer; so that it is easy to understand what an expenditure of money was required before a large number of hands could be obtained. Lapse of time increases the debt instead of diminishing it, since the laborer asks each week, as a rule, for more than the amount of his wages. Whenever the hands are displeased with their work—either because they quarrel among themselves, because their employer does not treat them well, because they do not get all the money advances they ask, or for any other reason—they have entire freedom to offer their services to anybody else, who willingly pays their debt, as everybody is always in need of help; but often, and especially when the employer does not live permanently in the country, as was my case when I was in Soconusco, laborers whose debts reach a considerable sum conceal themselves, fly to another district where they are not known, or in some other manner evade the payment of their indebtedness; with the result that it is a total loss to their employer. The same is the case when the indebted laborer dies or becomes disabled for work.

These are the practical results of the peonage system, so far as my experience goes, although I do not deny that it is liable to great abuse on the part of the employers, who are favored in a few cases by the tolerance of the local authorities and by the ignorance and poverty of the laborers.

There are some places—especially in the States of Tabasco and Campeche, where mahogany, cedar, ebony and dyewoods are cut in uninhabited spots, which change as the wood is exhausted—where the employer assumes, in the absence of any magistrate or other authority, and generally through an overseer, for he himself seldom remains at such places, all the powers of government. Of course, opportunities for doing injustice are very much increased, in view of the fact that there an employer is hardly ever called to account for abuse of authority. In most of these cases the employer is obliged to set up, for the convenience of his laborers—as I have heard, though I have no personal knowledge in the matter—a store where they can provide themselves, there being no other near by, with provisions, groceries, and such dry-goods as they may need in the ordinary course of life, paying for them with the scrip issued to them by the employer over his signature in settlement of their wages. It is easy to see how greatly this system is liable to abuse, since the laborer has to purchase at the store of his employer everything he wants, and at such prices as the

owner may think fit to charge, thus losing all the benefits of competition.¹

But the peonage system has no legal existence in Mexico, because Article V. of our Constitution of 1857, enacted for the purpose of abolishing it, provides that "nobody should be obliged to render personal service without proper compensation and his full consent," and forbids the issuance of any law to authorize any contract which might have for its object the "loss or irreparable sacrifice of the freedom of man through work, education, or religious vows." This article was amended on the 25th of September, 1873, chiefly with a view of prohibiting the taking of religious vows in Mexico, and also of making it more explicit, and it reads now, so far as work is concerned, as follows: "The state cannot allow the fulfilment of any agreement, contract, or covenant which may, in any manner, impair, destroy, or irrevocably sacrifice man's liberty, either through work, education, or religious vows."

Whatever abuses might have been committed under the peonage system in Mexico in former years when laborers were abundant and occupation scarce, and the laborers were ignorant and destitute, they have either disappeared altogether or been very materially reduced with the changing conditions of the country, as labor is now in great demand, so much so that in very many places the demand exceeds the supply. The laborers began to be educated with the restoration of peace. The local authorities vie with each other to enforce the laws which guarantee the personal rights of every inhabitant of the country.

Rate of Agricultural Mexican Wages.—The broken surface of Mexico gives us all the climates of the world, frequently at very short distances from each other, and enables us to produce the fruits of all the zones, while placing at our disposal, at the same time, an immense hy-

¹ It seems that something similar to this is done in the United States, as is shown by the following extract from Gen. Rush C. Hawkins's article, entitled "Brutality and Avarice Triumphant," published in the June, 1896, number of the *North American Review*, page 660:

"One of the most facile means in the hands of avarice for cheating the poor and helpless is the 'corporation and contractor's' store. It is usually owned by corporations whose employees are the only patrons, and the rule is to sell the poorest possible quality of supplies at the highest price obtainable. In many instances employees are given to understand that they are expected to trade at the company and contract stores, or, failing to do so, will be discharged. This oppressive method of cheating is not confined to any particular part of the country, but prevails, with varying degrees of malignancy, wherever under one management, either corporate, partnership, or individual, any considerable number of employees are assembled together. Since the close of the Civil War many thousands of ignorant blacks have been made the victims of this common and heartless swindle, which has absorbed their scant earnings. At the end of each month, year in and year out, it has proved to their untrained minds an astonishing fact that the longer and the harder they worked the more they got in debt to their employers."

draulic power, of which for the present we hardly avail ourselves. But, on the other hand, this condition of things made transportation very expensive, and rendered the interchange of products exceedingly difficult. The obstacles to communication between the various sections of the country, and the diversity of conditions existing in each, cause a great difference in the wages paid in different localities.

