

Diaz of Mexico a Useful Tyrant; 30 Years Since He Seized Capital

HE HAD THEN LIVED 46 YEARS, MOST OF THEM AS A TURBULENT
REVOLUTIONIST — HIS NARROW ESCAPES AND INGRATITUDE
TO JUAREZ—BRILLIANT SUCCESSES IN FRENCH WAR.

Many years ago the remark was made by Mr. De Lorme, when considering the British constitution, that in that country it had ever befallen that all revolutions and public commotions had terminated in a manner, not to exalt the power of individual persons, but to advance the freedom of the people as a whole. The most casual glance at the history and the present political condition of Mexico shows that Mr. De Lorme's remark is inapplicable to that country, except in the way of contrast. The proper title of the present monarch is not easily determined. If a tyrant is one who has seized absolute power in an irregular manner, however that power is wielded or perpetuated, Diaz is a tyrant; but, whatever his title may be, there is no man who can deny or sensibly belittle the great material services that Diaz has rendered to his country. These are manifest at home and famous abroad. They have made his hand firm, and his seat sure. So strong is his hold on Mexico that everyone concedes his ability to select his own successor, and the only interest that is openly taken finds voice in the question, "Whom shall the ruler select?" The strong hand of the ruler rests heavily but equally upon all the states of the republic. His secret service is one that Dionysius would have envied.

Born in 1830, in Oaxaca, of poor, plain people (his mother had a strain of ancient Mexican blood in her), the young Diaz, eager to learn, but too poor to live without labor, decided to enter the church, where he could learn without money, but fell happily under the notice of Benito Juarez, then governor of Oaxaca, who aided him, opened a way for him to enter the seminary, and advised him to study the law. So early, at the age of fifteen, did his obligations to Juarez begin. Juarez already eminent and soon to become famous, saw that Diaz promised to become remarkable, and, when his term at the institute was completed, he took him into his own law office.

A YOUTHFUL REVOLUTIONIST.

That was the year 1853, when the incompetent and fatuous Santa Anna returned from Colombia and imposed his fatal dictatorship upon the country. He overthrew the Federal system, converted the states into departments where he established military rule, in place of civil government, seized all the public revenues, abolished free speech and the liberty of the press, increased the army to 90,000 men, assumed the title of "Serene Highness," and announced that his rule would continue at his pleasure. The next year, in December, he ordered a plebiscite to confirm these pretensions. Only two men in Oaxaca dared to vote against him. Diaz was one. Santa Anna, sensitive to the implied criticism, ordered him to be shot, but he escaped, joined Herrera, who was in revolt, and gave his adhesion to the "Plan de Ayutla." Diaz's debut on the historical page was noble, as well as dramatic.

Then followed a period of almost hopeless anarchy. Santa Anna abandoned the dictatorship on Aug. 9, 1855. In the capital a Junta was named, who chose for President Don Martin Carrera, who took office Aug. 14, 1855. In September another Junta met in Cuernavaca, and, on Oct. 4, 1855, chose for President Don Juan Alvarez. He entered the capital Nov. 15, 1855. After a year of mutiny and rebellion the constitutional convention met, and for months discussed the articles to be incorporated into the new instrument of Government. This constitution has not yet been superseded on the records, though in practice it has so far fallen into the realm of things purely academic, that it may well be ignored in the present paper, with the exception of the provision that the President being dead or dis-

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abled—the chief of the supreme court shall become his successor. On Sept. 15, 1857, the new constitution came into force, and Gen. Comonfort was chosen President for four years, President Comonfort issued a pronouncement in Tacubaya, proclaiming the fall of the constitution, the abolition of his own office of constitutional President, and his assumption of the title of dictator.

THREE YEARS' WAR.

This remarkable coup d'état failed of success, and on January 11, 1858, Don Benito Juarez, chief justice of the supreme court, a full-blooded Indian and one of the best and purest of patriots, became "Presidente de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos," while the late dictator, Comonfort, went forth, a fugitive, from Vera Cruz.

