

AGRICULTURE IN MEXICO.

PRIMITIVE FARMING METHODS RESULT IN POOR CROPS.

Antiquated Plows, Hoes and Sickles—Mules Thrash the Wheat with Their Heels—Poor Water Supply.

While Mexico is generally reputed to be one of the richest, it is in reality, says I. N. Ford in the *American Agriculturist*, one of the poorest agricultural countries on the American continent. It produces barely enough corn and beans to keep an impoverished population alive. With tropical belts on the Gulf and Pacific coasts pre-eminently adapted for the cultivation of sugar and cotton it has no surplus of either crop for export. There are no finer coffee lands in the world than the mountain slopes of Vera Cruz, Michoacan, Jalisco, Guerrero, and Oajaca, but the product is inconsiderable in comparison with that of Brazil. With the exception of hides and raw fiber, Mexico has only a small surplus of agricultural produce to send to the American market, which receives the bulk of the exports of South America and the West Indies. This inertia of its working population combined with a deficient water supply and an unprogressive agrarian system neutralizes the advantages of vast extent of territory, variety of natural products, and range of climate.

There is no conservatism like that of the Mexican peons. They are accustomed to the old methods of agriculture and they will not depart from them. I was greatly surprised during a recent journey from Yucatan and Vera Cruz to the hot lands of the Pacific and thence to the Rio Grande to find wherever I went the crooked-stick plow in use. On the largest haciendas American plows have been introduced, but the laborers dislike them, and are constantly running them against rocks and deliberately smashing them. Wherever farming is conducted on a small scale the ancient implement with its forked stick as a substitute for the share is used. Sometimes the shorter fork is pointed with iron, but invariably there is a single handle. In Indian villages I saw ox-teams that were lashed to the longer stick by rawhide thongs fastened to their horns—as primitive a method of plowing as could well be imagined. The peons prefer their own implement because they do not consider it necessary to do more than to scratch the earth when they raise their corn, beans and red peppers. Deep plowing in their estimation involves waste of energy in a land favored with perpetual summer and spring, and where the luxuriant magueyes grow without cultivation in every hollow and on every hillside.

The Mexican peasant has in addition to his antiquated plow a hoe and a sickle, each patterned after those used in Goshen under the Pharaohs. The hoe is ponderous and clumsy, and looks like a huge rammer. The sickle has a full set of teeth in place of a sharp edge. With the hoe rank growth of weeds is kept down and the irrigating trenches are opened and closed; and with the sickle the small grains are harvested. Improved reapers and cultivators are never seen except on a few large estates whose owners are suspected of having a weakness for fancy farming. Threshing machines have been introduced only in rare instances. They keep the old-time method of driving mules around a ring and having them thresh out the wheat with their heels, aided by the wind. Corn is the staple food of the population and it is husked by hand, and ground with a roller upon a stone after it has been soaked in hot water and lime overnight. The chief occupation of Mexican women of the lower classes is the preparation of tortillas or maize cakes, the paste when ground by the roller being baked in a shallow pan over a slow fire.

The farm vehicles in rural Mexico are of rural construction. The wheels are solid sections cut from the trunks of trees with the pith punctured for the axle. The roads are so rough that any cart except a very heavy one with block wheels would be in imminent danger of dissolution, and hence conservatism may have its use in the retention of the old-time mule and ox carts to be seen everywhere on the high plateaux. Even when more modern vehicles are provided the wheels are made of enormous circumference. At some of the improved sugar works, for example, ricks for carrying cane, which is a load of very light weight, are mounted upon wheels large enough to move an obelisk.

Mexico has vast territory with tropical belts on the Gulf and Pacific coasts available for the cultivation of tobacco, sugar and coffee on a large scale, and a broad plateau which by reason of its altitude is practically an extension of the temperate zone into Southern latitudes. Land alone will not make a country rich. There must be an abundant supply of water; there must be an enlightened agrarian system by which the number of self-interested cultivators can be increased year by year; and there must be an intelligent and industrious class of farming labor by which produce can be systematically handled. All these conditions are lacking in Mexico.