The Department of Public Works of the Mexican Government has been for some time past collecting data regarding the wages paid to field laborers, and during one of my visits in 1891, to the City of Mexico, I obtained a summary of such data. It is very difficult to present it in a complete and correct form, because there are several systems of wages. In some places a fixed amount is paid for one day's work; in others, again, besides the wages, rations are given,¹ consisting of a certain quantity of grain, sufficient for the subsistence of the laborer and his family; the quality and quantity of these rations vary, as well as their value, for grain has different prices in the various localities; and all these causes render it very difficult to make an entirely accurate *résumé* of the official data.

The most complete that I was able to prepare, during my visit to Mexico in 1891, is the following, which embraces the maximum and minimum field wages paid in the different States of the Mexican Confederation, in cents and per day:

¹ This assertion is confirmed by the following statement from Mr. Ransom's (U. S. Minister to Mexico) report on Prices and Labor in Mexico, of September 26, 1896, published in vol. xiii., part I, page 117, of *Special Consular Reports*, on Money and Prices of Foreign Countries:

"A large portion of the farming in Mexico is carried on under the 'share system.' The Government reports show that, in many instances, rations of corn are furnished to the hired laborer; in some cases we find that he is allowed a small amount per day for his board in addition to wages; again, he is furnished by the landlord with a small piece of land to cultivate for his own benefit."

These views are confirmed by a report on the condition of Mexico, dated at its capital city, on September 4, 1896, from Governor Thomas T. Crittenden, then Consul-General of the United States in the City of Mexico, and published by the *Journal of New York*, in its issue of September 17, 1896:

"The wages paid laborers and artisans are largely improved. Formerly workmen, particularly agricultural laborers, were paid in 'kind'; now they are paid in money. In the case of farm laborers, it is the custom of the country for the employer, in addition to the regular wages, to allow the laborer the use of a certain acreage to raise his own food. In many of the agricultural districts, instead of employing labor directly, the owners of haciendas follow what is known in the United States as the share system of cultivating their land. Those who were formerly practically serfs now receive half the crop they raise. Corn is the great staple of the country.

"In considering the labor and wage question it should be borne in mind that the American skilled workman possesses on the average a much higher degree of skill in his trade than the Mexican employed in a similar vocation. The American skilled workman also performs much more work in a day than the workman in this country."

DAILY WAGES PAID TO FIELD HANDS IN MEXICO IN 1891.