Then began the "guerra de tres años," the three years' war. Diaz, true for the time to his chief, fought bravely and skillfully at Oaxaca and Jalapa, and contributed largely to the successes that opened the way to the City of Mexico, where, on January 11, 1861, exactly three years from his entry on his duties as chief magistrate, Don Benito Juarez re-entered the capital, and was again hailed by an enthusiastic people as President of the republic. In three years, his headquarters, like those of John Pope, major-general commanding, had been in the saddle. Before he had loosened his saddle girths, however, he was obliged to resume his seat, and to lead his people again into the wilderness for realizing the impoverished and prostrate condition of his country, he had no sooner assented to the act which Congress passed on July 17, 1861, suspending payments of interest on the national debt, than he found France, Spain and England, all at once by a sudden agreement, landed on the Mexican soil. In December of 1861, and January of 1862, three armies landed on Mexican soil. The attack was shrewdly timed. Not only was exhausted Mexico regarded an easy prey, but America was herself wading through the deep waters of civil war, and could not even turn her eyes from her own work. Happily, England and Spain saw Napoleon's nefarious purpose and shrank away from him, but the French army, the faithful Church, and that large body of Mexican miscreants called Conservatives prevailed, and Maximilian sat at length upon the precarious throne of Turbide.

AGAINST THE FRENCH.

But now the spirit of patriotism was aroused. Every state was faithful. The spirit of the people was almost entirely with Juarez, supporting and encouraging him. The French held simply the ground they stood on. Where they passed, a rush of hungry ill-clad, scantily-armed Mexicans swarmed after them. Open opposition was, for a long time, impracticable, but small detachments, convoys, supplies, and garrisons were cut off and destroyed by the eager patriots. In Puebla, Gen. Comonfort, who had returned and offered his services to Juarez, who had accepted him (as Santa Anna had refused him), held under his command a force officered by men who were destined later to achieve temporary eminence—Gen. Escobedo, who was to capture Queretaro and Maximilian; Negrete, who was to head an insurrection and lose his life; Alatorre, who, as general of the national forces, was to offer himself as the last obstacle to Diaz's successful rebellion and to be swept away by that man of destiny, General Juarez, who later threw in his lot with Diaz and was suffered to occupy the throne during an interregnum of four years; and Diaz himself.

At Puebla, Diaz distinguished himself during the siege; at Miahuatlan and La Carbonera he routed the French. He entered Oaxaca. He worked bravely and well. His courage was always admirable, the devotion of his troops remarkable. He began to make a clearing about Oaxaca. The French fell back—northward, eastward—in any direction to avoid this skillful, persistent, resourceful, guerrilla chief. He defeated Gen. Brincourt and routed his army, himself with scanty and ill-equipped forces. Marshall Bazaine, in person, came against him and Diaz was overwhelmed and taken prisoner. This was the second time he became a captive. For the second time also he refused to give his parole, and for the second time he escaped. At once, with a handful of men, he resumed operations. He surprised and captured Tehuilingo and recruited his forces from the garrison. The next day, he defeated a force of French at Plaxilla and armed and mounted his little company from the spoils. His command grew. Every week saw a new victory and new additions to his little force.

END OF MAXIMILIAN.

It was at this opportune moment that America, having shaken off rebellion and disunion, turned her attention to Mexico, still ensnared in the coils of France. A word and a threat to Napoleon III. and that shifty monarch hastened to advise Maximilian that he must no longer rely upon French bayonets, but make the best terms he could for himself.

In April, 1867, the French sun was now setting—Diaz captured Puebla and marched upon Mexico. Maximilian was taken prisoner at Queretaro and shot, July 18, 1867, while Diaz was consummating the capture of Mexico. He refused to bombard the city. He knew it must soon fall. Indeed, his humanity must be praised. At Puebla, he pardoned the prisoners, even those who had been the most venomous against the republic—Escamilla, the traitor, who in the eager successes of treason, had offered a reward for Diaz's head. Escamilla did not know the value of that head.

