

LABOR CONDITIONS IN GUATEMALA

SYSTEM OF PEONAGE EXISTS IN CARIBBEAN STATE TOLERATED NOWHERE ELSE.

Guatemala City, July 12.—Perhaps in no other country in the new world are labor conditions worse than in Guatemala. Of the 2,000,000 people who constitute the population of the republic, 1,000,000 are full-blooded Indians and 800,000 are half-breeds, leaving only 200,000 to represent the people of property and standing in the community. The other 1,800,000 must work for their daily bread, and precious little of that do they get for their labor.

To start with, there is a peonage law. This means in practice that debt-slavery has been recognized although chattel slavery is tabooed. The result to the slave is theoretically the same. Under this law when an Indian or a half-breed becomes indebted to a man, he is compelled to pay his debt in actual labor. Very few of these people are able to keep out of debt. It has been estimated that at least 85 per cent of the men are peons, leaving only a fourth free. Perhaps the thing which more than anything else, drives the Indians and half-breeds into peonage is the exemption tax which all of them are required to pay if they would escape the army. And most of them have an eager desire to have themselves from service in the military organization of the country. When it is stated that the pay of a soldier amounts to less than 4 cents a day, and that out of this he must subsist himself, one readily may see how unattractive the profession of arms is to the average Guatemalteco. His superior officers are men not noted for their kindness to those under their control, and the private can afford nothing better than a blue jean shirt and overalls and sometimes a delapidated straw hat. Unless he gets into the service around the palace at Guatemala City, he seldom or never wears shoes. The hardships of the army are so many and so constant that the natives usually go into it only at the point of the bayonet. But once in, they know better than to desert, for the hand of the government is omnipresent, and the fate of the deserter is to be shot in his tracks.

The result of all this is that the men prefer to become peons to going into the army. The exemption tax is 180 pesos. Of course, none of them has 180 pesos of ready money, and the only way to get it is to go to some planter and borrow it. Borrowing means a lifetime service, for the peso-and-a-half wage per day they are paid seldom suffices to meet the absolute needs of life.

When the mozo, as the laborer is called, borrows money, he enters into a contract to work it out, agreeing that if he tries to leave the plantation before the debt is settled, he must bear all of the expense to which the padrone is put in order to bring him back and enforce the contract. When the mozo begins work he is given a little book, a duplicate of the one in the possession of the padrone. In this the padrone must enter all charges against the mozo and all credits for work performed. The natives cannot read or write, as a rule, yet they have learned to watch their books carefully and to prevent the overcharges that formerly were made against them. When Saturday night comes, the mozo usually wants a little money for "white-eye," the native brandy, and the padrone is always ready to furnish it. In fact, he is willing to give the mozo anything in reason that he desires to keep him contented and happy. The Guatemalteco padrone tries to keep his mozo in a happy frame of mind. When the mozo wants to get married the padrone furnishes him the necessary money, and the same is true when he is sick, or when members of his family die. The padrone gives the mozo a place upon which to build his little thatched hut, where he can raise his family.

Sometimes the mozo and the padrone do not get along together, and the relationship is unsatisfactory to both. Under this condition the mozo may be given a certain number of days to look around to find some other planter who will act as padrone for him. If he finds such a planter, the new padrone will pay off his debt to his former padrone and charge it up to the peon, and he must work it out.

Every padrone must register his mozos, and when he does this they be-

Mackinaw Coat Popular



Here is the most popular thing just now in the way of steamer coats. The long coat has been found to be somewhat in the way and the Mackinaw has taken its place. Its various pockets are especially fascinating to the girl who never can have one even in her gown. The bowler hat can be adjusted in many ways and on a windy day can be veiled.

come exempt from military service. This registration is in the nature of a license for which the padrone must pay a small sum. If he fails to take out this license, the mozo is likely to be drafted into the army, or if he runs away, the padrone cannot enforce his claim for his services.

While the present peonage system is one that no civilized nation would tolerate, and the wages paid the peon under it are perhaps less than half those paid in the other Central American countries, it must be said, in behalf of President Cabrera, that he has taken one long and far-reaching step in the direction of better conditions for the peon. Prior to five years ago the debts of the father descended upon the sons, and the whole family of a peon that died became the property of the padrone until the debt was liquidated. Usually the debt was never paid, and the obligation went down from one generation to the next, unbroken through the years. When Cabrera took the matter up, he had enacted a law which provided that when a peon dies all of his obligations to his padrone are cancelled, and his family are privileged to go where they will. Provision is also made that no mozo under 21 years of age can make a binding contract, so that the half-breeds and the Indians cannot be forced into a life of peonage if they are strong enough in their determination to fight it off. Of course, very few of them fail to become peons, because peonage, with all its attendant ills, is certainly better than service in the army.

