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THE MEXICAN MUDDLE

VI.—Perturbed But Peaceful El Paso.

By Frederic J. Haskin.

EL PASO, Tex., November 19.—This metropolis of the southwest wishes to correct the national impression that she is a war center. Although she is the gateway through which war-torn Mexico imports everything, from cartridges to detectors, the city continues calm and orderly as ever. Nevertheless, the storm in Mexico has left its mark in ways that are interesting to note.

El Paso is the city of the refugees. A great class of Mexican society and almost deserted the republic, and most of them have come to El Paso. They are the landholders and moneyed men, the friends of the old conservative order. Their estates laid waste and their stock driven off, the men themselves have retreated with their families to wait for better times. Many of them are still very wealthy in spite of their losses, for Mexico was the land of great fortunes. No better place in the United States, they are people of cosmopolitan experience and culture, and their presence constitutes not a problem, but an asset.

The bulk of the refugees, however, are of another type. Altogether, 15,000 of them in her city, and it is obvious that they cannot all be Castilian capitalists. The great number of lower-class Mexicans do constitute a problem, both political and social. They do not become American citizens; hence it is supposed that they will go back to Mexico as soon as order is restored. In the meantime El Paso is trying to educate them, and especially to teach them English. The lower class quarter of the city, by the river bank opposite Juarez, is given over to them. It is a bit of Mexico in the United States. The speech of the streets, the signs of the shops, are Spanish. Ragged little Mexican newsboys vend a dozen Spanish papers; even the old Mexican street hawk has invaded the quarter with his stand of cheap candy and the accompanying swarm of flies.

Immigration comes in waves. Every battle or prospect of a fight sends a crowd of non-combatants seeking safety over the line. Since many of these immigrants must be classed as undesirable aliens, a strict inspection is maintained. At a time of real danger, as when Villa was moving on Juarez, the national government established a camp for refugees, where they were held under guard until it was safe to send them home again. Five thousand people took refuge in the camp. Today there are two Mexicans in El Paso to every American. The peaceable nature of the Mexican is strikingly shown by the fact that they have never given trouble of any sort, even when the American government took steps against Villa, with whom most of them sympathize. The attention of the immigration inspectors is directed toward finding out the physically unfit rather than the potential disturbers. The bulk of the immigrants come in over a single bridge, where the trolley line crosses from Juarez to El Paso. Here every passenger is sharply scrutinized, and the apparently innocuous business or pleasure, it is sometimes hard to distinguish between an undesirable alien and an old lady on a shopping tour.

Once deported, city officers of El Paso complain that the undesirable find means to slip across the border in spite of the most rigid guard. Crime in City. Ninety per cent of the police court cases in El Paso, the pocket pickings and petty thefts, are planned across the river and carried out by Juarez Mexicans. These criminals are known to every inspector and it is impossible for them to cross any of the bridges, yet some of them have been arrested on the American side half a dozen times. This same difficulty in watching the winding and overgrown banks of the Rio Grande has hampered the customs inspectors in their fight against smuggling. Juarez today is the only point where Villa can import munitions. It has always been his main point for importation. The United States government has declared an embargo on exports of arms or ammunition to Villa territory. Yet so long as the Mexicans are able to pay for cartridges there will be men to take the chance of being shot by border patrol or drowned in the Rio Grande while getting them to him. Various bold expedients have been tried by the smugglers. When the Rio Grande is out of play, as sometimes happens here, their venture becomes comparatively simple. They have only to dash across the river bed. When the stream is low the shifting sand that fills the channel turns to quicksand, and they are sometimes successful enough to make the smuggler earn his profits. In very high water there is the risk of drowning.

When the United States has declared an embargo on cartridges their value in Mexico is doubted.

Men and Women Engage in Smuggling. Rifle shells worth 75 cents in El Paso brings the smuggler a dollar and a half in Juarez. They are smuggled in boats or by swimmers who buckle a belt about their waist and float the river at night. One man went into the business wholesale. He filled a hollow log with cartridges, disguised it with branches and swam across the stream, pushing his log before him. Various attempts were made by the border patrol to carry ammunition across the bridge. A squad of United States soldiers searches every Mexican coming to El Paso and Juarez. Then the women began to smuggle cartridges. They were allowed to pass with their babies, and they stowed cartridges in that portion of their wardrobe where the American shopkeeper is popularly supposed to carry his "roll." This scheme was checked by stationing woman inspectors at the bridges. Every revolutionary faction has its agents and sympathizers in El Paso. The town has become a hotbed of intrigue. An American newspaper man who knows all the capitals of Europe said that not even Budapest, that center of political plotting for all the little kingdoms of the continent, could be mentioned in the same breath with El Paso. The Carranzistas, the Zapatistas, and the Huertistas, all the other "istas" of tangled Mexican politics. For the most part they plot and intrigue in a perfectly orderly fashion. They arrange for the purchase of arms and supplies and the sale of cattle and hides, make loans, attempt to find out each other's plans and influence public opinion through the little Spanish newspapers. Many a plan of campaign has been laid in El Paso.

