

MEXICAN EDUCATIONAL METHODS

By Robert H. Murray

III "Mexico In Its Centennial Year."

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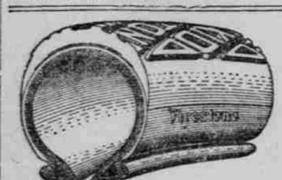
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Teachers in That Country Retire With Pensions.

MEXICO, D. F., March 5.—There is a marked similarity to be observed between Mexico and Japan, when comparison is made of their relative development in the last few years. Both have had forth diligent and well directed efforts along lines of popular education, Japan probably with better results than Mexico. The Japanese possess temperamental qualities which serve to impel them to seize upon educational opportunities with more avid enthusiasm and determination than the average Mexican. Japan, too, had a scholarship and an elaborate, useful and permanent educational system centuries before the Spanish came to Mexico.

There was scholastic attainment among the Aztecs, it is true, but it was of a nature calculated to leave slight impress upon the latter day generations of Mexicans. In the "Calmeac" schools of the Aztecs the nobles were taught the martial or priestly arts. Patriotism and the qualities of the stoic were the elements upon which the greatest stress was laid. For the common people there were the "tepu-chall" schools. In the curriculum were included history, eloquence, astronomy, astrology, law and military tactics, as the Aztecs understood them.

Popular Education. There was no popular education in Mexico under Spanish rule. For the sons of the wealthy, or those who were patronized by the epulent, opportunity for mental training was offered virtually only in two professions, the priesthood and the law. Colleges were founded, it is true, but like the schools, they were under the domination of the priests, and no encouragement was given the children of the poor either to seek admittance, or to prepare themselves by a course of preliminary study to attack the higher citadels of learning. The priests taught the Indians to read and write, but only as a means for spreading the propaganda of Catholicism among them. The Spaniards and their priests subscribed to the theory that education tended to foment discontent, and rebellious tendencies among the masses. So, generally speaking, the educational policies of the conquerors was repressive.

Only Education. Yet Mexico saw the birth of the first university and the first college upon the American continent. The University of Mexico was founded in 1521 and enjoyed high rank among the world's institutions of learning until it was closed in 1833. One of the projects inaugurated by the government in celebration of the Mexican centennial this year is the reestablishment of the university. The National Preparatory school, which now partakes in part of the functions of a national university, probably will be absorbed.

Within the scope of the university also are likely to be brought a number of thriving and well organized schools of higher education. Among the preparatory schools, the national medical school, the San Carlos academy of fine arts, the school of jurisprudence, the agricultural school, the pedagogic department of the two normal schools, the school of mines and the school of commerce, the national conservatory of music, besides several others. The College of San Nicholas de Hidalgo was founded at Patzcuaro, Michoacan, in 1546.

Revolution Lulls Education. Blight fell upon all educational activity in Mexico in the period of revolution and general civic prostration that ensued between the establishment of the country's independence in 1821 and the opening of the Diaz regime in 1876. There was no money forthcoming from the government. The great mass of the population, which had remained densely ignorant under the Spanish reaped no educational benefit under the republic.

It was estimated 30 years ago that less than 2,000,000 of a total estimated population of 11,000,000 could read and write. In the latter part of the 18th century there were only 10 schools in Mexico. By 1895 one-third of the population of the federal district could read and write.

With the enactment of the reform laws, by which the religious orders were disestablished, the church separated from the state and the influence of the priests broken, education began to revive. President Juarez, in 1857, had enacted a compulsory education law. It remained non-effective until president Diaz gave it force and vitality.

"Education is our foremost interest," he said recently. "We regard it as the foundation of our prosperity and the basis of our very existence. For this reason we are doing all that we can to strengthen its activity and increase its power."

In the Mexican schools. One gains, perhaps, his strongest impression of the manner in which Mexico has progressed by visiting some of the schools in this city, and in other parts of the country. One of the most interesting in them are the boys and girls from 6 to 14, or older. The law makes it obligatory upon parents to send their children to school between the ages of 6 and 14. A sharp system of inspection is in operation, by which watch is kept upon the children within the city, which is divided into districts. If they fail to obey the law they are fined, or imprisoned. Discipline and Cleanliness. In the primary schools three striking conditions force themselves conspicuously upon the notice. One is the discipline, another is the cleanliness of the children, and the third is the astonishing proficiency with which they master the English language. English is an important part of the curriculum. When one listens to youngsters of 8 and 10 years reading, writing and speaking English, comparison are forced upon one which are not altogether complimentary to the children of similar age in the United States' public schools. Perhaps, the reproach should be directed toward the educational authorities at home who are prone to underestimate the growing importance and value which foreign languages should occupy in the education of the present generation, and who fail to appreciate the fact that a working knowledge of languages can best be supplied when the pupil is young. I have visited few schools in the United States where the absence of a visitor evoked so little notice from the children, or distracted their at-

Children Are All Forced to Be Clean and Physicians Watch After Their Health—Education Is Compulsory in the Army and Prisons of the Country—Rapid Development of Learning.

