PART III

I shall now conclude this little book by a chapter which will have no particular interest. for any one but the descendants of Franklin Everett and Clara Everett, nee Spencer, his wife. I presume that no one else to whom I present one of these volumes will care to read what follows; but I believe to the descendants of Franklin Everett, the anecdotes and experiences herein set forth will have an interest which will grow greater as the years pass on.

I have already described the removal of Franklin Everett and his family from Alamakee County, Iowa, to Burt County, Nebraska. In spite of all the drawbacks incident to a new country, and which I have already described at some length, Franklin Everett prospered in his new home and within a few years had a fine farm and a large amount of livestock about him. Occasionally during his farm life in Iowa he had experience in the buying and shipping of livestock, especially hogs, and usually prospered in these ventures. After he had become firmly established in his new home and the farmers in the community had reached that point in their farming where they were able to produce a considerable number of hogs, he again commenced the purchase and shipment of livestock.

About the year 1875 he built a store in what is now the town of Lyons, being located on the comer of Main and Second streets, now occupied by a brick building, still owned by some of the Everett family. This building he filled with a stock of goods, such as are suitable to the wants of the people in a new community, and Walter Everett, the second son, although but sixteen years of age, took charge of this store, and with the general management of Franklin Everett, speedily made a success of the venture. It was but a short time before Walter was able to handle it in every respect, with no special assistance from father, who was busy with the management of his farm and handling of livestock. This store was operated by Franklin Everett and son for about six years, and when in 1881 the railroad was built into Lyons, they, believing that there would be too much competition for a store to be profitable, sold out their business, retiring with a

most handsome earning as a result of their six years of mercantile life. They then opened a little bank, the first in that part of Burt County, doing business in the same building in which was the postoffice, father being the postmaster and Walter acting as deputy. When the bank was first opened they had no burglar-proof safe, using the same old fireproof safe that had been used in the store. The deposits, which were fairly good from the state, were generally hid in a barrel of beans or some other convenient or secret place, while the old safe carried but a nominal amount for father well knew the great danger of burglary. The bank prospered and soon was doing a fine business. As some slight protection against robbery, Edward B. Everett, the youngest son, slept in a back room adjoining the bank office. He was then a boy of about eighteen years. One Saturday night in May, 1883, Bert went to bed and to sleep, as usual. He awoke about midnight and found two men beside him, one sitting astride him with a revolver pointed in his face, while the other held both his wrists. The coolness of the boy under the conditions was remarkable. He said he realized instantly that the bank was to be robbed, but felt certain if he made no resistance they would not harm him. As resistance would be utterly useless, he inquired what they wanted. One of them answered that they wante d him to open the safe. Now, Bert did not know the combination of the safe and truthfully told them so. They asked him where his gun was. He said he had none. One robber then asked, "What in hell are you sleeping there for if you have no gun?" When he had satisfied them that he could not open the safe, one of them remarked that it made no particular difference, that he could do it in a few minutes. They had brought with them a clothes line, cut from a neighbor's yard, and with that they tied his hands behind him and gagged him with a dirty towel. This, by the way, was the greatest shock of the whole affair to my mother, who afterward said, "Just think of it, they stuffed that dirty towel right in poor Bert's mouth." Bert said it seemed to him they were not more than ten minutes opening the safe, and it is likely that gagged as he was and with the fear of what the robbers might do to him, the time undoubtedly seemed fully as long as it was. At any rate, they opened the safe very quickly, but probably were disappointed in the amount

which they secured, as father or Walter, according to their usual custom, had hidden the bulk of money in some other place. The robbers, however, secured some three or four hundred dollars in cash and about the same amount in postage stamps (these funds being the property of the U. S. Government).

Having secured the plunder, they went back to Bert's bed, where he lay with his hands tied behind him and one foot tied to each bed post, and said to him, "We have to leave you now. You tell the old man that all he needs to do is to raise the interest rates a little and he will soon even this up." They temporarily removed the gag from Bert's mouth while standing over him with the gun, and he, having fully recovered his nerves, said, "Don't you know, boys, tomorrow is Sunday, and how am I to go to Sunday school if you leave me tied up here?" They laughed and said, "Well, we guess you'll have to stay away from Sunday school one day." Before leaving him they said, "Now, if you give us your word of honor not to give the alarm, we will leave you ungagged." He told them he would not promise, but he would give the alarm as soon as he could. Accordingly, they went away, leaving him bound and gagged. It chanced that a day or two previous, in walking along the street or road, he had found and picked up a large clasp knife, open, which was so firmly rusted it was not easy to close. He had dropped it in his coat pocket without closing it, and when he had retired the night of the robbery he had thrown his overcoat over the foot of the bed. It occurred to him that if he could in any way get the knife to his hands he might manage to cut the rope with it; and after much wriggling and squirming he succeeded in getting the coat into a position that enabled him to get his hands into the pocket and get the old clasp knife into a position where he could cut the clothes line, with which his wrists were bound, against the edge of it. Having accomplished this, the rest was easy. He speedily removed the gag from his mouth, untied his ankles from the bed posts and rushed out to give the alarm.