Race feeling in El Paso has never been troublesome. There is no American race feeling in the city. The Mexican never troubles. better than El Paso, or where people were on better terms with their neighbors across

the border. You hear many a regret for the old days before the first rebellion, when every El Pasoan had friends in Juarez. Since then the better element has left Juarez almost entirely and few people visit the Mexican city except out of curiosity. In fact, the more prominent El Paso merchants stay away, because they find themselves and their money value are too well known in Mexico.

A few miles from El Paso is the army post of Fort Bliss. Its garrison may have something to do with the exemplary behavior of the Mexicans on both sides of the river. Fort Bliss usually contains three or four regiments of infantry or cavalry and a regiment of artillery. The fort is head-quartered in the city in a building liable to be transferred at any moment to the scene of a new disturbance. Two regiments recently went to Douglas. But enough troops are always left in Fort Bliss to put down any possible trouble in that vicinity. A telegram to Washington would bring them down to take charge of the city.

The presence of the artillery is also a strong safeguard. The sky line of the business district of El Paso, with its towering skyscrapers, looms up from Juarez as the sky line of New York looms up from the lower harbor—no doubt a tempting target to any outlaw leader who happens to have a cannon and a grievance. The thought that the artillery of Fort Bliss would quickly knock him and his cannon to powder is sure to have a restraining effect. El Paso has enjoyed absolute quiet for years. The city is obviously prosperous. Some people have accused her of favoring war and opposing peace because war brings business. El Paso protests that she prospers in spite of the war. The great volume of business lost in Mexico has been replaced from the southwestern part of the United States. With the restoration of order El Paso expects a boom.

For this reason the recognition of Carranza has been favorably received, though Villa is probably more popular personally. Any step toward a stable government in Mexico is hailed enthusiastically in El Paso. For five years the southern republic has been spending its money for means of destruction rather than construction. For instance, it is said that not a single new wagon has gone to Mexico in four years. With the coming of peace should come a great demand for the necessities of everyday life. El Paso does not forget that to Mexico she is truly El Paso del Norte—the gateway of the north.

THANKSGIVING.

BY DR. FRANK CRANE. (Copyright, 1915.)

Thanksgiving is a Puritan festival, and maugher the feasting with which we celebrate it, a touch of seriousness always clings to the occasion.

From the beginning we have never omitted its observance, not even during the war of the sixties, not even in the lean and panic years of 1857, 1873, 1893 and 1907. There were always enough of us glad to be alive, and that it is as well with us as it is, as the deacon's phrase says.

It may not be a bad idea in this year of grace 1915 to take stock of our blessings. Of course, we have faults, unjust conditions, sufferings, dangers and the usual quota of undesirable elements incident to the human family in all times and places. Only Thanksgiving day is not the occasion for complaints nor alarms, let us rather look about and see wherein Destiny has been good to us. This a wholesome exercise and a commendable habit.

The first thing that comes to all our minds is the unspeakable calamity of the war that rages among our brothers in Europe. By the mercy of fate we are spared that.

The choicest of our young men are not being infected, dismembered or murdered upon the battlefield. It is not the blood of our boys that is being poured down the sink hole of race pride and governmental incompetency. We are spared the blighting hates that are wars' bitterest by-products; we are nursing no long fury of resentment against another people.

The systems and ideals of government upon this western continent are such that we not only live in friendly rivalry and intelligent co-operation, but we see no possibility of things ever being any other way. One-half the world has eliminated war even from its thought. That is something.

We are the least endangered of any nation. In spite of alarmists it is hard to see what object any nation could have in attacking us. As near as safety can be assured upon this sublimity sphere we are safe.

We are prospering materially. It is but a pose when we affect to despise prosperity. We all want it and labor and sweat to be decently thankful when we get it.

There are always those who howl carmine, and their cry is the clearest. It is cantankerous human nature to fear something ill is bound to happen when we are all happy. But it is the rottenest ignorance of superstition. Men of sense ought not to be afraid to laugh when they feel good, even if tomorrow may bring the gripes.

Our farms are teeming. We have had bumper crops. The good God has filled our bins with corn, wheat, oats and apples. Cotton flourishes.

We have been able to send millions of dollars' worth of provisions to unfortunate Belgium, one of the most splendid acts of history.

With magnificent self-restraint we have played the big brother to Cuba, Mexico and Haiti.

Representatives of our sister American republic have several times sat with us in humane council on pan-American affairs.

War is always fraught with unexpectedness, but our pilots have piloted us so far safely through the troubled waters. We are not the enemy of Germany, nor of England. We stand the one great exponent of humanity, even above patriotism.

While we have had our strikes and labor wars, on the whole our great struggle toward a righteous economical adjustment of the producing forces of labor and capital has proceeded with remarkable dignity and intelligence.

The cause of education was never more popular. Our vast system of free public schools steadily increases the intelligence of our citizens.

