

IN MEXICO'S MICHOACAN

A Region of Rich Valleys Amid High Peaks. Indian Craftwork Center—Patzcuaro On The Lake Of That Name Is Important Market

MEXICO CITY, Mexico, Dec. 30.—A single line of track, now narrow gauge, now normal, connects the seething modern capital of Mexico with Patzcuaro in the provincial State of Michoacan. The track is not smooth as glass, the cars are not de luxe and the trip is not accomplished with hair-raising speed. Oh, no—but it is all cozy and modern enough. The trifling annoyances are absorbed in one's sense of excitement, and a potent excitement it is, as befits the beautiful deep land into which one is penetrating.

The mountainous Mexican landscape is continually opening into new regions—new countries, really, with their own peculiarities of climate, tree and flower, their own type of Indian face, their own codes, customs, causes, sometimes their own speech. Many such small, isolated worlds are passed on the trip to Michoacan, and the alert eye will take delight in distinguishing them.

The first stage, the run to Toluca, is slower, but much finer by train than is the same trip by motor. The trail grinds up the great western barrier of the Valley of Mexico, while the city flattens out below, a few tiled

domes shining through the cold, early morning mist. The city vanishes and the train begins to weave across the uplands, a chilly country of fir forests, cubical villages of adobe, and brown, up-ended fields squarely hedged with rows of aloes. Then down into the Valley of Toluca. This flat plain of corn and wheat lands, stretched vast and shimmering between the range we have just crossed and the foot of Toluca's snowy volcano, was once the portion of Cortez and part of his colossal private empire of arable Mexican valleys. Later it belonged to various titled hacendados. Now the Indian villages count a fair share of it their own, to keep, as long as they work it.

The train stops in Toluca's noisy station, and one looks down upon a swarm of leathery faces and brown hands pushing bowls of food toward the car windows. These vendors are mostly women and barefoot, with the primitive squareness of face and body and the monumental stillness of the Indian. But the moment's intense competition forces them into activity. Their blue shawls are awry. Their braids caper up and down on their shoulders. And running from window to window of the train, how they

kick up the hems of their full gypsy's skirts! "Pollo! Enchiladas! Pulque, señor, pulque!" they cry, in little piping voices.

Native Crafts Centre

Lying in the midst of a region of craftsmen and close to the markets of Mexico City, Toluca is the centre of a craft industry, well developed and relatively profitable. The embroidered bags and girdles, the baskets figured with mottoes and idols in bright green and crimson, are attractive at first. On acquaintance one prefers certain other products of the region; the good brown pottery, for example, and the blankets in sober earth colors. These things are made to be used and worn by the Indians; and aside from their own intrinsic handsomeness they acquire a value in one's eye from association with the Indian kitchens and the men in the fields.

There are other centres of handicraft in Mexico, and, in fact, few towns are without some peculiar specialty. But Toluca teems with it like no other place. Carriers crowd the motor road to Mexico City, dog-trotting across the mountains with towering cupboard-like crates of stuff riding on their shoulders. On Fridays the covered municipal market cannot contain all the little Indian marchantes, men and women, with their children and dogs. So they spread through the arcaded sidewalks of the town and settle in a vast gleaning and gibbering encampment upon one of the open plazas. This market, livelier, less muted, than others, is required sightseeing. Otherwise Toluca is perhaps too much the bustling little provincial city to keep one long.

The train leaves and presently we are moving through an arid grazing country. The low rounded hills are spotted with nopal and other cactus. Such a big country—big to the point of looking void. Now and then a horseman, a train of burros, or a rancho of crumbling adobes appears on its face, large and forlorn like a ship at sea. The light pours down from a clear sky—and what glints there are on the grass blades, the stones in the plowed fields, the bits of last year's stubble! A rather forbidding region.

But now the train is running down through a sort of glen which drains those upland prairies. Another moment—a moment, really, for even in so vast a country the changes are curiously abrupt—and we are in a

region of green meadows and streams bordered by the Mexican cypress. Another country, fertile, intimate.