Attention from their studies so slightly, as in the Mexican schools.

Children Must Be Clean. While manifestly the circumstances of a majority of the children were humble, their attire was uniformly neat and clean, their hands and faces were as immaculate as one could reasonably expect those of an active, healthy youngster to be, and their hair was combed. When this was mentioned, one of the teachers explained: "The children are not allowed to remain in school unless they are clean. If the parents of a child are too poor to supply the proper clothing, the teachers and the pupils whose parents are well-to-do, usually do what they can to supply the deficiencies. We give them ample facilities for keeping their bodies cleanly. I will show you."

This was in one of the 10 modern school buildings which have been erected within the past few years. The teachers led me to the lavatory, and pointed out basins and showers, with an abundant supply of water, soap and towels. Watch Health of Children. "We also keep a careful watch over their health," said the teacher. "If children are ailing, or show signs of eye, ear or other disorders, they are sent immediately to physicians." When I was in the city of Tehuantepec, I saw children so small that their tiny legs cleared the floor by inches, poring over their English books. Children of wealthy and well-to-do Mexicans are sent to the public schools. I watched a son of Jose Yves Limantour, the minister of finance, sitting at a desk side by side with the son of a cab driver. A subsidiary feature of the present educational system of the country would seem to tend toward inculcating a spirit of comradeship and democracy among the classes. Minister Limantour, by the way, is an earnest second to president Diaz's educational projects. He has just donated four lots and \$100,000 in cash toward the establishment of a home for students of limited means who come to the capital to study in the higher and professional schools of the republic.

Kindergartens; Night Schools. Kindergartens and night schools are a late manifestation of the expansion of the free education in Mexico. The government pays for all text books, instruction, etc., in primary, normal and professional schools. President Diaz turned his attention to the education of the Indian children nearly 20 years ago. Attendance upon study was made compulsory with them. The states have been spurred to appropriate as much money as they can toward education. There is not a town or hamlet in the country without its primary school. Most stress is laid upon teaching the children reading, writing and arithmetic.

Education for Prisoners. Education is also compulsory in the army and in the penitentiaries. Certain hours daily are set apart for instruction in the barracks and the prisons. Service in the army, or a term in the penitentiary, ought to be blessings in disguise to thousands of Mexican men, providing they possess within themselves the ability and the inclination to take advantage of their opportunities. Recent estimates, conservatively based, show that there are in the Mexican public schools 1,000,000 children, with 15,000 in the Catholic seminaries and 20,000 in schools conducted under the auspices of Protestant denominations. Free scholarships aggregating \$80,000 are given yearly by the government.

Two normal schools, one for each sex, in this city graduate teachers, who are educated and trained according to accepted principles of modern pedagogy. The efficiency of the teaching force is constantly being improved. Formerly the public school teachers, owing to lack of opportunities for adequate training, were not properly equipped. This class of instructors are being replaced as fast as possible by normal graduates, while the former are detailed for service in the schools of the various states. In this manner a system of progression and improvement in the teaching corps has been inaugurated which will, within a few years, relegate the less desirable instructors, and replace them with graduates of the normal schools.

Pensions for Teachers. Encouragement to engage in the profession of teaching has been supplied by the establishment of a pension system. After 30 years of continuous service a teacher is entitled to retire fully, and the effect to continue work their salary is doubled. Moral precepts are taught in the school, although instruction in religion, and the reading of the bible is prohibited. The course of study in the schools of this city requires six years in the primary grades and five years in the secondary grades. Then the student is passed to the professional schools. Plans are now under way for the establishment of a secondary school for girls which will place within the grasp of the mentally ambitious young women of Mexico an opportunity to acquire a higher education. In the primary school manual training and domestic science are required. Old School Buildings. In the older schools of the city much is to be desired in the environment. The buildings, originally not intended for scholastic purposes, are either old, or inconveniently arranged. But this condition is being remedied. Besides the ten modern school houses already spoken of, three others are now building. There is at present available \$1,500,000 for new buildings. Within ten years the budget allowance for federal education, comprising only the federal district and the territories, and exclusive of the amount spent by the states, has been increased from \$1,000,000 to \$7,000,000, the last being the sum provided in the current budget.

There are within the federal district and the territories 650 public schools, with 2500 teachers. The pupils number 70,000, not including 6900 pupils in the high schools. Private schools come under the jurisdiction of the minister of public instruction. They are subject to supervision by government inspectors. Expense for Education. In the Mexican states the average sum expended per capita for educational purposes varies from \$8 to \$12. The state of Mexico has a school for every 15 square miles of territory. In the states of Tlaxcala and Morelos, which are the smallest in the country, there is one school to each 500 inhabitants. In four other states, which are larger and

less densely populated, Coahuila, Tamaulipas, Chihuahua and Sonora, there is a school to every 1427 inhabitants.

Voting capacity is universally dependent upon the educational qualifications of the people. Mexico enjoys no exception from this rule.

