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Colonization in Mexico.

An Interview with GENERAL PORFIRIO DIAZ,
President of the United States of Mexico,
accorded to Mr. JOHN W. De KAY.

Together with leading Press comments, and an Introduction by
ROBERT J. BARRETT, Editor of London "Financier."

INTRODUCTION.

IN the following pages are published some of the important conversations that my friend, Mr. De Kay, has had with President Diaz, of Mexico, on a subject of wide interest and importance.

My visits to Mexico have been those of a foreigner—an enthusiastic foreigner it is true—but still a foreigner, who has studied Mexico and its prospects from the point of view of the European investor, and my last visit to America has only confirmed a belief

long held that the value of Mexico as a contributor to the world's riches is, even now, but little realised. She is a great country with a great future. Mr. De Kay has recently dealt with one phase of his favourite topic in the leading London newspapers, namely: the value of a properly organised movement to get the people back to the land. I shall just tell the simple story of how I became interested in Mexico from my earliest days, and how the romantic enthusiasms of my youth have been confirmed by the more practical materialism of later years. It was business that first took me to Mexico, but it was also this business that enabled me to realise one of the strongest ambitions of my boyhood. When very young Mexico and its history held my youthful imaginings as few other countries could. What lands are there with a story more romantic, a climate more salubrious, scenery and verdure more wonderful, or a people more interesting? Mexico has been called the Land of Flowers and Love, and certainly the spirit of poetry has pervaded the country; even in those far-off days when the fugitive boy prince of the Aztecs gathered flowers in the forest to which he had been driven, and returned to lay them at the usurper's feet.

I defy anybody with a spark of imagination to escape the strange feeling of romance with which I was overcome during my first few days in Mexico. It was like entering Spain at the most picturesque period of her history, but a Spain larger and more

romantic than that of the middle ages. Here you see the same men and beautiful women, but they move on a larger stage. There is more to see in Mexico, and more is left to the imagination. There are more unexplored regions in Mexico, more variety of nationality and a freer, easier life in every way.

Although four hundred years have passed since the Spaniards conquered a people civilised with a civilisation such as the Eastern Hemisphere had never understood, Mexico has not kept pace with modern ideas. Her riches were the wonder of the subjects of the Great Ferdinand, but I doubt, speaking broadly, whether, with the exception of the working to some extent of her minerals, her resources have been treated in any but a primitive manner. Commercially speaking, Mexico is still a Land of Promise. An imaginative race conquered by a nation of Seigneurs. Mexicans for generations have been far too aristocratic to take their proper place in the rough and ready fight for commercial supremacy. But the more I have seen of the country, the more I have realised that her hour has come. The first step in serious regeneration is now an accomplished fact. Mexico has found political salvation, and is ripe for peaceful progress under the rule of a man of genius and a patriot, whose love of country is subservient to all other considerations. As President Diaz has said, his people's liberty has been dearly bought. Constitutions wrung by years of blood and hardship, rest on foundations firmly cemented by the well-bought experience of the people.

It is always a good omen for any country when the student and traveller finds integrity and strength at the head of affairs, and I certainly found in President Diaz a personality of which any country might be proud. Of humble origin, his whole demeanour bears out my contention that Mexico is essentially a country of aristocrats. His physique is solid, even suggestive of the full-chested Saxon pioneer, of which the late Cecil Rhodes was so typical an example. But he owes to his Latin blood certain characteristics that the Columbus of Africa lacked. There is fire in the dark eye and restrained passion in the broad proud nostril, singularly unlike the phlegmatic strength of Rhodes. Yet with all his temperament and romantic patriotism, the President is no mere dreamer. I had not been long in Mexico before I found him a solid statesman, who dealt with political matters from a commonsense business point of view, who thought deeply, and only expressed an opinion after conviction. Those who approach President Diaz with theories that cannot be put into practice, soon find that his time is not to be wasted. He is a keen sportsman, and would prefer to spend his time shooting game to useless chatter. These facts regarding the President's character are worth noting in view of what he had to say to Mr. De Kay. Both these men are persons of thought as well as action, little inclined to conversation without a purpose.

In Engand people are not fond of studying maps. Most of

us remember the satirical suggestion of Lord Salisbury to an eminent Peer fearful of the invasion of India—that “the noble Lord should study the atlas.” So it is that readers may be surprised to hear that the Mexican Republic covers an area thirteen times as large as Great Britain, and that she has a constitution based on that of the United States of America. This enormous country has a population of less than twenty millions, though conditions are in every way suitable to Europeans. In the lowlands the climate is tropical, and on the plateaux is temperate. It may be the very charm of the country and its climate that accounts for a certain lethargy among a people who are not naturally inclined to push and fight for material objects. It is easy enough to turn to mineral wealth extracted with comparative ease, when you can find it so ready to hand as has been the case in Mexico. Yet Mexico is naturally an agricultural country, and should long ago have taken her place among those great tracts in America which supply the overcrowded population of Europe. I have not space in so short a survey to go into the question of railway enterprise in Mexico; otherwise, I should like to show how the lines must ultimately rely on agricultural produce and the development of grazing interests for their chief sources of revenue.