There are no large rivers, and the water supply is deficient throughout the elevated plateaux. Mexican farms without systematic arrangements for irrigation are waste land. The great haciendas of some are supplied with water stored in reservoirs during the rainy season for distribution during the dry season. Small farmers, if they can purchase water rights from the large proprietors, are enabled to cultivate as much land as can be irrigated from the main trenches. As the rich land owners usually need all the water which they can control, it is difficult for a small farmer to obtain irrigation privileges. Those who have a vested right derived by inheritance entitling them to a fixed amount of water per day during the dry season cannot increase the area under cultivation. In a country where there are few lakes and no forest tracts feeding great streams there are insuperable obstacles to the extension of irrigation facilities.

To this is added a complex system of land tenure which retards the subdivision of the great estates into small farms. The land owners are rich men who are lightly taxed and have no inclination either to improve their resources for irrigation or to sell portions of their estates which are not under cultivation. The creation of an industrious class of small farmers is prevented in this way.

WISE WORDS.

What we learn with pleasure we never forget.

Satisfied men can only be found in in coffins.

Presumption is our national and original disease.

Time and tide wait for no man's three months' note.

Experience is the cream of life, but it sours with age.

It often happens that fear is merely dread of being afraid.

The man who keeps his mouth shut never has to eat any crow.

The plant of happiness cannot thrive without the air of cheerfulness.

The innocence of the intention abates nothing of the mischief of the example.

If you want to know how to keep a hotel, ask some one who never tried to keep one.

Make friends with your creditors if you can, but never make a creditor of your friend.

Many people mistake stubbornness for bravery, meanness for economy and villainess for wit.

A felon is not a desirable thing to have, but it is always on hand when you don't want it.

Promises made in time of affliction require a better memory than people commonly possess.

Always hope for the best. You will never get it, so there will be no excuse for abandoning hope.

If there is anything that makes a very poor man feel sarcastic it is to read advice to rich men on how to secure a good appetite.

A Pocketful of Bees.

A tall man with bushy black whiskers entered the Cadillac House yesterday afternoon, and while he was registering, placed a long narrow valise on the counter. A spring in the valise seemed to have given way, and a little door at the side suddenly flew open, disclosing to the eyes of the bystanders thousands of bees working in and out of a honeycomb. There was a small stampede among those standing about the counter at first, but all fears were allayed when the tall stranger explained that they wouldn't get out and wouldn't do any harm if they did. He then delivered a short lecture upon the bee and its habits that proved very interesting and drew quite a crowd for a few minutes. He said that his name was J. F. Michael, and that he was from German, Ohio, where he has a large bee farm. He is here visiting the Exposition, and brought his boxful of fine Italians that he might compare notes with some of the exhibitors. When some one asked him if he could show the queen to him, Mr. Michael dived into a capacious pocket and produced a handful of little boxes, each of which contained half a dozen common bees and a queen.

"Great guns! man," exclaimed a traveling man, "are you a walking beehive?"

"Oh, no," he responded, "by no means. These are just a few of my pets that I carry around to show people. You see, each one of these little boxes has a queen in it. They are somewhat particular as to their society, and I have put these other fellows in to keep them company."

"Don't they ever get loose and run amuck over your person?"

"Sometimes, but a few stings more or less don't make much difference. But you must excuse me, gentlemen, I have to give them their dinner," and he snapped the satchel shut and left for his room.—*Detroit Tribune*.

The Laughing Plant.

A curious plant grows in Arabia called the laughing plant. It is of moderate size, with bright yellow flowers and soft, velvety seed pods, each of which contains two or three seeds resembling black beans. The natives frequently dry the seeds and reduce them to powder. It is said that a dose of this powder produces a similar effect to that of laughing gas. It causes the most sober person to dance, shout, and laugh in an extremely boisterous manner, and to run about doing the most ridiculous things for an interval of half an hour or more. As the effects of the powder wear off exhaustion sets in, and the person falls into a deep sleep. When he awakens several hours later he has not the slightest recollection of anything he did while under the influence of the drug.

Queen Victoria's Prize Cattle.

Her Majesty, the Queen, exhibited a lot of Aberdeen-Angus cattle at the recent fair of the Royal Northern Agricultural Society of Great Britain, at Aberdeen, and was fortunate enough to secure several prizes. Among her stock was a famous polled cow, which in point of size has been at the head of the show cattle of this breed for several years. The weight of this enormous cow last year was "over a ton" and she is said to have been improving since that time.—*American Dairyman*.