STATES.	Minimum. Cts.	Maximum. Cts.	Average. ¹ Cts.
Aguascalientes.....	\$0.18 $\frac{3}{4}$	\$0.18 $\frac{3}{4}$	\$0.18 $\frac{3}{4}$
Lower California (T).....	.50	.50	.50
Chiapas.....	.25	.75	.50
Chihuahua.....	.18 $\frac{3}{4}$	.25	.21 $\frac{7}{8}$
Coahuila.....	.31 $\frac{1}{4}$	.75	.53 $\frac{1}{2}$
Colima.....	.25	.37 $\frac{1}{2}$	.31 $\frac{1}{4}$
Durango.....	.25	.75	.50
Federal District.....	.31 $\frac{1}{4}$	.37 $\frac{1}{2}$	.34 $\frac{3}{8}$
Guanajuato.....	.18 $\frac{3}{4}$	.31 $\frac{1}{4}$	.25
Guerrero.....	.18 $\frac{3}{4}$	.50	.24 $\frac{3}{8}$
Hidalgo.....	.12 $\frac{1}{2}$	.37 $\frac{1}{2}$	.25
Jalisco.....	.18 $\frac{3}{4}$	.50	.34 $\frac{3}{8}$
Mexico.....	.12 $\frac{1}{2}$	.37 $\frac{1}{2}$	.25
Michoacan.....	.15 $\frac{1}{2}$	.75	.45 $\frac{1}{4}$
Morelos.....	.25	.75	.50
Nuevo Leon.....	.18 $\frac{3}{4}$	.18 $\frac{3}{4}$	.18 $\frac{3}{4}$
Oaxaca.....	.18 $\frac{3}{4}$	.50	.34 $\frac{3}{8}$
Puebla.....	.18 $\frac{3}{4}$	.50	.34 $\frac{3}{8}$
Queretaro.....	.18 $\frac{3}{4}$	.37 $\frac{1}{2}$	.28 $\frac{1}{2}$
San Luis Potosi.....	.18 $\frac{3}{4}$	.25	.22 $\frac{1}{4}$
Sonora.....	.30	1.00	.65
Tabasco.....	.37 $\frac{1}{2}$	.50	.43 $\frac{3}{8}$
Tamaulipas.....	.25	.50	.37 $\frac{1}{2}$
Tepic (T).....	.25	.50	.37 $\frac{1}{2}$
Tlaxcala.....	.25	.50	.37 $\frac{1}{2}$
Veracruz.....	.25	.62 $\frac{1}{2}$	.43 $\frac{3}{8}$
Yucatan.....	.25	.37 $\frac{1}{2}$	.31 $\frac{1}{4}$
Zacatecas.....	.18 $\frac{3}{4}$	.50	.34 $\frac{3}{8}$
Average in the whole country.....	.23 $\frac{1}{2}$	.50	.36

Before giving an account of the causes of the diversity of wages paid in Mexico for field work, and showing why these wages are so low, it is opportune to say that it is not in Mexico only that such diversity of wages exists, for something similar is the case in this country. According to information published by the Wisconsin Labor Bureau, in 1891, a common laborer in Atlanta earns 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ cents per hour, while the same laborer in Galveston, also a Southern city, earns 25 cents per hour, or three times as much.

The Division of Statistics of the Department of Agriculture of the United States issued, in 1892, a report (Miscellaneous Series, Report No. 4) on the "Wages of Farm Labor in the United States. Re-

¹ The averages in this table are not properly made, because they are obtained by adding the minimum and maximum wages and dividing the result by two, and that does not give the true average. To secure an average rate, each rate should be multiplied by the number of persons receiving it, then the total number receiving all rates should be divided into the aggregate amount, as shown by the multiplication. The total average in the preceding table was obtained by adding all rates in each column and dividing by the number of rates, which gives only an arithmetical mean and not an average, but not having the data necessary to make a true average, I only did what I could.

sult of nine statistical investigations, from 1866 to 1892, with extensive inquiries concerning wages from 1840 to 1865," which contains (page 16) a tabular statement showing that in 1892 the average wages for farm labor, without board, was \$12.50 per month in South Carolina, \$13.30 in North Carolina, \$13.50 in Georgia, and \$13.75 in Alabama, while in California the wages paid were \$36.50 and in the State of Washington \$37.50, the average for all the States for that year being \$18.60. For farm labor, with board, the wages varied from \$8.40 to \$25, and averaged \$12.54.

Mr. Ransom's and Mr. Crittenden's Reports on Wages.—On September 26, 1896, Mr. Matthew M. Ransom, United States Minister at the City of Mexico, sent to the State Department a report on the currency, prices, and condition of labor in that country, which was published in the *Special Consular Report* (vol. xiii., part 1) on Money and Prices in Foreign Countries, and to which he appended a statement of wages paid to men for agricultural labor in 1893, stating that the rates were taken from the Government statistics for that year, and that they were expressed in Mexican currency. As that statement is a little more comprehensive than mine and somewhat later, and although it is not complete and cannot, I think, be taken as entirely correct, because it would be exceedingly difficult to make an altogether reliable statement, I consider it a fair one and insert it here:

WAGES PER DAY OF AGRICULTURAL LABOR IN 1893—MEN.¹

STATE.	Major-domos.	Overseers.	Herders.	Shepherds.	Pulque Hands.	Peons.
Agascalientes...	\$0.25 to \$0.37	\$0.25 to \$0.37	\$0.13 to \$0.20	.....	.....	\$0.13 to \$0.25
Campeche.....	.50 to 1.50	.25 to .31	.25 to .75	.....	.....	.25 to .50
Mexico.....	.37 to 1.00	.25 to .50	.18 to .50	\$0.18 to .25	\$0.28 to \$0.37	.18 to .50
Guerrero.....	.75 to 1.00	.25 to .50	.37 to .50	.....	.....	.12 to .31
Hidalgo.....	.37 to 1.00	.18 to .50	.18 to .50	.18 to .31	.37	.18 to .50
Jalisco.....	.37 to 1.00	.25 to .50	.25 to .50	.25 to .50	.37	.25 to .50
Michoacan.....	.50 to 2.00	.25 to .50	.25 to .50	.18 to .37	.18 to .50	.37 to .75
Sonora.....	.62 to 1.00	.50 to 1.75	.37 to 1.00	.37 to 1.00	.....	.37 to 1.00
Tabasco.....	.75 to 1.00	.50 to .75	.25 to .50	.25 to .50	.37	.25 to .37
Coahuila.....	.50 to .75	.37 to .50	.37 to .50	.25 to .37	.37	.37 to .75
Colima.....	1.00	.....	.25 to .37	.....	.....	.18 to .25
Tamaulipas.....	.50	.18 to .25	.18 to .25	.....	.....	.37 to .62
Chihuahua.....	.....	.50 to .75	.50 to .75	.....	.....	.25 to .37
Durango.....	.50 to 1.00	.31 to .62	.31 to .50	.25 to .37	.18 to .25	.18 to .25
Guanajuato.....	.37 to 1.00	.37 to .62	.25 to .37	.18 to .25	.18 to .25	.18 to .25
Nuevo Leon.....	.75 to 1.00	.25 to 1.00	.25 to .75	.18 to .50	.37 to .50	.18 to .50
Oaxaca.....	.50 to 1.00	.37 to .50	.50	.....	.....	.25 to .50
Puebla.....	.50 to 1.00	.37 to .50	.25 to .50	.18 to .31	.25 to .66	.18 to .37
Veracruz.....	.50 to 1.25	.37 to 1.00	.37 to 1.00	.37 to 1.00	.....	.18 to .37
Yucatan.....	1.00 to 1.25	.....	.50 to .75	.25 to .50	.....	.25 to .75
Zacatecas.....	.37 to .75	.25 to 1.00	.25 to .75	.37 to .50	.18 to .50	.18 to .50
Federal District.....	1.00 to 1.50	.50	.50	.37 to .50	.37 to .50	.37 to .40
San Luis Potosi.....	.50 to .83	.40	.20	.18 to .20	.18 to .25	.18 to .25
Morelos.....	1.00 to 2.00	.50	.50	.....	.....	.37 to 1.00

¹ These rates are taken from the Government statistics for the year 1893. They are expressed in Mexican currency; in United States currency they are about one-half. In some of the States rations of corn and bacon are furnished; very seldom any meat.

Besides Mr. Ransom's report, another with the same purpose, made by Mr. Thomas T. Crittenden, United States Consul-General at the City of Mexico, dated September 1, 1896, containing important data, was published in the same number of the *Special Consular Reports* of the United States. Both reports embrace data about wages in the factories, mines, and railroads that, while I believe they are correct as far as they go, are not comprehensive enough, as they relate only to certain factories and mining districts. So far as the railroads are concerned, they are entirely reliable, because the railway companies are but few, and most of them furnished directly to Mr. Ransom a correct schedule of their wages. As they serve to show the rate of Mexican wages, I append to this article such tabular statements sent by Mr. Ransom as I think of interest.

Mr. Crittenden's report contains the following table of wages and salaries paid in and about the City of Mexico on September 1, 1896:

MEXICAN WAGES.