I have referred to the drawbacks that have hitherto hampered Mexico as being largely aristocratic. In this connection I have drawn attention to a fact that will at once strike the student of

European politics. In the constructive development of the country a barrier has been the holding of vast tracts of almost undeveloped land by a few owners, who either lack the enterprise or the capital to do their duty by what should be considered a trust by patriots of all countries. I am glad to see by his conversation with Mr. De Kay, that President Diaz, despite his carefully weighed words, realises that here an essential reform must be carried out. Land, by the way, is cheap in this favoured country, costing on an average (productive capacity considered) but a fifth of the price paid in our own Colony of Canada. Mexicans have an excellent example of the value of small holdings at their very door, for in such holdings do the great stability and solid resources of the United States lie. Tilled by individual enterprise these produce a huge volume of food products for the markets of the world.

There can be no exaggeration of the importance of the development of home industries to Mexico. Mexico should, long since, have been manufacturing to supply her own wants, and sending her surplus abroad. In the hardware industry, the manufacture of machinery, textile goods, and other great lines of commerce so firmly established in England, France, and Germany, Mexico cannot hope to become a serious export factor but she can reduce imports by her home manufactures. A practical statesman like the President sees this, and knows well enough that only example and the infusion of an industrious, thrifty, and practical

element will arouse his countrymen to a true appreciation of the magnificent opportunities that have hitherto been neglected. There is no reason why it should be long before Mexico puts the balance of trade very largely in her favour, by attention to manufactures and food exports. This latter should be the first industry to affect the scales, as the soil of Mexico has been blessed by Nature with possibilities for production such as few countries possess. My own opinion, and it is shared by other men of experience who have studied the subject, is that Mexico's chief export in the near future will be Meat. In that direction I look for great development.

To the inexperienced European a few words on the subject of meat and all that concerns it, are not amiss. Imagination in most cases does not go beyond the homely chop or family joint to which we are accustomed at home. But have these *patres-familiarum* any idea of what the development of the meat industry as it is known in countries like the United States and Argentina means? Most people do not realise that fleets of ships are carrying these products to countries thousands of miles away; that around the packing industry are built great and thriving cities; that areas of fertile land many times the size of England are devoted to the production of the animals, which are transported thousands of miles by rail, and in some countries constitute the chief source of railway traffic.

One step at a time is the motto of most practical men, who

wish to carry through a great scheme, and I am glad to note that both Mr. De Kay and President Diaz have their attention turned to the first essential in Mexico's advance. The Mexican is a fine fellow, and with all his romantic qualities, has the makings of a first-rate worker. But nations, like individuals, are dependent on one another; and Mexico, no more than England or any other country, can stand alone. For a long time to come she must depend on the foreigner. The great banking countries of the world will increase their support with that foresight which has always characterised them; the investing public of Europe will realise that here is a country of rare possibilities, which has reached that stage of political stability which inspires confidence, and the prospective emigrant will turn his eyes West with a knowledge that justice, liberty, and a great field for enterprise awaits him in a land that is healthy, thinly populated, and full of undeveloped resources, merely waiting for energy, thrift and sobriety to turn them to advantage.

To the oft-repeated question of "What will happen when the hand of the great Diaz is removed?" I would reply that: No one has done so much toward making this position clear to all the world as Mr. De Kay in his books and other writings on Mexico. His view of the matter as summarised by himself is this:

(1) After the declaration of independence of Mexico was issued the chief struggles were between the clergy and property interests on the one hand, and those of the

masses who wanted religious and political freedom on the other. There were no railroads, and practically no telegraph lines in the country; communication was difficult, and adventurers could foment disturbance at points remote from the Capital.

(2) The attempt to establish the Empire under Maximilian was backed by the conservative element of the country, chiefly in the hope of insuring the safety of property, and was encouraged by the clergy for the continuation of the established Church.

(3) There was not until recently any middle class possible in Mexico. Foreign development and a demand for skilled labour is building up a strong middle class and giving large numbers of native Mexicans a stake in the Nation's welfare.

(4) Responsibility and the close association of large capital sobers a nation as it does an individual and there has been invested in Mexico under the Diaz rule, about £300,000,000 of Foreign capital, two-thirds of which has come from the great Republic of the United States on the North. The vested interests in the country require peace.

(5) The blessings of continued commercial growth and general advancement of the people, which are only possible

under a solid Government, are so well appreciated by the masses of the Nation and so strongly required by the wealthy element of the country that all classes in the Republic realise that they have much to lose and nothing to gain by attempting to foment any sort of strife.

(6) That in every part of Mexico there are strong men devoted to the programme of peace, and ready and able to see that this programme is not altered.

I believe that Mr. De Kay's terse summing up of the situation is sound, and I am sure that it embodies his well-grounded opinion of the situation based upon his close study first-hand of the conditions in that country for the past ten years.

R. J. BARRETT.

LONDON, 1st February, 1909.

Judios

PRESIDENT DIAZ AND THE JEWS.

Interview by Mr. JOHN W. De KAY.

(Reprinted from *The Whitehall Review*, London, January, 1909.)

If Shylock shows to mankind a Jew, he shows a type, but not a race. In so far as he in any way represents a race, he represents a people who have been made what they are by the iron hand of Fate.

By nature the Jew has always been, and is religious and faithful to his religion. If the Christian (who regards himself as the follower of the Prince of Peace and engages in all kinds of war) is not consistent, it remains for the Jew to be consistent everywhere and always. From Moses to Disraeli the Jew has always declared his conviction in the distinct greatness of his race.

The Jew has never been absorbed. He is to-day in form and feature, and largely in thought, what he was in the days of David on the plains of Judea. Whether in Turkey, or Russia, or Japan, or the United States, or England, he is always and everywhere a Jew.

Back in the twilight of history he was a dreamer, a poet, and an idealist.

He cultivated the soil, was humble, and lived very near to