Shattered Glass.

Still another old time belief has gone down beneath the relentless hand of modern revision. It seems that Cinderella's famous slipper wasn't of glass at all, but of fur. The mistake arose through the blunder of the man who originally translated the story from the French, where the slipper was described as being of vair, fur. Glass is verre, so it would seem that he was doing the work by dictation.—*The Argosy*.

THE FARM AND GARDEN.

PREVENTION OF HOG CHOLERA.

This disease may be more easily prevented than cured. One important thing is to protect the animals from contagion, against which no remedy is effective. The hogs are to be kept dry and clean, the feed troughs must be washed out frequently, pure water is to be supplied, and a good thing is a bathing trough for use, instead of a filthy puddle, and this should be kept filled with clean water daily. Some charcoal once a day will be useful, and gorging with food is to be avoided.—*New York Times*.

SHARP GRIT.

Even on stony ground the hens may, by daily foraging over the same space, use up all the available material that is serviceable as grit. Smooth, round gravel is not suitable. Hens require something sharp and cutting, or they will be unable to properly masticate their food. The broken china and crockery may be utilized with advantage for grit by pounding it into small pieces (about the size of best seed), and scattering it wherever the hens forage, as they will search for and find every piece.—*Farm and Fireside*.

LONK SHEEP.

The Lonk is one of the varieties of sheep that have existed from time immemorial in all the mountainous regions of Asia and Europe, and is confined almost entirely to the higher ranges of the Cumberland, Westmoreland and Yorkshire hills in England. The Rocky Mountain sheep is the American representative of the same group. All of them have horns on the male; those of the female are less developed in nature. The natural Lonk is of little commercial importance, but is annually shown at the Royal Society's Shows, more as a curiosity than anything else. As selection and improved breeding came into play the horns were bred off and the wool became less hairy, till the modern breed became fixed in type.—*American Agriculturist*.

STORING FARM IMPLEMENTS.

The length of time that farm implements can be made to do good service depends largely upon the management given. It is important to adjust and manage well when in use, and it is equally important to store them properly under shelter when not in use.

Before storing it is best to clean thoroughly both the wood and iron parts. If necessary the woodwork should be well painted with an oil paint. Lined oil and ochre, vermilion or Spanish brown will make a good paint for this purpose. The dirt and grease should all be cleaned off the iron or working parts, then a coat of paint will prevent the iron or steel parts from rusting, and will not only be a help in preserving from injury, but will also lessen the work necessary to put them in condition for use in the spring.

If the shed has not a good floor, boards should be put under the wheels or all parts that rest on the ground. It is important to have the roof tight so that the machinery will keep dry. A little care in properly storing the machinery under shelter will not only make it last longer, but better and easier work can thus be done with it when in use.—*St. Louis Republic*.

CRIB BITING HORSES.

Crib biting in horses is sometimes an acquired habit, and colts will learn it from older animals with whom they are associated in the stable or field. Horses that are kept much in the stable without active exercise will sometimes for mere amusement bite the stall or manger, and follow it up from day until it becomes a habit very difficult to break up. In other cases it is due to indigestion, the result of poor food, water, or over-feeding without sufficient exercise; in fact, excesses of any kind may lead to indigestion and crib biting, and thence to the serious vice of wind sucking. A confirmed cribber is nearly always a wind sucker, and this leads to digestive disorders and loss of flesh and health. For treatment cover all the woodwork within reach of the horse when in stable with sheet iron and in a way to prevent him from getting hold of it with his teeth. Place a lump of rock salt in his manger, or where he can reach and lick it as often or as much as he chooses. In another box place a lump of white chalk, and then sprinkle all the hay and oats given with water or a little magnesia and water. The animal should also have plenty of exercise, and if he has to stand in the stable for a day or two at a time put on a muzzle after he has eaten his ration; but the constant supply of salt and chalk will usually effect a cure without the use of other remedies and preventives.—*New York Sun*.

HARVESTING APPLES.

