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FONDO  
PEREZ MALDONADO

## PREFACE

Quicquid agunt homines, votum, timor, ira voluptas,  
gaudia, discursus, nostri est farrago libelli.

FIVE-AND-TWENTY years ago, who on all the earth would have invested his money in a Mexican bank; have trusted his savings in a Mexican mine; or have considered it a safe and prudent thing to go to Mexico at all? A somewhat similar question was once asked by Sydney Smith of the United States of America; but to-day the answer would in both cases be the same. Both have triumphed over time; both have made a name for themselves in the Old World that nothing can obliterate; and both have before them a future as brilliant as it is certain, and as solid as it has been well earned.

It takes many generations to effect a change in popular superstitions, and assuredly ignorance of and concerning countries afar off amounts almost to a superstition in some people? In spite of board schools and polytechnics, in the

## ERRATA

*Preface, line 22, omit word "concerning."*

*On page 1, line 4, for "During" read "Throughout."*

*On page 117, last line, for "Mexican" Railway read "Central."*

*On page 250, line 10, for "puebla" read "pueblo."*

*On page 298, line 21, for "Campiche" read "Campeche."*

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It takes many generations to effect a change in popular superstitions, and assuredly ignorance of and concerning countries afar off amounts almost to a superstition in some people? In spite of board schools and polytechnics, in the face of educational establishments of acknowledged world reputation, knowledge of the greater portion of the Western Hemisphere is a sealed book to the majority of the present generation. A prominent Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, once its President, assured me that he had been appalled at the ignorance of Cabinet Ministers concerning simple geographical conditions of the countries concerning which they were then actively discussing, reminding one of Butler's lines in "Hudibras":

"Some force whole regions, in despite  
O' geography, to change their site."

Sir George Taubman Goldie, who is President of the Royal Geographical Society this year, states that the Foreign Office alone of the Civil Services of the Crown included geography among the subjects for the entrance examination of candidates. The Foreign Office had made a pass in this subject compulsory, but at present and henceforth geography ceases to be a subject which candidates might even voluntarily select. One would imagine that a knowledge of geography, even among subordinate members, would be of value in the Colonial Office, which administers or controls vast regions contiguous to the possessions of Foreign Powers, to say nothing of the Indian Civil Service, the Board of Trade, and the Post Office. Sir George has called attention to an extraordinary address which came before his notice as follows: "Ottawa, Ontario, United States of America"; but I could give him a more remarkable instance than this, notably in connection with a leading Bank, the Manager of which, when I proffered a request for a letter of credit upon Mexico, called for the "South American list," and upon my suggesting mildly that North America would be more useful under the circumstances, expressed his conviction that "Mexico was in South America," a delusion which a study of the map alone dissolved.

I much fear that Mexico has hitherto been among the little-known countries of the earth, and even to-day the general knowledge concerning it, if one may judge from the astounding mis-statements which one continually comes across, is decidedly elementary. It is commonly described as a "South American Republic," when its position is in North America; as a "dangerous country" in which to travel, whereas it is as safe as either America or Great Britain, so far as immunity from personal assaults and robberies is concerned; as a "risky place for investments," while statistics prove there is greater solidarity among the banks and similar institutions, and far more honesty among the people themselves, than can be found in any country of the Old World.

Another common supposition is that, with the disappearance of General Porfirio Diaz, either by reason of his

voluntary retirement or other cause, the present condition of peace and prosperity must come to an end. This fear of collapse has been so frequently expressed, and always by individuals who, never having been in the country, can and do know nothing whatever about it, that the world at large has come to believe it. There has seldom been perpetuated a more complete and foundationless error. While it is perfectly true that the New Mexico—"Mexico of the Twentieth Century"—owes practically everything to the long-sustained government of Porfirio Diaz—its regeneration as a Nation, its rehabilitation as a Power among the countries of the earth, and a force henceforth to be reckoned with—so thoroughly has this great Soldier-Statesman done his work, so well has he laid the foundations, built up the walls, and roofed over the whole structure, that the fabric stands to-day self-supporting and indestructible, a living and a lasting monument to the man who built it—to his strength, his devotion, and his intelligence. But Mexico is no longer in any need of a defender, nor is it now dependent upon its architect. He has built too soundly and permanently for that. Diaz may pass away; but, while his name will never perish from record or recollection, his guiding hand can be dispensed with, and that without fear of untoward consequences.

