

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 necessities 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 necessities 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.

condition of living and happiness between the two classes are compared, I do not think that any material advantage to the latter would be found. Their social condition is, of course, infinitely better in Mexico because there they can rise to the highest position in the country. The condition of some of the working classes in this country is not as satisfactory as it might be. The recent clothing strike in New York City has shown beyond all denial that the pay of certain classes of workmen engaged in the making of clothing has been as follows: Tailors, from \$3 to \$5 a week; children's jacket-makers, about \$3 a week; kneepants makers, \$5 a week; vest-makers, \$4 a week. In other words, these people have been receiving from thirty-three to eighty-three cents per day.

Recently, there has been a tendency to reduce the compensation of working girls in the great shops of the big towns. I understand that in New York the wages of \$3 a week is now considered quite enough, and a working girl could hardly afford to live there on \$3 a week.

The Mexican laborer is receiving wages quite equal in amount to those received by his poorly paid unfortunate brethren in this country, but his wages are far more powerful than theirs in the purchasing of those necessaries which go to make up his life. With his 37½ cents per day, he can live, according to his notions, in comparative comfort; with their 37½ cents per day, it is not possible to live with comfort in this country. His climate is also mild and delightful; he needs not the fuel and the clothing which are necessary to the New York workmen.

It is not possible in every country to pay high wages to the laborers. Even in this great country, where laborers are better paid than anywhere else, and where they have sometimes been called princes—and they deserve that name, if compared with others—wages are sometimes quite low.

To ensure for the workingman of Mexico higher wages many things have to be accomplished. He has first to be technically trained, to be made more intelligent by education, to unlearn his habits of dawdling and procrastination, in a word, to put more conscience into his work. There are mechanics there who are getting good pay because they have learned the lesson of the times; they are diligent and efficient. Foreign mechanics are well paid in Mexico when they are engaged by responsible concerns. In some lines of endeavor, wages are very good there as compared with the cost of subsistence.

Mexico is a southern land with a benign climate, a winterless land, a land of easy habits, and its masses are not yet inclined to put forth the exertion necessary to gain high wages.

High Wages to Skilled Laborers.—Everybody admits, even those who most harshly disparage Mexico because of her silver standard, that railway engineers, conductors, and in fact all skilled laborers, re-

ceive in Mexico higher wages than such laborers receive in the United States under a gold basis, that is, that the wages of such men in silver are more than its equivalent in gold at the corresponding price of silver; while the native unskilled labor is paid a very low price, a price considerably lower than similar labor is paid in this country. This fact proves very conclusively, in my opinion, that labor, independently of the demand, which is one of the principal factors to regulate its value, has a fixed price; that is, that the more it can produce the higher is the price it can obtain. A company, for instance, finds that it is very profitable to establish in Mexico cotton or woollen mills, smelters, or any other similar plant, and as there are not experts in Mexico to establish the plant and work it, it has to send for them either to the United States or to Europe; and the expert, of course, would not go to Mexico unless he expected to receive something more than he can get at home, and, naturally, in money having the same value. If the expert gets \$4 a day in gold in the United States or England, he would certainly not go to Mexico to receive \$4 in silver, which would be equivalent, at the present price of silver, to less than \$2 in gold, so losing more than fifty per cent. of his present wages; but he would demand at least from \$8 to \$10 in silver, which is more than he receives at home, and the company starting the plant has necessarily to pay those wages or it would be unable to carry on its business. This explains why experts and skilled laborers get higher wages in Mexico than in the United States, while the unskilled laborers, for reasons already stated, get a great deal less.

Skilled labor in Mexico commands, of course, the same or higher price as in the old countries, and it is paid in its equivalent in silver, and it is paid much better than in Italy, Spain, and Turkey, and about as well as in England, all of which are old countries. Of course, no workingman in Mexico can get, or can expect, such wages as are paid in Homestead, Bethlehem, and Pittsburg; namely, \$10, \$15, and \$25 per diem, for the simple reason that in Mexico no such establishments exist as the Carnegie Works, and, therefore, no opening for the specialties referred to.