In cutting the rope from his wrists he gashed himself quite badly on the old knife blade, but in his excitement he never noticed this. Me speedily had the whole town out and sent men in all directions. This was about 2:30 in the morning. They found that the

robbers had taken Franklin Everett's favorite horse and a horse and saddle from one of the neighbors. The horses were found about daylight by Mr. J. B. Lyon on the outskirts of Decatur.

About two days later word was received to go to Fremont, as they suspected some people there. Bert Everett and his father went down and they thought it was the same men. At the depot in Fremont these men resisted arrest and one shot the deputy sheriff through the mouth, the bullet coming out through the back of his head. Then they ran across to some vacant lots to where there was a man plowing and demanded that he unhitch his horses, each man taking one. They rode these horses to a bridge across the Platte River. There is an island in the river, and when they reached this it is supposed they thought they were on the other shore and, leaving the horses, attempted to hide in the brush.

The sheriff with a posse of men were in pursuit and the criminals, finding an old boat, got into the water and kept the boat between them and the posse. The sheriff, Robert Gregg, shot at the men a number of times, and when he had only one shot left succeeded in shooting one through the head. Then the other man immediately surrendered.

When the men entered the boat they had two suitcases. Only one of these could be found, it containing a complete burglar outfit. The one that surrendered pleaded guilty to shooting the deputy sheriff and was sentenced to state's prison for seven years. No evidence was found that they robbed the bank, but there was no doubt but that they were guilty.

This slight loss had no appreciable effect on the banking business, and Walter continued to conduct it most successfully for a number of years. Then his health being impaired to some extent by the close application to business which had characterized him from his sixteenth year, the bank was reorganized and other parties took an interest in it, and it still continues as the Farmers' State Bank of Lyons, Nebraska, the controlling interest still owned by the Everett family. At the present time Franklin Everett is

president, W. S. Ne wmyer (who is the husband of the only daughter and youngest child of Franklin Everett) is its cashier.

While Franklin Everett and Walter Everett had been carrying on the mercantile and banking business, assisted by Edward B. Everett, the writer had taught school, read law and opened a law office in Lyons, Nebraska, where he practiced for some fifteen years; but the town being small and the law practice limited, he becam e interested in other things; being interested in lumber yards at Lyons, Wakefield, Winside, Concord, Laurel and Coleridge, Nebraska, and a general store at Laurel, Nebraska.

Edward B. Ev erett, a few years after his adventure with the burglars, married Amanda Piper, and went to live on the old home farm, Franklin Everett and wife having erected a home and moved to the village of Lyons.

About the year 1900 the family became interested in the building of the Pan American Railroad in Oaxaca and Chiapas, Mexico, an account of which follows:

THE PAN AM ERICAN RAILROAD

In the year 1900 Walter Everett made the acquaintance of James M. Neeland in Los Angeles. Neeland had been in Mexico and could speak Spanish fluently. He was one of the most remarkable men that I have ever met. His initiative and imagination were marvelous. He would conceive of schemes so great and daring that it made an ordinary man catch his breath, and yet his vivid imagination and great command of language enabled him to convince his hearers that the success of the plan was at least possible.' "And," he would say, in concluding one of his word pictures of the working out of some great plan, "it will make us *rich* beyond the dreams of avarice." Naturally he was a born promoter. He had fallen in with a rather shrewd old Mexican, Jose Pepe Mora by name, from whom he had learned many facts concerning a railroad that had, some twelve years before, been projected in the States of Oaxaca and Chiapas, in Southern Mexico.

This railroad had been in process of construction by the Barring Bros., of England, at the time their failure shook the financial world in the '8 0's, and was to have extended from San Geronimo, on the Tehuantepec Railroad, south-easterly along the isthmus to the frontier of Guatemala. It was intended as a military road and was much desired by Porfirio Diaz, who was then the ruler of Mexico.

When news of the failure of Baring Bros. reached the construction camps in Chiapas, the employees were panic-stricken, and they abandoned the job in about the same manner that burglars would leave the cracking of a safe at the sound of a policeman's rattle. Barring Bros. had assembled machinery, rolling stock and rails at Tonala and Aurora to the value of hundreds of thousands of dollars, and all this property, together with many miles of grading, had reverted to the Mexican Government. At the time that Neeland and Mora took up the project much of the machinery had been ruined by the action of time, climate and vandals, but the eighty miles of good rails were uninjured, and much of the other property still held value.

The Mexican Government would give this property, together with a large bonus in government bonds, to any one who would build the road, so Neeland a nd Mora assured Walter. Neeland drew rosy pictures of how easily he would make all participants "rich beyond the dreams of avarice" if Walter would finance the scheme. Walter became interested and he and Neeland came to Nebraska and laid the matter before father, Burton and myself. Neeland represented himself as a practical railroad builder with much experience. "You fellows put up the money and I will put on my overalls and *go* down and build the road," was his airy statement.

Experience proved to us that he was incompetent, where executive ability was required, as a child of ten years. He was a promoter, pure and simple, and a good one.