It is always difficult to convey by means of figures any idea of the actual size of countries, but of Mexico it may be said that it is ten times larger than Great Britain; it has a coast-line of over 6,000 miles; 10 volcanoes; 59 lakes and lagoons; a total area of about 750,000 square miles, and, in its narrowest portion, separates the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans by a distance of only 140 miles. The largest State in the Republic is Chihuahua, with an area of nearly 90,000 square miles, and the smallest is that of Tlaxcala, with an area of 2,558 square miles. There are upwards of 40 different tribes of Indians living in the country who speak as many different languages; while in one State alone—namely, that of Oaxaca—I have the assurance of the Archbishop (Dr. Eulogio Gillow) that there are no fewer than 75 dialects spoken by the natives, with most of which his Grace is well acquainted.

The result achieved in publishing this unpretentious account of Mexico should be to prove that the Republic to-day is a new land, with a strong and stable Government, increasing revenues, abundant resources, and a people fit and ready to take their place among the counsellors of the earth. A few months ago the Republic celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Mexican Constitution; and it is difficult to recall the long train of intervening events, and to review the attendant difficulties met with without experiencing something like a feeling of astonishment at what has actually been accomplished within that period. Having at enormous sacrifice of life and property freed herself from the Spanish yoke, the country found that of the Church no less oppressive and no less cruel. A long and painful struggle with her own sons, followed by a fierce resistance to the foreign invader, with the inevitable financial collapse following upon an exhausted treasury, a depleted people and a crippled industry, all had to be faced, and *were* faced with a courage and a devotion almost heroic. Unlike its many sister-republics, Mexico is not in the least danger of having any one of these disasters recur. They have been grappled with and overcome for all time; henceforth the Republic's road is clear. It would be a bold prophet who could say the same of some South and Central American States, whose troubles would appear to be of the Lernean monster type—as soon as one head is struck off, two shoot up in its place.

The good offices of Mexico, in conjunction with the United States, in settling (for the time being, at any rate) the differences between Honduras and Nicaragua towards the close of last year prove conclusively the high moral standing of that country among the Latin-American people, who viewed with equanimity and satisfaction as emanating from Mexico what they would have regarded with suspicion and resentment as coming from the United States alone. I regard the influence which Mexico is able to wield among the turbulent small republics of South and Central America as of the utmost consequence and value, and as likely to have far-

reaching effect hereafter in settling the innumerable squabbles arising in this part of the world, such as the United States could never succeed in quelling, with or without the aid of the "big stick."

Another evidence of Mexico's advancement in the high esteem of the rest of the world was found in the anxiety evinced by European banking houses to secure the placing of the last loan for the sum of \$80,000,000 gold (say £8,000,000), in November of 1904. Representatives of the houses of Bleichröder of Berlin and the Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas (Paris) conferred at length with the Finance Minister at Mexico City; but the terms offered by the New York house of Speyer and Co. triumphed, and European houses were disappointed.

It seems almost incredible that less than a decade before that Mexico might have gone the round of the European capitals with hat in hand and seductive terms in her pocket, and then would have failed to raise half a million dollars. And it was a 4 per cent. loan, sold to the underwriting syndicate at 89 per cent., with no special pledge for the payment of interest and sinking fund—terms such as any old-established European Government would have been pleased to accept.