Maximilian was dead, shot at Queretaro as Irtubide had been at Tamaulipas. Irtubide had been little more than an incident. Maximilian was not even that. He was only a gorgeous episode in Mexican history. The Mexicans still refuse him the title of Emperor. They do not deign to call him even a usurper. He is only an episode that disturbed the Presidency of Juarez without interrupting it. Meanwhile Gen. Don Porfirio Diaz

had reached the important point in his career—that of individual decision. The country was quiet at home and at peace abroad. The French were driven out, the clergy and the Conservatives were utterly prostrate and discredited, the Liberals were still united, and at last an era of national prosperity seemed at hand under the wise and beneficent rule of Don Benito Juarez.

INGRATITUDE OF DIAZ.

Juarez had placed Diaz under numerous, varied and intimate obligations. He was his protector and father during his childhood and always his chief, his friend, and his benefactor. Diaz was perhaps the one man in the republic of whose fidelity Juarez was absolutely assured. He was mistaken. Diaz forthwith renounced his allegiance and denounced his benefactor. He took the field, issued his pronouncement, raised an army, and became the nucleus of a rebellion against the state. Disaffection spread widely and rapidly. Friends and partisans of Diaz raised the banner of revolt throughout the republic, and only the unexpected death of Juarez saved the grand old Indian patriot from the infamous success of Diaz's ingratitude and perfidy.

Juarez's death, however, created a complication. The constitution of 1857 still held a little life and the succession to the Presidency, therefore provided, placed Lerdo in the chair of state. Lerdo was a fellow conspirator and adherent of Diaz, but, if that shrewd rebel believed that Lerdo would step aside in Diaz's interests, he was mistaken. Diaz had shaken the branch and his subordinates had run off with the fruit, so Diaz turned against Lerdo the preparations that he had perfected against Juarez, and continued an armed rebel against the lawful Government.

Lerdo, however, developed unexpected resources or used unexpectedly well those that he had, and was exiled and driven out of the country. From America he prepared his weapons and encouraged his friends in Mexico. He crossed the Rio Grande March 22, 1876, with forty men, and published the "Plan de Tuxtepec." Passing south, his force increased to 400, and he captured Matamoros, but his hopes waned and his heart fell when he learned of the large forces that awaited him on the path to the capital. He turned aside, and determined to go to Oaxaca, his old friend, the beginning of all his ambitions and of all his successes, the home of his old benefactor, Juarez. Here, only favorable omens, and an auspicious beginning awaited him. He turned back and came to New Orleans, where Juarez had supported himself during his own noble exile by the labor of his hands. The turbulent Diaz, now 46 years of age, sailed for Vera Cruz under the alias of "Dr. Torres of Cuba." He was discovered, however, and jumped overboard, but was caught and locked up. He corrupted the purser, who threw a billet of wood overboard, raised a dry that the purser had escaped, and directed the pursuit, while Diaz was concealing himself under a piece of furniture in the purser's office. At Vera Cruz, Diaz escaped, disguised as a stevedore.

MARCHES INTO MEXICO CITY.

The magic of Diaz's name filled his muster rolls with recruits, and on November 23, 1876, while the President of the Mexican republic fled, a fugitive, to America, Diaz marched into the City of Mexico.

But with the departure of President Lerdo, the chief justice of the supreme court became President of the republic, and, while Diaz was organizing his irregular government in the capital, Don Jose Maria Iglesias assumed, in Guanajuato, the title that the constitution conferred on him, of President of Mexico. But nothing could now restrain Diaz. Iglesias and his army and his lawful title were hardly a straw in the way of the man who, to satisfy the hunger of personal ambition, had betrayed his benefactor, Juarez, and violated the peace of the country. Iglesias fled to America as Lerdo had done.

