

**THE MAN OF MEXICO.**  
**REMARKABLE CAREER OF PRESIDENT**  
**PORFIRIO DIAZ.**  
*By a Special Contributor.*

**NOTE:**—This character sketch of President Diaz becomes especially interesting in view of his recent intention to visit this country. The illness of Senora Diaz, to whom Mr. Lummis refers as the idol of the Mexican people, to whom she is affectionately known as "Carmelita," prevented President Diaz from carrying out his plan, and necessitated the sending of representatives instead of a personal visit.—[Editor McClure Syndicate.

**T**HE arithmetic has such an overwhelming majority in its following that it would doubtless be unwise to question it. Yet one may sometimes be pardoned for a silent incredulity. But 1830 from 1899 seems, according to the best text books at my command, to "leave" sixty-nine; and I do not believe any man will see Porfirio Diaz without running over the figures again and make sure there is no mistake. It seems incredible that this fateful figure should be on the verge of three-score and ten. Yet he was born in 1830—appropriately enough on the eve of the birthday of Mexican independence (September 16)—and this is generally taken to be 1899.

A man of 55, with speech as compelling, capillaries as free, eyes as eagle-clear, is envied; and I have never known a man of any age whose step was younger.

The recent expectation that this undimmed veteran—the greatest soldier and the greatest statesman that Spanish-America has ever produced, and one of the large names in both rosters for all history—was to revisit the United States (he was here in 1883, on a supplemental bridal tour), gives the interest of the day to a brief summary of one of the most astounding careers of record.

**Like a Hero of Romance.**

A strangely romantic mixture, surely, is this soldiery figure who has wrought such miracles in Mexico. The chief drawback to him as a subject for literature is that no fictionist would dare invent anything so "improbable" as his established history. An orphan nobody in a backwoods corner of Mexico; a callow theologian; a green law student, earning his way through a little Mexican institute civil; a boy Mayor of an Indian hamlet, wheedling his aboriginal constituents into drilling for fun—and then drilling them for business enough to capture the capital of the State when a usurper held it; a guerrilla chief in the warring wars of the Reforms, when stolid, stubborn, sound but factless Juarez was trying to put the church between fences and keep it there; the Sheridan and Grant in one through that unequal war in which Mexico protested against the usurpation of the little Napoleon; political opponent at last, of his friend and patron the great Indian President; and for nineteen years himself President of the country he first gave fair title to "call itself a republic; a field officer as dashing as our Funston, and of as phenomenal exploits, but in half a hundred battles; a commanding general whose grasp of a whole campaign has never been surpassed on this side of the world; a man as self-made as our rail-splitter, and fortune to wreak a far more vital change in his native land than even the extinguishment of slavery was in ours—here is certainly enough material for a hero. And I deeply believe that if there is such a thing at all, if mankind has a call to be proud of any special flower of manhood, for its own sake and not for racial vanity, Porfirio Diaz is entitled to whatever love and esteem manhood can give to manhood. And from whatever point of view.

**A Man Among Men.**

With a good deal of the Napoleonic insight and inevitableness, there is no suspicion of the selfishness, the coldness, or that certain atrophy of humanity which marked the greatest soldier of all time. Diaz is always human, always of that untranslatable quality his people call simpatico, for which we have no nearer approach than "winning" and "magnetic." A cool egotist might have whipped the armies of Maximilian, but he never could have fused Mexico into the nation it is today—and it is doubtful if he could even have made the same record in war. It is always to be remembered as a sheer historic truth that no man ever before on any considerable scale conquered disciplined armies with so small and so unlicked an array of pawns. Lexington is not parallel, nor any other battle wherein the raw recruits were our American yeomen. Diaz won his campaigns with material at which the most sanguine of our frontier campaigners would simply gasp. I do not despise the Mexican pelado; only I would not like to have to fight a battle with him for backing. And while the Mexican rural is a fighter of serious accountability, there were no rurales till Diaz made them, out of next to nothing. A man is judged in war and statecraft, by the material with which he has to work as well as by the gross result. In relatively modern history the only synonyms of Diaz's military career (as of the class where the ranks show for numbers, indeed, but the leader is really the army) are Cortez and Pizarro. Our own history has no fair parallel, even among the Marions and Custers and Roosevelts; for the very palpable reason that none of these, our lions, were leaders of sheep. No men have ever led a charge better; but some as wild heroes have been worse followed.

**Superb Physical Courage.**

This is not the side of Diaz I care to dwell on. Splendid as personal heroism is, it is also (luckily for humanity) not uncommon. It is significant here particularly, because without it and the direct hero-worship it aroused, Diaz very certainly could not have done his larger work. The man who led so many forlorn hopes against superior numbers, discipline and arms; who was brevetted with so many scars; who could not only plan a complicated campaign, but win it inch by inch at the head of his tattered demoralized; who spiked the enemy's battery with his own hands, in the heat of the melee; who served his own guns when the

last gunner had fallen or run away; who dazzled his men and his people as well by his personal in-fighting as by the endless ingenuity and almost devilish inspirations by which he befuddled or shattered the enemy—that sort of man, among any sort of men who love red blood and a steady hand, can get listeners after the fight when he speaks quietly as to citizens, telling them of national "righteousness, mercy and a judgment to come."