The apple is the great, the important fruit of this country, yet it is a fruit that is shamefully abused. Although the apple harvest commences in summer the harvesting of the summer and autumn crops is but like the skirmishing that precedes the great pitched battle compared to that of harvesting the winter fruit. Apple growers are a little afraid to suffer their fruit to hang until fully grown by reason of the danger of their being blown off by high, autumnal winds. Apples increase very much in size after many suppose that they are fully grown. The orchardist having many apples to pick should be amply provided with ladders, both self-supporting and those which lean against the branches, and with suitable baskets, hooks and small ropes to let down the handled baskets from the tree. The fruit should be picked and placed, not dropped, in the baskets, and great care should be exercised in pouring into larger baskets or into barrels to bruise the fruit. If the apples are to be sorted and barreled immediately, it is well to have a canvas table, one end lower and narrower than the other, with a sharp, conscientious man to do the assorting. It is best policy to make, at least, three classes of

fruit, first, second and third, or cullens. The first should be so sound, large and fair as to command extra price. The second should be free from bruises or rotten spots, but with some imperfections, such as gnarly spots, scab spots and a wormhole or two. The third should include windfalls, somewhat bruised, yet suitable for evaporating. In barreling, the fruit should be lowered into the barrel in the basket before it is emptied. There is no objection to forcing the end layers, provided those layers are fair representations of the fruit throughout the barrels, but do not commit the folly of placing large, fair apples on the ends and small imperfect ones in the middle. If you do, be sure your sin will find you out, and if it failed to expose you to others, it would lower your own self-respect.

It is a good plan to press in the head before moving the barrel, whether to the market, barn or fruit house, for to move them unheaded is to expose them to shaking and bruising. If stored awhile before marketing have the store room as cool and uniform in temperature as possible, and remove the heads so that the moisture caused by the process of "sweating," so-called, may evaporate. The moisture is caused by the cooler fruit condensing the vapor in the surrounding atmosphere.—*Metropolitan and Rural Home*.

FARM AND GARDEN NOTES.

How to put a horse "on his mettle;" Shoe him.

What is your reason for not keeping a few sheep?

You can't make a profit with a crowded yard.

You can't keep fowls thrifty without green food of some kind.

Mud applied soon to a bee-sting is said to afford instant relief.

Millet seed makes a good feed for young poultry. Usually at this time it can be bought cheap.

A little care for the comfort of the stock hot, dry days will indirectly be money in your pocket.

One test of a man's fitness for profitably conducting a farm is his ability to properly manage his hire help.

If going on a long drive do not forget that water is acceptable to the horse "between meals" in hot weather.

One may reap striped beetles from melon and cucumber vines by dusting the moist plants with air-slaked lime.

It's a bad idea to lock the stable door after the horse is stolen. What if the thief should repent and bring back the horse.

How about those winter lambs you mean to turn off early next spring. Now is the time for coupling if you wish the best prices.

The sheep is a dainty feeder and cleanly in all its habits. It cannot subsist on filth, nor can it long survive in filthy quarters.

Do not expect too many eggs. Occasionally a hen will be found that will lay a great number of eggs, but this is the exception rather than the rule.

Do apples pay? No, as the masses treat their orchards; yes, abundantly, when given anything like the intelligent care that makes any other farm crop pay.

While Leghorns are the best winter layers it is necessary to provide them with comfortable quarters if they are kept laying; this should be arranged for now.

Poultry like fruit of all kinds, especially apples, which at this season can nearly always be fed to a good advantage when more or less is going to waste.

Pullets that are expected to furnish eggs during the winter must be reasonably well matured by this time; late-maturing pullets will not lay until spring.

Of the Cochins, the partridge is the best for layers, the buff is the best table fowl, followed by the whites and blacks; one advantage they all have is their size.

There is no advantage in feeding turkeys for an extra large size. Medium fowls in good condition bring the best prices per pound, and when there is an overstock sell the more readily.

Every farmer should have the convenience of an icehouse. The best way is for a few neighbors to join and build, fill, and use the same. Ice in summer is a cheap—almost necessary—luxury.

It does not pay to allow the hens to sit now; break them up at the start. Late hatched chickens rarely prove profitable unless we accept bantams. This month will do very well for them.

Leghorns, Wyandottes and light Brahms are all good steady layers; Minorcas, Spanish and Houdans lay the largest eggs; Plymouth Rocks are good layers. Langshans are among the best winter layers.