Few Left Intact

Toward the end of the rainy season (September, October), the meadows are infested with cosmos, sunflowers, coreopsis, and certain small flowering grasses which are gathered by the Indians to be pressed and powdered into medicines. The crenelated fronts of haciendas shine through their islands of trees. A few of these enormous establishments are still intact, but the majority have lost their land, some of it, all of it, to the agraristas. Their patios and corals once teemed with the good things of the agricultural life; horses, burros and oxen in a steamy press; bins of corn, yellow, white and purple; heaps of fodder; carts loaded with manure for the fields; cobble courts strewn with harness, rope, wooden implements.

Rarely nowadays is such a wealth of life and things concentrated in a single hacienda. It is now scattered among the Indian villages. Michoacan has always been a very active front in that old war between the landless Indians and the land-sunfested hacendados. Much death and terror came of that war, but its issues were more real than in most wars. For the foreigner, in his snug security, his total immunity from danger, a sense of this struggle adds something to the beauty of the land itself.

The train stops at a couple of bustling junctions. It swings round the foot of Tzintzuntzan, first of the large lakes of Michoacan, and in the mid-afternoon we arrive in Morelia, capital city of Michoacan. It was once called Valladolid after the Spanish town, but its name was changed in honor of its son, Morelos, potent mule-driver, chief of the war for independence. It is an immaculate city of small domestic fortresses, all white. The house walls, with their rough surfaces, their bulges and buttresses, always freshly limed, appeal to one's plastic feeling. There is much hand-wrought grillwork or the purest simplicity. The great doorways open onto interior gardens, with tiled walks, small fountains, lime trees and bougainvillea. It is a decorous and silent city, a city of old black clad dames and sober professional gentlemen. Its tone is pretty well summed up in the huge cathedral or violet stone, very fine and admirable, though severe.

More Spanish Than Indian
Like most of the larger Mexican

places Morelia is more Spanish than Indian. In fact it looks and feels more Spanish than any other city of Mexico. It is a small and perfect model of Cordova.

Some two hours more of riding and we are on the borders of the Lake of Patzcuaro, in the country which Spanish culture has never quite subdued. Patzcuaro itself and the little lacustrine nation of which it is the capital are Indian, in spite of the stores, the electric light, the comfortable small hotels.

A few decades after the Spanish conquest, a certain canny, benevolent churchman was sent to Patzcuaro to accomplish the conversion of its Indians. One of his policies was to encourage the local crafts, and he is said to be responsible for the condition of village specialization which endures to this day in the Patzcuaro region. Some twenty pueblos are scattered around the shores of the vast lake, and few have not some industry peculiar to themselves.

Old, crumbling, ratty San Jeronimo, on the far side of the lake from Patzcuaro, specializes in weaving. From there come the bright girdles, woven with figures of animals and men, which the women of the lake use to hold up their many petticoats. Santa Fe, in its rich groves, produces pots and pitchers, in rather odd and elegant shapes, glazed dark green with designs in yellow. Tzintzuntzan, the ancient capital of the Michoacan Indians, is another ceramic village. Its potters make of their violent red earth a crude but handsome variety of vessels.

In Tzintzuntzan's Federal School, (which, incidentally, is the model school of the region), a fancy souvenir pottery is made by the students. Quiroga, a large town at the head of the lake is noted for its lacquered trays and boxes. The men of the island community of Jaracuaro make hats of palm fibre, which is imported from the hot-country. Janitzio, another island village, provides the region with fish.

Seine Fishing at Night

On moonless nights the men of Janitzio, paddle their huge dugouts to the reedy coasts of the mainland and there cast their nets and drag their long seines till morning. Farming goes on in all the villages but Uriche, standing among rich, dried-up lake bottoms, is par excellence the agricultural pueblo. Chiles, beans, corn and wheat are sown in those beauti-

ful fields and the lake reeds are cut to make mats and baskets.

On Fridays the villagers travel from all parts of the lake to market in Patzcuaro. Those who live in the remote pueblos must leave before daylight and paddle very hard to reach town before 11 a.m., when market is at its height. One should wander down to the landing place to watch them come in. The pale green lake is calm at that hour and lit with the peculiar brilliancy of tropical sunlight at high altitudes. Among the reeds are herons, blue and white ones, and many other large-winged birds. There are always a few earth-colored bathers splashing in the shallows. How silently the canoes come in! Some are enormous, and loaded with whole families. Others are small as duck-boats. Beaching them, the Indians transfer their cargoes to their own backs and trot off quickly across the blazing flats and up the long sloping calzada, keeping in the shadow of Patzcuaro's wide-eaved houses. And quickly through Plaza Chica, to plunge at last into the deep shade of the Great Plaza. There they settle down and unload their stuff on the cobbles. Patzcuaro has no covered market, but the plaza with its arcades and towering ash-trees, does very well for the purpose.