Big business grows bigger, yet has been marked with an increasing sentimentality and responsibility, and with the feeling of the necessity of maintaining public favor.

The south is advancing, the east was never busier, the north overflows with abundance, the west looms. Our experiment in democracy has not yet failed. A hundred million self-governing people pursue their fortunes in reasonable fellowship, untroubled by sectional hate, untrifled by foreign aggression.

We are not so contentiously religious as we were, but we have a deal more of that real religion that expresses itself in helping those less fortunate than ourselves, and in establishing social conditions that shall give every man a square deal.

What the future holds, of course, no man knows. It may have severe trials in store for us. But we shall face them with that same courage we have shown when danger loomed before us in the past.

With malice toward none, with charity to all, America fronts the future unafraid, ready for peace or war, and ready, too, to enter with a whole heart into the coming program of the twentieth century—the United States of the World.

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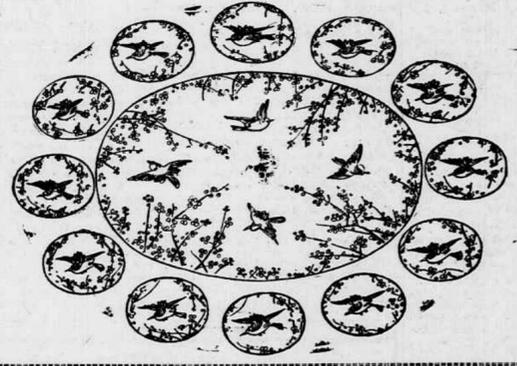
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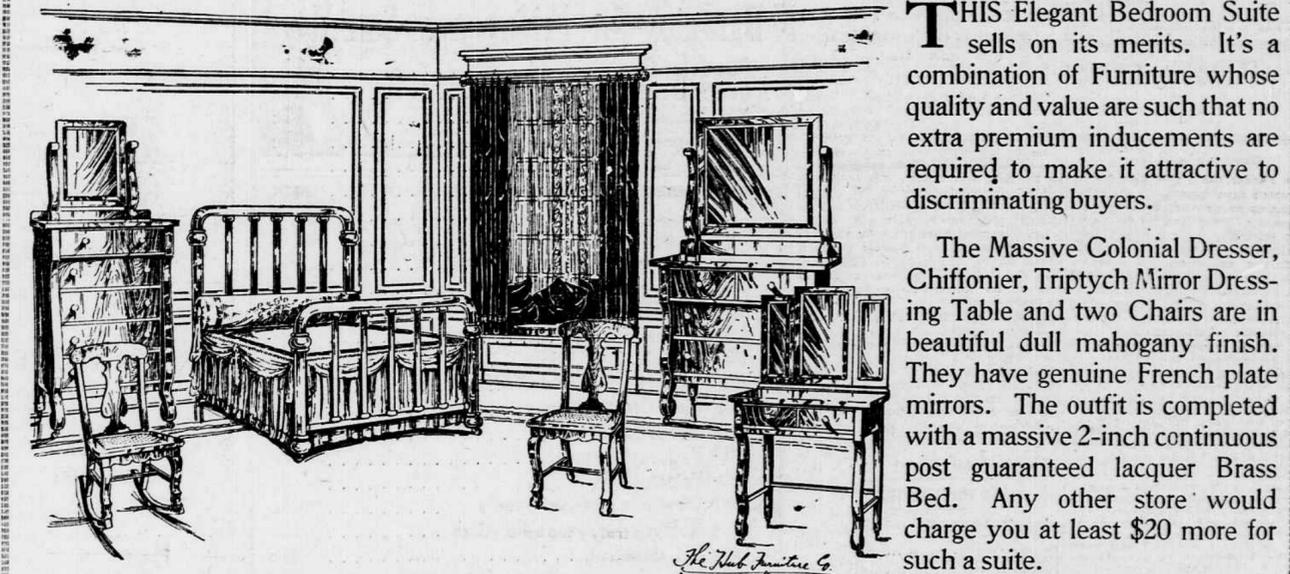


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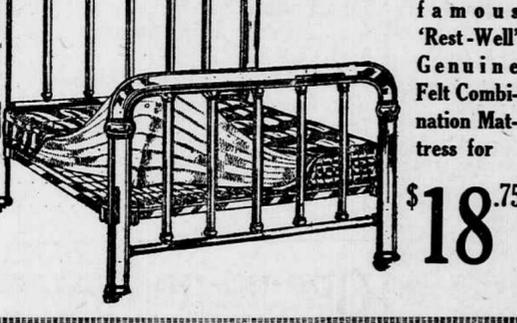
The Massive Colonial Dresser, Chiffonier, Triptych Mirror Dressing Table and two Chairs are in beautiful dull mahogany finish. They have genuine French plate mirrors. The outfit is completed with a massive 2-inch continuous post guaranteed lacquer Brass Bed. Any other store would charge you at least \$20 more for such a suite.

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