When the national and state projects for celebrating the centennial were under consideration, it was suggested by president Diaz that each state, city and municipality, so far as its means would allow, create some monument in the way of a public improvement in commemoration of the anniversary. In many places the carrying out of the suggestion has taken the form of new school houses. This means, naturally, a rapid and extensive expansion of the educational systems, both state and federal, the appropriation of larger sums of money for this purpose and, in time, a corresponding decrease in the illiteracy of the people.

Ignorant Can't Vote. Voting capacity is universally dependent upon the educational qualifications of the people. Mexico enjoys no exemption from this rule. Elections, as now conducted, are merely nominal. The bulk of the inhabitants, 12,000,000 of whom are the Indians whom president Diaz insisted should be afforded educational facilities, did not vote. They are not barred from the polls by intimidation or by a fear lest they incur the wrath of the government. Franchise rights to the Indian, and to a large number of those in whom the aboriginal blood is present only in infinitesimal quantity, mean nothing. They do not grasp the significance of the ballot, or now have in themselves the will or the power to use it wisely. Their daily wants, few in number and simple in kind, engross their lives and thought to the exclusion of all else. But the children of this class are going to school. They are clutching at the skirts of knowledge, which is power. The school children of the Mexico of today will be better citizens than their fathers, and their children will progress in political enlightenment faster and more steadily than the present generation. President Diaz will not live to see the Mexican nation reap the full benefit of his educational policy. But he will exist in history as the man whose wisdom and keen foresight made it possible, in time for the citizenry of Mexico to come into its own through the mental training and discipline that is essential to the permanency and success of any commonwealth.

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Next article, "Finances of Mexico."

By James Forbes

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THE CHORUS LADY

Novelized From Forbes's Play of the Same Name by John W. Harding

"But it's good to be home again," sighed Patsy contentedly, dismissing her thoughts the counterpoints that could not be placed to anybody's fault and giving her mother another affectionate hug. "An' how is things? How's Danny gettin' along?" "He ain't gettin' along as well as he might," answered the old woman un- easily. "He's had a hard time as it ever since the fore, though Lor' knows he's wurrked hard enough, an' he's had to get a partner."

"A partner?" "Yes, we didn't write to bother you about it. It wouldn't 'a' helped matters an' would 'a' set ye worryin', an' ye sure have enough to put up with."

"You oughter 'a' let me know about it, all the same. Who is he—the partner, I mean?" "A Mister Crawford from New York. He came here this very mornin' to look the place over. Yir father says it's little Danny 'il' get out at the stable now except his board an' keep."

"Ain't that punk luck?" commented Patsy. "Well, an' how's pop? I didn't have much money, an' I came away too quick to buy anything for you, but I brought some tobacco I got at the deepo at Washington."

Before her mother could reply O'Brien himself came in, his face beaming a welcome. Tears of tender joy moistened his eyes as he took the returned wanderer in his arms. "Ah, Patsy, but we've missed ye, me girl," he said. "It makes loffe worth livin' to see ye once in a while. Phwat happened to yir show that ye were able to come to us?"

"The angel, the financial party as was back of the 'Moonlight Maids,' got chilblains," she explained. "Poor creature! Where did he catch them?" asked her mother, with much interest.

"In the box office," replied Patsy, with a laugh, in which all joined, including her mother, who began to understand. "Wasn't the play comical?" asked the latter.

"I never noticed any one laff himself to death," said Patsy, shrugging her shoulders. "The comedians was a couple of morgues. The best joke in the show was the star—one of them hand-made blonds. She was in the original 'Black Crook' company, an' she had a daughter at school then. Then there was a couple of song an' dance men, a team of acrobats, a troupe of moth eaten dogs an' a chorus that looked like the Chambermaids' union."

"And wasn't even the scenery nice?" questioned Nora. "Yep," she admitted, "the scenery was nice, and I made a great personal success. I had three lines in the after- place."

"Well, never mind, child. The 'Moonlight Maids' brought us luck in bringin' ye here," said O'Brien. "An', now ye're here, we're goin' to keep ye awhile."

"I'd like to stay awful bad, but I'm afraid I can't, pop, dear," she said. "I've got to go back to New York to-morrow."

weeping, she bounced out of the room. Patsy, amazed and pained and anxious to soothe her sister, followed her to the foot of the stairs. "Why, Nora—honey lamb!" she cried. "Come here, child, I"— "Honey lamb nothing!" screamed the enraged girl as she slammed the door of her room. "I'll go in the chorus just to spite you."

Patsy, perturbed and distressed, turned back. "Mom, you haven't been encouragin' her? Pop, you won't let her go?" she questioned. "Phwat d'ye mean, child?" demanded her mother.

"I mean," answered Patsy emphatically, "I don't want my little sister in the chorus."

"If it ain't fit for Nora, it ain't fit for you, and it's here ye'll stay," declared O'Brien very quietly and very firmly. "Me? Oh, I'm different," said the girl. "I'm wise. I can tell the goods from the phoney every time."

"Couldn't ye teach Nora?" "I'd just as lief she wouldn't learn." (To Be Continued.)

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