One corner is always heaped with chiles, red, green and black. In another the vendors squat behind their heaps of fruit, mangoes, avocados, limes, oranges. A certain stretch of the arcades is aflutter with bags, halters, bridles, lengths of rope and other things of jute and hennequen fibre. Pottery, dress goods, shawls, notions and fish are always to be found in the same places. There is even an appointed site for cheese. A place for everything and everything in its place, and who knows how ancient are the traditions that appoint the places?

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Says Girls of 1855 Enjoyed Real Fun

ALAMEDA, Calif., Jan. 3.—The girl of 1855 had a lot more fun and a lot better chance of happiness than her granddaughter, has believes Mrs. Sophie Davis.

And Mrs. Davis didn't get her theory by reading. She got it by experience, for she was a girl in 1855.

Recently she celebrated her one hundred and first birthday. She is a little disgusted with the modern girl, who "swills gin and snucks on cigarettes."

"It's not her duty to gallivant around," Mrs. Davis says. "A girl's duty is to make an advantageous marriage and raise children."

Automobiles? They're the bunk, she believes.

"It's on their account that everyone's in a lurch hurry," Mrs. Davis declares. "In my day we saw a little country, but really saw it. Today you try to see a lot and frequently then you die."

City Election

THE ELECTION FOR MAYOR AND ALDERMEN FOR THE CITY OF FREDERICTON

For the ensuing year will be held on

MONDAY

The Thirteenth Day of January, 1936

at the Polling Places as follows:—

DIVISION NO. 1.—For all voters residing or owning property above the northwest centre line of Carleton Street, prolonged, at or near the City Hall, in the said City.

DIVISION NO. 2.—For all voters residing or owning property in the remainder of the said City, at or near the County Court House, in the said City.

NOMINATIONS

Every candidate for the office of Mayor or Alderman shall be qualified to vote at the election for which he is nominated by at least TWO rate-payers residing in the City of Fredericton, and qualified to vote in the ensuing election for which such candidate is nominated.

Every nomination paper, with the certificate of the City Treasurer, shall be filed with the City Clerk or at his office, and not later than FOUR O'CLOCK on the afternoon of MONDAY, the SIXTH DAY OF JANUARY 1936, and the City Clerk, before receiving such nomination paper, shall ascertain from the same that the requirements of the Election Act have been complied with.

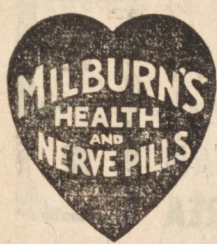
No candidate is qualified to be nominated for Alderman unless at the time of nomination he is a resident of the Ward for which he is nominated. The acceptance of each candidate and the signature of at least TWO resident qualified voters, who must sign the nomination paper shall be proved by affidavit attached to the nomination.

In case of a contest, each elector shall be entitled to vote for one candidate for Mayor, for ONE candidate for Alderman for Wellington Ward, for ONE candidate for Alderman for St. Anne's Ward, for ONE candidate for Alderman for Queen's Ward, and for ONE candidate for Alderman for King's Ward.

Dated this 21st day of December, A.D. 1935.

FRED I. HAVILAND,
City Clerk.

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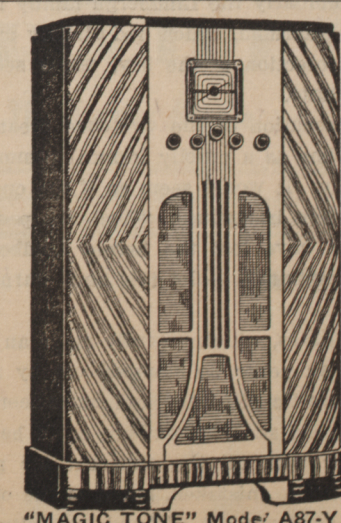
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