**What He Has Done for Mexico.**

No one would be more grateful for scientific demonstration that somewhere else in human history so radical a change has come over the political, social and commercial circumstance of a nation in so short a time as has befallen Mexico since Diaz wound the reins round his hands. I have not been able to find it for myself, with a fairly intimate knowledge of what Mexico was and is, and considerable attempt to learn something of other history.

Fifteen years ago, Mexico was a byword among the nations; unsettled by revolutions, moth-eaten with brigandage, Tweedean in local politics, remote, uneasy, ignorant, inaccessible, unsafe and beggared. Today it is as law-abiding, as safe, as cleanly administered, as any State in our Union, bar none; as easily traversed as any of our States west of the Missouri; as compact and national in spirit, and, in fact, as I could wish some better countries to be, of sound business prosperity in every line that ingenuity could question, and of a mental awakening as honorable as it is overwhelming.

Diaz not only crushed revolution—and the way to crush is to crush—and weeded out corruption in office, and cured the thieves and brigands and agitators who were curable and wiped out those that were not. He fetched into Mexico the largest railroad building that has been seen since our transcontinental lines, and supplemented them with the telegraph and a very good postal service. He slaughtered the obstructive interstate and intertown tariffs, multiplied manufactures, by an enormous figure, through judicious legislation, turned the balance of trade and changed revenue from a cavity to an eminence. He set a limit to the church, and began to make prisons we can justly envy. He greatly empowered colleges; and from the

knows and reveres and loves "Carmelita," with a devotion as deep as it is patriarchal. Beautiful, gracious, highly-educated, a type of the very highest womanhood, not alone the actual charities to which she devotes so much time, money and hard work, but her every relationship, have endeared her to her nation. It will be a fairly wise historian who shall be able to say how much of Mexican progress has been due to this lovely personality, winning hearts for the strong man at the helm.

**Mexico a Safe Country.**

Mexico today is as unemotional as New England. The most offensive tourist can go anywhere with as perfect safety as is found in this mortal sphere. He can say things that would get him knocked down in any New England village, and wear manners such as we never saw. It is quietly amusing to those who have any real knowledge of the country when he ascribes his safety to the "fact" that Mexico is a despotism; that Diaz is a czar, and the little policiaas at the corner his spies, and that no one dares be bad. The great secret is now that no one seriously wishes to. A good, serious man could go out any morning in any Mexican town under 20,000 and strangle all the soldiers in it, for a constitutional. He would not have prolonged need of a constitution, it is true; for there is law in Mexico, and it "goes." But the idea that the country is a military camp, or a close corporation of the despot, or a nursery of spies and passports is so grotesquely false and foolish that those who entertain it are proper for-warders of our gayety. Mexico is pretty thoroughly governed, but absolutely without a trace of Caesarism. The "hard hand" (and those are his own words to me) "was used when need was to throttle brigandage and revolution and uplift willful wallowing. But the machinery is astonishingly simple and small and untyrannous, as great minds devise. And, strangest of all, it is not so much to carry, deadheads and "make places" as it is to get effective public service. The service is not perfect, Mexico being still populous with human beings and not much invaded by angels (in spite of much immigration from the North.)

**Not Governed by the Machine.**

But there is no "machine," no aggregation for purposes of plunder; and the civil service of Mexico, big and large, is not anything we can fully afford to sneeze at. Despite our proper distrust of everything we do not know, the time has come when to despise Mexico is to confess scant enlightenment. And for what he has done for a republic which took its inspiration from us, after ours drew its models, ill as it long followed them; as well as for his gallant figure as a man such as brave men love everywhere and every when, President Diaz is likely to receive at our hands a memorable welcome. CHARLES F. LUMMIS.

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PRESIDENT D. PORFIRIO DIAZ.

medieval suppression of women to domestic ignorance, subverted that whole immemorial fabric and began (for the first time on a large scale, I believe, in any Spanish-speaking country) to provide liberally for women's real education. Long before he became a national figure he established a girl's school in Oaxaca; and now any bright girl in the republic can get a modern and practical education if she will.

**The Father of the Public School.**

Above all, he is the father of the public school in Mexico; a system to which he gives not only the due turn of the reins, but his earnest personal care. There is not a village in Mexico, even in the remote Indian districts, which has not its free public school; and the Normal schools of the republic are turning out yearly a little army of earnest and pretty well equipped teachers for these schools. Manual training schools, professional schools, all are taking a rank in "poor old Mexico" which no one will disparage who fairly knows the facts.

Peace, security, communication, commerce, education—these are in Mexico the children of one patriot. They are, to speak generically, and only of proportions large enough to count in history, modern inventions there, and the inventions of Diaz. Mexico had taste of all of them before, at times and by unsatisfying bites, but now they are on the regular bill of fare. I do not deem it too much to call the man who could do this, so soon and from so little, one of the world's great figures, the man who did do it, one of the great patriots. And no one fully grounded in the chronicles and in the visible facts of the field will call in question these apparently large statements. There sometimes are big men.

**The President's Wife.**

A factor not to be forgotten in the estimate of this great success is the present Senora Diaz, the President's young and lovely second wife. His first died in his years of stress, leaving him three good children. In 1883 he re-married, taking Carmen Rubio, the daughter of an old opponent, then not 20, but already a woman of the rarest charms. Not one of ten in Mexico would know who "la Senora Diaz" might be; everyone in Mexico old enough to talk, man, woman or child, Indian or mestizo or don,