EMPLOYMENT.	MEXICAN CURRENCY.	UNITED STATES CURRENCY.
Agents, railway..... per month..	\$75.00 - \$150.00	\$39.00 - \$78.00
Boiler makers..... per day..	4.00 - 8.00	2.08 - 4.16
Brakemen..... per month..	35.00 - 75.00	18.20 - 39.00
Bricklayers (native)..... per day..	1.00 - 1.50	.52 - .78
Clerks (office)..... per month..	40.00 - 200.00	20.00 - 104.00
Cooks, women ¹ do....	6.00 - 12.00	3.12 - 6.24
Cooks, men..... do....	25.00 - 75.00	13.00 - 39.00
Carpenters..... per day..	1.50 - 4.75	.78 - 2.37
Conductors, passenger..... per month..	100.00 - 160.00	52.00 - 83.20
Conductors, freight..... do....	100.00 - 200.00	52.00 - 104.00
Conductors, street-car..... per day..	.50 - 1.00	.26 - .52
Coachmen, private (native)..... per month..	15.00 - 30.00	7.80 - 15.60
Coachmen, public (native)..... do....	² 15.00	7.80
Division (railway) superintendents..... do....	250.00 - 350.00	130.00 - 192.00
Drivers, street-car..... per day..	.50 - 1.00	.26 - .52
Engineers:		
Locomotive..... per month..	150.00 - 250.00	78.00 - 130.00
Stationary, with board ³ per day..	2.50 - 3.35	1.30 - 1.82
Stationary, without board ³ do....	3.50 - 5.00	1.82 - 2.60
Engravers..... do....	5.00 - 10.00	2.60 - 5.20
Firemen, locomotive..... per month..	75.00 - 100.00	39.44 - 52.00
Firemen, ordinary..... do....	20.00 - 50.00	10.44 - 26.00
Furnace men..... per day..	1.00 - 1.50	.52 - .78
Harness makers, etc..... do....	.50 - 2.00	.26 - 1.04
Iron workers..... do....	2.00 - 2.50	1.04 - 1.30
Jewellers..... do....	2.00 - 5.00	1.04 - 2.60
Laborers, in large cities..... do....	.37½ - .67½	.19½ - .353
Laborers, in the country ⁴ do....	.10 - .15	.052 - .078

¹ And 9 cents (4.68 cents, United States) per day for rations.

² Maximum; these depend largely on tips.

³ In mines and on large plantations.

⁴ Laborers (day) in the country, from 19 to 50 cents per day. In some instances meals are furnished, or an allowance of from 10 to 15 cents a day to cover the cost of the meals. The average laborer will live well and in good strength on from 10 to 15 cents per day, and will support his family

MEXICAN WAGES—Continued.

EMPLOYMENT.	MEXICAN CURRENCY.	UNITED STATES CURRENCY.
Laborers in factories (10 to 11 hours). per day..	\$0.50 - \$1.00	\$0.26 - \$0.52
Laborers, skilled (10 to 11 hours).....do....	1.50 - 2.00	.78 - 1.04
Mechanics.....do....	3.50 - 5.00	1.82 - 2.60
Machinists (shop).....do....	3.50 - 5.00	1.82 - 2.60
Miners, skilled.....do....	1.00 - 1.50	.52 - .78
Miners, ordinary.....do....	.50 - .80	.26 - .416
Maids, house.....per month..	4.00 - 7.00	2.08 - 3.64
Operators, telegraph.....do....	50.00 - 150.00	26.00 - 78.00
Plumbers:		
Native.....per day..	2.00 - 2.50	1.04 - 1.30
American.....do....	6.00 - 8.00	3.12 - 4.16
Printers:		
Native.....per week..	7.00 - 8.00	3.64 - 4.16
Pressmen.....do....	8.00 - 11.00	4.16 - 5.72
Compositors.....do....	10.00 - 12.00	5.20 - 6.24
Policemen.....per month..	30.00 - 50.00	13.60 - 26.00
Switchmen.....per day..	1.50	.78
Blacksmiths.....do....	3.50 - 4.00	1.82 - 2.34
Gold- and silver-smiths.....do....	2.25 - 3.50	1.17 - 1.82
Stone masons.....do....	1.00 - 1.50	.52 - .78
Seamstresses.....do....	.37 - .50	.29 - .26
Train masters.....per month..	150.00 - 175.00	73.00 - 91.00
Tailors:		
Repairers.....per day..	1.00 - 1.25	.52 - .65
Coat makers.....per coat..	5.00 - 12.00	2.60 - 6.24
Vest makers.....per vest..	1.35 - 1.50	.71 - .78
Pantaloons.....per pair..	1.75 - 2.50	.91