The 25 per cent of the Indians and half-breeds which constitute the free labor of the republic do not escape working against their will. When a coffee planter or other agriculturist has need of additional laborers besides his peons, he simply sends to the jefe politico and requests him to secure the desired number of laborers for whatever length of time he may need them, this period to be stated in the application. The jefe politico sends out to the alcaldes and orders the requested number of laborers sent to the applicant. They must work for him at the maximum legal wage of a peso and a half a day during the time mentioned in the application. That they dislike to work and do it entirely

against their will, is shown by the fact that as soon as they finish their contract—a contract made for them and not by them—they will not accept an offer of even 10 pesos per day to complete the task that may be left unfinished.

The peons of Guatemala are an interesting lot of people. They are strong of leg and weak of arm. The burdens they can bear on their backs are surprising. One may see a 12-year-old boy pick up a trunk, under which the average American workman would stagger, and carry it up a flight of stairs. They have great endurance. Many of them are able to cover 60 miles from sun to sun, with from 40 to 50 pounds on their backs, and it is not unusual for them to make 20 miles carrying 100 pounds of merchandise of one kind or another. The average mozo can make better time on foot than his master on a well-seasoned horse or mule. He is given a few tortillas and started on his journey. If night overtakes him, the soft side of a stone usually suffices for his bed.

One cannot but have a deep pity for these unfortunate beings. The pure-blooded Indians of the upland region are a splendid type of the primitive American. They are cleanly, possess fine physiques, and lead wholesome lives in their native valleys when left to themselves. They have a nobility of bearing that is impressive. They are honest and to be relied upon at all times; their word is their bond. To see these poor people forced into a condition of slavery and brought down into civilization that injures them physically and morally, is a terrible sight. No anthropologist who has ever visited the region of northern Guatemala has failed to comment upon the high type of Indian to be found there. But, when an Indian is brought down into the coffee-growing districts, and there forced to work year in and year out for less than nine cents a day, little wonder it is that he degenerates and that the process is resulting in the passing of a noble race.

The educational system which Estrada Cabrera has established ultimately may result in a change in Guatemala. While the salaries paid the teachers are such that the schools are as yet of comparatively little benefit to the communities in which they exist, the seed of an educational system is planted, and the impartial observer begins to hope that in the years to come it will bear fruit in a higher standard of intelligence among the people. It seems probable that Estrada Cabrera's professed enthusiasm for public education is not entirely feigned. He certainly has produced a school law which, if it is lived up to, must produce good results in the end. It is but fair to applaud Cabrera for what he has done, but if there is any benefit to be reaped from it, this must come in the future, for today the condition of 90 per cent of the population of Guatemala is pitiable in the extreme. It is when one goes to the east coast of Guatemala and there sees the United Fruit company paying free labor more than 10 times the wage received by the peon of the west coast, that he begins to feel that, after all, the "southern corporation" may come as a boon to Central America. The thousands of laborers on the United Fruit plantations get \$1 sold a day. How much better is their condition than that of the peons who are paid less than nine cents can be imagined.

PRISONERS BREAK JAIL.

Pasco, Wash., July 13.—Four prisoners, Bert White, John Shand, O. B. Olsen and Charles Baker, made their escape from the county jail early today by sawing through the bars of their cell. They have not been recaptured.

SALE OF WASH GOODS



Imported French Voiles

That Sell for 35c a Yard

15c

the yard. It is a most unusual offering. Chiffon Lisse in stripes, checks and plain colors; French voiles in pretty stripes, and English novelty fabrics in exquisite colorings.

A Sale of Seasonable WASH FABRICS

That Is Real and Tangible. Fabrics Upon Which You Can Really Save Money

Crepe Plisse

That Sells for 20c a Yard

14c a yard. A pretty, soft crepe fabric that washes but does not require ironing; it comes in shades of lavender, pink, cream, white or tan; one of the daintiest materials for waists.

15c and 20c Fabrics in

Swisses and Lawns

10c the yard. This takes in all of our wash goods that sells regularly for these two prices; printed batiste in the season's newest patterns and fancy dotted swisses in a large assortment of beautiful effects.

25c Summer Silks

In Tussah Effects

17c the yard. Right now when several months of the season is upon us and you can use the goods, we offer a most complete line of these soft, silky fabrics in all wanted shades. You should take advantage of it.

The Unusual Offer We Are Making on \$22.50, \$25.00, \$27.50, \$30.00, \$32.50 and \$35.00

= WOMEN'S SUITS =

\$17.50

is attracting a most unusual amount of attention. All day Friday and Saturday a constant stream of women passed through our suit room. We have augmented this lot of garments considerably by adding many new suits that previously were not intended for the sale.

If you are at all interested in a High-Class Suit for a very little money you should come to the store and see them

Hammocks and Porch Shades at Rock-Bottom Prices

If you are contemplating the luxury of a hammock now is your time to get this high-class merchandise at rock bottom prices.