This was thirty years ago, and never for a moment has Diaz seemed to regret or realize that his country lost her liberty when he became supreme. The constitution, the "safeguard of the liberties of a free people," nominally exists; the people are content to be ruled by a despot under the name of President; the country is beautiful and fertile, traversed by railroads, productive, peaceful—all the evidences of national prosperity abound. But what of the moral condition of the republic? This man's firm purpose obscures, in the case of Mexico, the essentially unstable condition of all arbitrary Governments. His control of the National Legislature is more complete than was that of Henry VIII., whose Parliament at the mere mention of his name would rise and bow to the vacant throne. The various state legislatures exist solely to require and confirm his decisions. The state governors are entirely his creatures, and hold office, or are removed, or are promoted, at his single pleasure. Whatever can become of public liberty during the course of such and so powerful an autocracy? It is a significant commentary upon Diaz's policy that his country can only hope for the tardy and hampered freedom that she may expect from the hungry and furious Church party, whose last conspicuous exploit, upon the field of Mexican history, was to offer liberty as a sacrifice to the Emperor of the French.

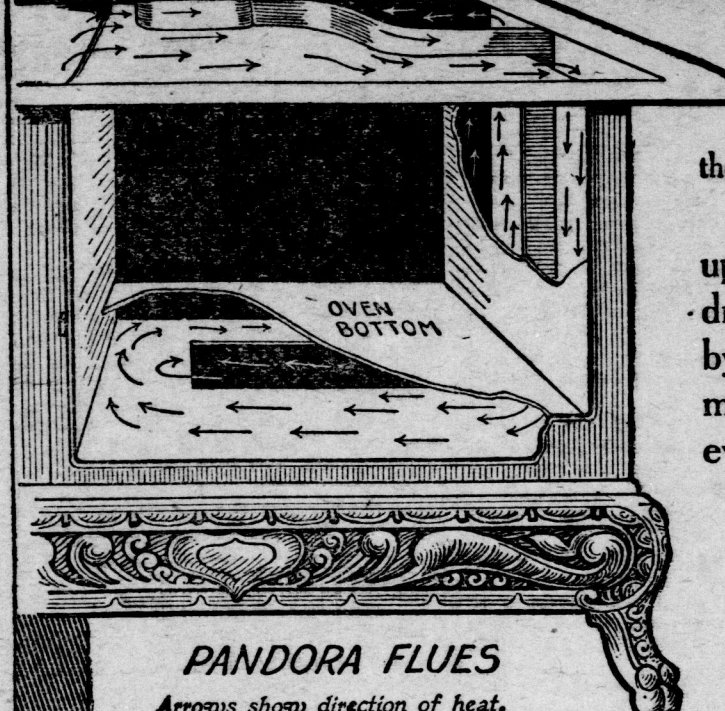
Mexico was as free and no less happy under Mendoza and Bucareli and Revillagigedo as under Diaz, and may again require the patriotism of another Hidalgo, of a new Morelos, and of a second Guerrero to shake off the pleasant and prosperous Diaz, which now enslaves her. Mexico is peaceful, rich, populous, and happy, but she has ceased to be free.

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The result is that the heat is spread uniformly over the oven. And every loaf of a whole batch of bread will be done equally well on all sides.

From under the oven bottom the heat travels up the inner half of back end flue,

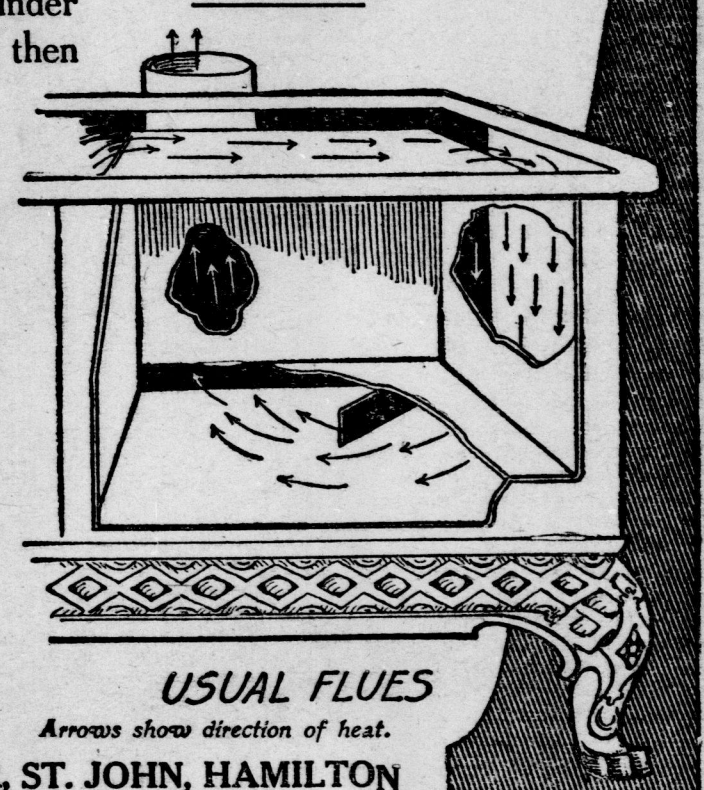
and passes under the back inner pot hole before disappearing up the chimney.