Let us glance at the Republic of Mexico to-day, and see what are its claims to be considered a factor in the world's affairs: A Public Exchequer in the full tide of prosperity, and a substantial surplus; its bonds held in every country of the world, and quoted upon every Stock Exchange; a solid, well-drilled, and devoted Army of 26,000 men on a peace footing, increased at twenty-four hours' notice to 60,000 upon a war footing; 20,000 miles of telegraph lines; 17,000 miles of railways; public credit upon a level never attained previously; an entire absence of jealousy or contention among the Government officials, from the highest to the lowest; a lack of polemics which can be matched in but few countries of the world; and a general peacefulness among all classes as complete as it is rooted. As a Mexican once expressed himself: "Progress and peace are nailed to our

soil with the rails of our iron roads, and no criminal hand shall be strong enough to tear them asunder."

What the country has lacked hitherto has been an intelligent middle class, and gradually this great *desideratum* to the permanent welfare of any nation is growing into existence. The picture of Mexico to-day is more composite than settled; for on the one hand are to be found the latest ideas in municipal government and social life, and on the other feudalism of the most pronounced if picturesque type. The old usurers have given way to modern banks, but the tenacity with which some State Governments cling to tradition, and the little desire displayed by the people to escape from it, strike the stranger as remarkable indeed.

Hitherto a great deterrent to the more complete regeneration of Mexico has been the character of the native peons. Forming as they do fully seven-tenths of the population, they present a problem not insoluble, but nevertheless difficult. As a class they are averse to change of any kind, and cling as affectionately to their modes of living—primitive and not too cleanly—as they do to their picturesque but unsuitable costumes. Education is doing its work slowly but surely, and the forces employed are exerting a modest but still perfectly discernible influence, which is drawing individuals upwards to a higher plane.

The gradual development of the country's abundant resources, the continually increasing intercourse with the hustling and bustling strangers from Europe and the United States, the introduction of luxuries hitherto undreamed of; and, above all, the competition for his services in the field, the factory, and the mine, are telling upon the peon, and making of him more of a man and less of an animal. I have some hopes of the Mexican peon, provided he can be kept from the clutches and baneful influence of the peripatetic Socialist agitator, who has unfortunately already made himself a nuisance and a menace in the country.

In a previous work dealing with South American States, I pointed out the curious anomaly which exists in regard to names of numerous men and women, South American by birth,

possessing the most ordinary English names, such, for instance, as Williams, Cox, Perry, Thompson, Walker, etc., etc., and yet being totally unacquainted with the English language. The bearers of such names as these one would naturally expect to speak a little English, or at least to understand it; but, in spite of the fact that their parents may have only been settled a few months in the country before giving birth to their children, and may perhaps themselves retain tender remembrances of the Old Country, their offspring are to all intents and purposes Chilians or Argentinos, or other nationalities, as the case may be, and neither speak nor understand the Anglo-Saxon tongue.

In Mexico, owing to the large number of Americans and the few British bearing English names who have come into the country and have settled there, it is quite usual to find cognomens of distinctly British origin, such as Williams, Wilson, Kelly, Knight, etc.; while in Cuba the names O'Reilly, O'Gorman, and other Irish appellations are encountered as the names of streets, and some are given to public buildings.

It seems to have been the custom in Mexico for American residents to adopt the Spanish equivalent to their Christian names, and one frequently meets with members of the younger generation who are known as "Santiago," instead of James; "Guillermo," instead of William; "Juan," instead of John; and "Enrique," instead of Henry; being addressed by their Mexican acquaintances as "Don Santiago," "Don Guillermo," "Don Juan," etc., while they generally sign their names in the Spanish style. This may be regarded, perhaps, as a very favourable sign of the merging of Mexican and Saxon in one friendly and amicable family. When men begin to call each other by their Christian names it is generally an indication of something more than ordinary intercourse. The fusion of nationalities which is going on in Mexico is, in my opinion, one of the most hopeful signs of the future prosperity of the country, for it entirely eliminates any likelihood of that insane jealousy and dislike which are so characteristic of social and of commercial life in

the Argentine and Chile. I say little of Brazil in this connection, because the Brazilians and other foreign nationalities, the Portuguese perhaps alone excepted, are so totally opposed to each other in every idea, and custom and every feeling, that any national fusion is out of the question. Undoubtedly the Mexican nation of the distant future will be very largely composed of the best representatives of many foreign races, a blend which should result in some really brilliant specimens of mankind. The day will probably come when the Mexicans will speak English, and the foreigners speak Spanish as well as their own native tongues.