All hammocks marked \$3.00 for **\$1.95**
All hammocks marked \$3.75 for **\$2.65**
All hammocks marked \$4.50 for **\$2.95**
All hammocks marked \$5.75 for **\$4.25**
All hammocks marked \$6.75 for **\$4.95**

Japanese bamboo porch shades reduced to very small prices right now when you need them the most. Here are the inducements:

Size 4x8 feet now for **\$1.35**
Size 6x8 feet now for **\$2.25**
Size 8x8 feet now for **\$3.35**
Size 10x8 feet now for **\$4.25**
And several other equally good price reductions.

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MICHIGAN IS SWEEP BY TORNADO

GRAND RAPIDS PEOPLE INJURED AND ONE WOMAN KILLED IN KENOSHA, WIS.

Grand Rapids, July 13.—Grand Rapids was hit early today by a tornado that injured 40 or more persons and did thousands of dollars' worth of damage. The storm entered the city from the southwest about 4 o'clock. The first place struck was the city market and Grand Rapids Central league baseball park adjoining. The market was crowded with farmers and their teams, as trading had just begun. After the storm struck, the roof of the ball park grandstand was lifted off and scattered about the market. A panic followed. Horses were killed and a great many persons were hurt, some so badly they had to be sent to the hospital. The police reserves and fire department were called out. The storm swept across town, striking the residence district. The storm struck the market place just as the bell for the morning opening rang. A terrific thunderstorm which had been approaching had given no warning by sawing through the bars of their cell. They have not been recaptured.

peared in the southwest and headed directly toward the clustered product wagons.

With a deafening roar the roof of the ball park grandstand was lifted high in the air and fell in a rain of planks and beams upon the frightened men and horses in the market place.

Men and women, thrown down by the wind, were run over and knocked unconscious by dashing teams. Nellie Wisconsin attempted to quiet her frightened horse, but fell, and in a moment two heavy fruit wagons passed over her. She may die. Many other persons suffered broken limbs. Charles Gibbs, 57 years of age, who was suffering from a nervous disease, died from shock caused by the storm.

Woman Killed.

Kenosha, Wis., July 13.—Mrs. E. Printz of South Kenosha was killed and many people injured in a tornado which passed through the suburbs of Kenosha early today.

Mrs. Printz was about to become a mother. She was ill when the tornado struck her home and died from the shock.

The two-story home of Captain O. Nelson at South Kenosha was completely demolished and Nelson was found buried in the debris.

He was unconscious, but will recover.

It is said that the path of the storm was a half-mile in width. It is impossible to estimate the loss. Houses were blown down, trees uprooted, barns collapsed and crops ruined by the force of the storm. In Kenosha proper, where the storm

MURDER AND SUICIDE.

Los Angeles, July 13.—Harry Webber, a marble layer, shot his wife early today on the steps of a lodging house here and then blew out his own brains. Webber was 31 years old and his wife, 21. They were married about a year ago in Portland, Ore., where the young woman resided. Her name prior to marriage was Rose Wilson. Domestic differences caused the murder and suicide. According to the police, Mrs. Webber had threatened to leave her husband and the latter had told her he would kill her if she did.

PLAYS AND PLAYERS

Harry B. Smith, the musical comedy librettist, is said to have made a fortune of about \$2,000,000 in that field. G. A. Bedford, who is the ex-censor of plays in London, has himself written a one-act play, called "A Snug Retreat."

One of the Shubert enterprises in New York during the coming season will be "Rutherford & Son," now running in London.

George Demerel, who won fame in "The Merry Widow," is to be starred in a new musical piece now making a great hit in Berlin.

"Ready Money" is to be produced in New York late in the summer. The drama has already made a remarkable success in Chicago.

John Cort is shortly to produce a satirical farce called "The Richest Man in the World," by Arthur Gillespie and Collin Davis.

Julian Street, the millionaire short story writer, has collaborated on a comedy with Frederick Palmer, the well-known war correspondent.

"Felix Friganza" has been engaged to play the leading feminine role in a new review to be produced in New York, to be called "The Passing Show of 1912."

A new German blow pipe for which many advantages are claimed, burns a mixture of air and the vapor of benzol, petroleum or alcohol.

KILLS TROUT WITH GOLF BALL.

Chilopee Falls, Mass., July 13.—Here is a fish story that is sworn to and better than that there is a fish to substitute the yarn.

J. S. Hunt, postmaster of Worcester, killed a 10-inch trout with a golf ball while he was driving for the seventh hole. The ball veered and struck in a trout stream that runs through the links. Hunt picked up the fish while he went to recover the ball and will mount the fish.

COOLER WEATHER COMING.

Washington, July 13.—At the conclusion of another day of sizzling heat where high temperature prevailed generally from the Rockies to the Atlantic with the exception of New England and eastern New York, weather bureau officials promised tonight somewhat lower temperatures in the plains states within the next 36 hours and probably Monday in the Missouri and upper Mississippi valleys and upper lake regions.