Low Wages in Mexico.—A great deal has been written about the low scale of wages prevailing in Mexico. The laborer in that country has been held up to his brethren in the United States as an object of great pity and commiseration, and his condition has been depicted in most realistic colors. He has been compared with the well-fed, well-clothed, and well-housed workmen of this Republic, and the comparison was not made to appear greatly to his advantage. Wages in Mexico are certainly very low, although, fortunately, they are rising; but biased persons from this country who visit Mexico and remain there only a few days, unacquainted with the language, the people, and the conditions of the country, completely misunderstand the case, and are apt to come to general conclusions from some special instance that may come to their notice, and return to the United States supposing that

on from 10 to 20 cents per day. Of course he will have his little patch of corn, beans, and chiles planted near his hut, which is the largest part of his "bill of fare" three times a day, and for three hundred and sixty-five days in the year. Five to ten dollars per year will clothe him, except, perhaps, his hat, and for that, he will, if he can get the money, pay from \$5 to \$20. As to wages paid for farm labor, it is well to add that a large part of the farming in this country is done on shares; almost the entire corn crop of Mexico—and it is one of the largest and most important—is raised by the "peons" on shares. The landowner furnishes everything, including a house to live in, and for this receives one-half of the crop. Others of the poorer class who are employed directly by the owner receive, besides their daily wages, a small plot of ground and a certain number of hours each week to cultivate it.

they know all about the subject, and make incorrect and ungrounded statements about the laboring classes in Mexico.¹

Farther on I will show the difference in the cost of life between Mexico and the United States, and, as a consequence of the same, how much more can be obtained in Mexico by a smaller amount of wages than in the United States. Those who work in Mexico live fairly well according to the value of their services and the necessaries of life. Those who are out of employment find existence much more tolerable in tropical Mexico than in this country, where fires and warm clothing are for the greater part of the year indispensable. Both in Mexico and the United States the very poor are wretched. But, from a hygienic point of view, the Mexican laborer's adobe hut is no more squalid and unwholesome than the swarming tenements and sweat-shops of New York City.

When one speaks of wages in the United States he always refers to wages in the Northern and Western States, which are the highest paid in this country and in the world, but not to the largest section of this country where wages are comparatively small, especially those paid to the negroes in the South. It is true that the latter enjoy advantages that the Northern laborers do not: a more benign climate and the privilege of cultivating a small plot of ground where they can obtain vegetables, fruits, corn, etc., and raise some domestic animals, and find easy and cheap shelter, which contributes, of course, to reduce the expense of the necessaries of life; but the Mexican laborers are very much in the same condition with a great many decided advantages over the Southern negroes, in so far as the climate is concerned, and if the wages and the

¹ One instance of this is the case of Mr. Theodore Knauff, who is a student of sociology and recently visited Mexico, and in December, 1896, delivered a lecture at the Franklin Institute of Philadelphia, under the joint auspices of that Institute and the Young Men's Christian Association of that city, upon the conditions of Mexico as he thought he found them, in which, at the outset, he declares "that of the 12,500,000 people composing the population of Mexico, at least 8,000,000 have never slept in a bed or worn stockings. They are forced to live at a less expense per diem than it takes to keep the meanest American farm-horse. Millions of Mexicans have never worn anything but a single garment, called a 'sarappe,' which is roughly described as a sack with a hole in the top, through which the wearer protrudes his head. This garment," continues Mr. Knauff, "forms at the same time the Mexican's coat, hat, and even his bed. The feet are usually bare or clothed in domestic sandals. The women wear a kind of cotton shawl over their heads and shoulders, called a 'rebozo.' The Mexican farm laborers' conditions are inferior to those of the late slaves of our Southern States. Their huts have but one opening, no windows, and dirt floors. When wishing to go to bed, they simply unroll their mats, and, without removing their clothing, lie down and go to sleep. The laborer has a certain wage and is given time and place to build himself a house. If he does not build it he has nothing with which to cover his head. The houses are built by the people who live in them. Some of the houses are mud-roofed and others roofed by palms or banana leaves."

Anybody familiar with Mexico knows that this statement has as many mistakes as lines.