Why Mexican Labor is Cheap.—The question of wages is undoubtedly settled by fixed laws, but these laws are so complex and affected by so many factors that there is a very wide difference of opinion about their true nature. Undoubtedly the amount and quality of the work produced by the wage-earner in a given time is one of the principal factors regulating wages; but when a country is isolated by the condition of its civilization, by tariff barriers, by very high cost of transportation, or by other causes, preventing it from receiving the manufactures of the commercial nations which compete in the world's markets, wages may be affected by different principles, like the cost

of living and others. The isolation of Mexico during several centuries, and the want of cheap and easy means of communication, prevented the development of agriculture, trade, and industries and made many communities self-supporting; that is, they had to raise the necessary articles of food for their own maintenance, and sometimes to weave the cotton and woollen goods required for clothing. This isolation, of course, prevented the development of the natural resources of the country and kept wages necessarily very low; because the demand for its products being very limited—just enough to supply the needs of a small community—and the supply very great, the price of labor had necessarily to be very low. The question of wages is settled by natural laws, and there is a natural level for them. In isolated districts, not subject to the general law governing wages, as most of Mexico was before the railway era, the rule is that in a cheap country, where the necessaries of life are but little, wages are comparatively low, while in a dear country wages have to be proportionately high, because in any case a man has to earn enough to sustain life. When a laborer can satisfy his needs by working little he has no inducement to go beyond that; but when to support himself and his family, he needs to exert himself as much as he can then he has to produce a comparatively large amount of commodities to earn higher wages. The laborer's wants not only depend, in such isolated districts, upon the natural conditions of the country, but also on the degree of civilization which the people have reached. Of course, competition in manufactures which go to international markets controls wages in commercial and manufacturing countries. These considerations explain why wages in Mexico are so low, as compared with wages in the United States, and it suffices to say that, now that our railways are built and the country has entered on the path of prosperity, as the old conditions are changing, wages are increasing and tend to increase considerably.

It must be borne in mind that the climatic influences in both countries are so different that their respective inhabitants, and especially the wage-earning classes, cannot be judged by the same standard. The mild climate of Mexico, for instance, does not require all the provisions for winter and the corresponding increased expense for that season that are needed in this latitude. Almost all over that country, excepting in the most northern States, the difference in the seasons is so slight that we do not need to change our style of clothing from winter to summer. We do not need to heat our houses, not even in the City of Mexico, which is nearly 8000 feet above the level of the sea and located in what we call the cold region; and, therefore, we do not have the expenses unavoidable in a northern climate where houses have to be heated during the winter. The benignity of the Mexican climate renders unnecessary expensive houses for the poor people, that

is, houses which can be hermetically closed in winter to keep them warm; on the contrary, in the temperate and hot climates, what is desirable is to keep the houses cool. Building materials, namely, adobe, which is unburnt brick of very large size, is very cheap, and all this contributes to make living in Mexico much cheaper than in the United States. In a great many localities in Mexico even shoes are not indispensable, and may be considered as an article of convenience or luxury, not a necessity. So far as food is concerned, nature has provided, too, an abundant supply of fruits, a fertile soil, which in some localities yields as many as four crops a year; and the maintenance of a family is, as compared with the same needs in the United States, exceedingly cheap. Therefore, what would be considered as starvation wages in this country would supply a working family in Mexico with all the necessaries and even with some of the luxuries of life; and these natural conditions cannot be altered or changed by legislation, or by any artificial means.

I consider the assumption that the tendency of wages in Mexico is to become lower as a very mistaken one. The contrary assumption is the correct one. Wages in Mexico could not be any lower than they are, and in every kind of work there is a marked tendency to increase, and I know by personal experience that an increase, and a very decided one, has taken place during the past fifteen years.

Difference in Amount of Work Accomplished by Mexican and American Workmen.—It is a fact that wages in Mexico are far lower in many instances than those paid for the same industries in the United States, although sometimes, that is, in the case of skilled laborers, they are as high or higher; but this ought not to appear strange when it is considered that this country pays probably the highest wages in the world; not even the foremost manufacturing nations of Europe, as England, France, Germany, and Belgium, being equal in this regard. Yet while it is true that labor in European countries is not so well remunerated as in the United States, it must be taken into account that the same amount of labor produces there less than here. I am assured by competent persons that a bank-bill printer, for instance, does not print in England more than 1000 sheets per week, while the average work done by the American workman is 6000 sheets per week; and it is stated in the *Journal des Economistes* that a French weaver can take care of only four looms, a Belgian of five, an English weaver of six, and one from this country of eight, while a Mexican weaver cannot attend to more than two looms. But the actual production during a given working time is in Mexico far less than in the United States, or even in Europe.

The day's work of a Mexican laborer, very likely, represents in many cases only one-fourth of what is accomplished during the same time by