Thus it will be seen that all the heat circulates around the oven twice and under every pot hole before it goes up the chimney—that the draft for baking is also the best for cooking.

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TO PRESERVE THE BUFFALO

THE LAST SURVIVORS STILL AT
LARGE ARE IN THE MACKENZIE
RIVER DISTRICT, AND NEED
PROTECTION.

The last few survivors still at large of the almost countless bands of buffalo, once undisputed masters of the vast interior plains of the North American continent, stretching from the Gulf of Mexico northward to the Arctic Circle, are at the present time inhabitants of the remote Mackenzie River Valley, hundreds of miles north of the settled portions of Canada's prairie provinces, and according to a report of Mr. Ernest Thompson Seton, the author-naturalist, and Major A. M. Jarvis, of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, who are now in the far north looking into the question, unless steps are promptly taken by the Dominion Government for their protection, the last of the wood buffalo, the largest and finest of the buffalo kind, will in four or five seasons more have forever disappeared from the face of the earth. A herd of the plains buffalo, the only large herd indeed in existence, was recently purchased by the Canadian Government from an American hunter in Montana, and is to make its home hereafter at Elk River Park, in Northern Alberta, a tract of 3,000 acres of rolling prairie land, with a mixture of hill, forest and plain, an ideal range for the purpose—but what an exchange, one cannot help thinking, for the freedom of the interior. There was a time, well within the memory of many still living, when a single herd of buffalo has been seen on the plains of Arkansas that contained not less than four million of these animals. They lived and moved as no other quadrupeds within recent times have done, in vast multitudes, like grand armies on review, covering scores of square miles at a time. "Their ways," as an early writer has said, "were as beaten as our great roads, and no herb grows thereon." Surely, if any animal ever was designed by nature for the supplying of the wants of an entire race, that animal was the North American bison. His body yielded fresh meat or was converted into pemmican for the red man's winter use. His skin, dressed with the hair on, was the Indian's clothing and bedding. His skin, dressed without the hair, made the covering for the hunter's teepee (tent). Some times stretched over a wooden frame-work, it served, too, for a boat. The hide was made into shields, ropes and traveling bags for the living and into winding sheets for the dead. The sinews furnished thread, bowstrings, snowshoe webs, and similar requirements. The hair was occasionally converted into belts and ornaments, while from the bones were fashioned articles of use and adornment, and from the horns the aborigine's spoons and similar requirements. The hair was occasionally indispensable to the buffalo to the North American Indian in the latter's wild state, he might be roaming the wilds today like moose, bear or caribou. But because of the Indian's very independence can him, and with the object of bringing the red man into subjection to and dependence upon the whites, the buffalo were ruthlessly slaughtered by the thousands,



and even bands of United States regular troops told off to annihilate what still remained within reach of the frontier posts, until the tribesman was brought to the state of subjection and of utter helplessness that he occupies in the great American republic today. The Canadian Government can well afford the small expenditure which would be entailed in gradually driving the scattered herds of the Slave Lake country, all that remain of the wood buffalo at large, into some peaceful valley within reach of civilization, where a few rangers will be sufficient to protect them from poachers and where they can and will breed and multiply. Whether the poaching of which Ernest Thompson Seton and Major Jarvis speak in their letters from Fort Smith, is the work of four-footed or of two-footed wolves, little can be done so long as the herds remain in that remote part to save them from extinction. —Montreal Witness.

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