Keep the March and early April pullets for laying. If given comfortable quarters they will lay regularly the greater part of the winter. Late-hatched pullets will rarely lay before spring.

If you have tried alfalfa (lucerne) and failed, try it again on a new plan. Put out only a little, sow in rows and keep clean by hoeing, until it has made a good start. After that it will take care of itself.

Gather up and store the sorghum blades without threshing. Picking off the seed will help to give the fowls exercise during the winter, besides supplying them with a good ration store where it will keep dry.

Iron for roofs is objectionable because it expands in heat and contracts by cold, cutting off the nails that hold it down. The reason for the short duration of paper and tar roofs is that the life of the tar is destroyed by the sun's rays.

A large proportion of the poultry sent to market from now on until cold weather will be in a very poor condition, and this is one leading cause for low prices. A little better feed and care would greatly improve the quality.

The First Iron Bridge.

At the present day, when we are accustomed to look upon iron as the chief constructive material with which civil engineers and architects all over the world deal, the first iron bridge that was ever built is a curious sight. This bridge, the arches of which were made of iron, was called "Ironbridge," and it was erected in 1778. It spans a little river in the county of Salop, on the railroad line from Shrewsbury to Worcester, in England. At the present day the structure is surrounded by a thriving little village, which took its name from the bridge. Several iron foundries have been established in the neighborhood. The structure was a timid attempt at what has since developed into an extensive industry. There are three supports; two of them are very small and cross a narrow country road, while the third and largest one spans the bed of the river. It is about ninety-six feet long and weighs 378 tons. The braces were cast at Coalbrookdale, every bar being composed of two segments. Stephenson, the great civil engineer, wrote as follows on the construction of this first iron bridge: "When we bear in mind that the manipulation of cast iron was at the time of its erection in its infancy we cannot help but feel convinced that unblushing audacity alone could conceive of such an enterprise, and the intelligence with which the details were outlined and executed is equal to the boldness of the conception." The bridge is constantly used and is in an excellent condition, a fact which disproves all the ominous clamorings of cranks that the pernicious influences of rust will sooner or later bring danger to the iron bridges of to-day.—*Boston Transcript*.

An Unhealthy City.

Cairo for a long time has been notorious as one of the most unhealthy cities of her size in the world, and is likely to remain so unless the French can be induced to abandon their present obstructive policy in Egypt. The town is practically without drainage, and year by year the necessity of remedying the evil becomes more urgent. Some time ago the Government took the matter in hand, employed a number of distinguished sanitary engineers, and prepared a scheme for a system of sewerage which is generally admitted to be the best and cheapest that could be devised. It was proposed to pay for the improvement by the appropriation of half the octroi receipts of the city, but France will not consent and demands the appointment of an International Commission of three experts to study the question, to invite plans, and to decide as to which is to be adopted; no plan to be adopted unless accepted by all these experts unanimously. The object of this proposition is clear, and, unless it is modified, the drainage plan must be abandoned, at least for the present.—*Times-Democrat*.

How the Kaiser Trains His Boys.

It seems that the Emperor of Germany has a great deal of the old Spartan feeling about him—at all events, with reference to the training of his children. His six little sons are subject to a severe regimen by their father. They sleep in a plain, bare room, upon iron cots, with hard mattresses and scant bed-clothing. At seven every morning they take a cold bath, and are then put through vigorous gymnastic exercises.—*Philadelphia Record*.

It is said that 506,832 persons are members of the Congregational Church in this country, and more than one-fifth live in Massachusetts, which thus heads the list.

Safety on the Seas.

The old tar who sympathized with folks on shore for the dangers they had to face in getting around would have still stronger arguments to sing about if he happened to be on deck now. He could quote the figures of the National Board of Steam Navigation, which show that of the 500,000,000 passengers carried by vessels on American waters and from American ports but sixty-five lives were lost, and defy the statistics of inland travel to approach the results in the high average of safety. But one life lost for every 7,692,307 people carried! Does not this clearly prove that ocean transportation has become a science, ship-building an architectural certainty, and that comfort, convenience and promptness have been wedded to the highest form of safety.—*Philadelphia Times*.

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