The ready welcome which Mexicans are extending to American capital, the unrestricted commingling of Mexicans and Americans upon the same Boards of Directors, joined in the same management and side by side in many social and charitable enterprises, form one of the most convincing signs of future prosperity. There is little of that anti-foreign jealousy and deep-seated suspicion which so often strangle success and poison it when achieved, which characterise inter-commercial association in the Argentine and Brazil.

The type of American coming into Mexico also shows marked evidence of improvement, the States now sending their best instead of their worst specimens, as was formerly frequently the case. I speak of the *real* American—the lineal descendant of the Pilgrim Fathers, and not of the cosmopolitan breed which passes as an “American,” the man with a German nose, a Russian name, and the manners of a brute.

The clean-cut, trim-built, stern-faced young American is a familiar sight nowadays in all parts of the world. I have met him in Japan, in Australia, in South and Central America, in the British, German, and Dutch Colonies, and occupying positions of responsibility and trust in his own new over-seas possessions. Always one notices the same inflexible purpose, the noble earnestness, the indomitable will to succeed. It is as if he took Fortune by the throat, exclaim-

ing: “No, you shall not avoid me! I *will* have you hear me! You shall yield me of your treasures! You *shall* recognise my worth! Do you heed me?” And Fortune is caught by the sheer audacity of the pursuer.

Bacon assures us that if a man look sharply and attentively he shall see Fortune; for though she be blind, she is not invisible. That is the experience of a good many young fellows who came to Mexico in the early days, and who died leaving enormous fortunes to their children, or are living to-day to enjoy the fruits of their daring and their enterprise.

I have approached my task of describing Mexico in the Twentieth Century with great diffidence and some misgivings. I have ever in mind Owen's confession: “The more I know I know, I know the less.” Mexico is not an easy country to know, and still a less easy one to describe. It is not a new country, and yet it is treated with a lightness and a levity by some would-be writers that must much distress those who love it as citizens, and disgust those who have visited it as guests. Even those who have lived in Mexico all their lives confess that they do not “know” Mexico. I make the same admission, but nevertheless I claim some acquaintance with the country, with the people, with their resources, their hopes, their ambitions, and their disappointments. Such as they appeared to me after a fairly lengthy stay in the country, during which I travelled practically from end to end of the Republic, I have endeavoured to the best of my ability to portray. May I add that I have brought to bear, as far as I can with my naturally insular ideas, tempered though they may be by a long experience of life and matters in the greater number of the Latin-American Republics, neither prejudices nor predilections. I have striven to be fair as well as accurate, and certainly I have spared no pains to arrive at sane and sensible conclusions. How far I have succeeded, and how much I may have failed, I must leave to my critics in Mexico and out of it.

Several photographs used in this publication have been supplied by the Percy S. Photo Co., Mexico City; Mr. Waite,

photographer, Mexico City; Messrs. Hickman and Todd, Tehuantepec; Mr. Frank L. Clark, Mexico City; Mr. W. Schlattmann, Mexico City; and M. Vallete, Mexico City; while for others I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. James W. Purcell, Saltillo; Mr. W. Morkill, Puebla; Mr. Walter Morecom, Mexico City; General Juan Quintas y Arroya, Mexico City; Mr. Robert P. Elliot, of Oaxaca City; and Mr. W. W. Wheatly, of Mexico City. A few are from my own camera.

THE AUTHOR.

September, 1907.

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