Our family became interested. Franklin Everett, always wise, far-seeing and cautious, said to us—his sons: "You fellows can put your money in there blindly if you want to, but I am going to see for myself." He got A. B. Lyon to go with him, and in spite of his age, about sixty-eight, and extremely poor health, went to Mexico, and drove

over the proposed line in a two-wheeled ox cart. He was too weak and sick to ride a horse and there was no other means of conveyance. In spite of the great hardships he endured and his constant sickness, he came back enthusiastic. "The greatest chance I ever saw," was his report.

About this time, it was in 1901, Hon. H. P. Shumway and I determined to go into Mexico and get our own ideas at first hand. We visited Chihuahua, Mexico City, Puebla and many smaller places and were impressed with the opportunities that the country offered. But we had heard so much of the "deadly climate" and "bad water"of the tropics that we really failed to enjoy what should have been a most delightful trip.

Mexico City, under the splendid government established by Porfirio Diaz (one of the greatest men that the nineteenth century produced in any country), was making wonderful progress. For hundreds and perhaps thousands of years, a city had existed there. Originally its site had been a mountain lake. Gradually the water had passed away and as it grew dryer the city had grown up. Perhaps at first it was built on piles—anyway at the time of the conquest by Cortez the standing water still made causeways necessary in parts of the city. The city was entirely without drainage, and even where the surface was free from water, it stood at all times within a few inches of the top of the ground. It would seem that with a dense population, under such conditions, pestilence in some form would have been at all times present. But such is the disinfecting power of almost constant sunshine and the pure breezes that sweep down from the mountains that surround the valley, that even under the conditions I have described the death rate was far lower than one would expect. With good sanitation, it would become a health resort. Diaz was at the time of our visit putting in a system of sewers. The streets were being torn up and trenches dug. The accumulated filth of ages was being exposed and the stench was horrible; but when the work was completed Mexico City was freed from danger of great filth disease epidemics, and made one of the most delightful residence cities of the world.

From Mexico City we went to Pueblo, thence to Oaxaca. While there we visited the celebrated ruins of Mitla.

Shumway and I had often heard of the wonderful ruins of Mitla, situated some fifty miles to the southward of the city of Oaxaca, and we determined to take advantage of our stay at Oaxaca to visit them. We had been in Mexico so short a time that we had not acquired enough Spanish to enable us to get about conveniently. It chanced that we stopped at the only American hotel in the city. It was kept by a widow lady and her daughter, a young girl of some sixteen or seventeen years. In making inquiries of our landlady as . to the best methods of reaching the ruins, it developed that she and her daughter had never seen them, although they had lived within a short distance, above mentioned, for many years; and we, feeling the necessity of some one who could speak the language, after some hesitation, ventured to suggest that if she and. her daughter would make the trip with us we would pay all expenses. To our delight the offer was accepted in the same spirit in which it was made, and the next day we all climbed into an old-fashioned coach drawn by four very decrepit-looking horses, and started to see the ruins.

There is at Mitla a considerable town, and we found there what, in Mexico, passed for a good hotel. We were obliged to stay the night there, as it took the entire day to drive from Oaxaca to Mitla.

I shall never forget the joke on Herbert, occasioned by the fear which we both had of drinking the water; for at that time we imagined that all tropical streams were more or less polluted and poisoned. After driving all day in the dust we, of course, were tormented with thirst. We sat in our room after the day's drive was over and H. P. said, "I am going to buy a bottle of beer." Now, both H. P. and I were teetotalers. I laughed at him, saying that the beer would probably be worse than the water. However, he invested in a bottle of beer and drank the same eagerly. H. P. congratulated himself that he had been able to quench his thirst without danger of contracting some disease. The beer was warm and stale and there was no ice in town. We had not long been in bed when I was

awakened by his groans. "What is the matter, H. P. ?" said I. "Oh, that beer has made me so sick!" and a very sick man he was. However, nature came to his relief and he threw up the beer, after which we got a fair night's sleep.

Next day we visited the ruins and examined them carefully. Their celebrity rests upon their antiquity and the mystery which surrounds their origin, rather than any intrinsic merits in the ruins themselves. They are certainly beautiful, but an American contractor, given the proper material, could reproduce them in a few days. Considered as the work of a race of savages, who were ignorant of even the simple principle of the arch, and who, to cap their openings, used huge oblong blocks of unhewn stone, the ruins were certainly remarkable. The greatest wonder is, how, without the aid of any modem machinery, or even, so far as we know, without draft animals of any kind, they were able to place in position lintels and caps of stone weighing many tons. It would seem, to look at these huge blocks, that it would be impossible to get enough naked human strength around them to raise them to the positions in which they were placed. Absolutely nothing is known of the race who built these ancient buildings, as even the natives found in the country at the time of the conquest by the Spaniards knew nothing of their origin.

We returned to the city of Oaxaca, and shortly thereafter went to Vera Cruz. One scene which we witnessed while in Oaxaca gives so clear an illustration of social and agricultural conditions in south central Mexico, at least the conditions that prevailed at that time, that I must relate it.

Passing along the country road at some distance from any large town, we came upon a great field of wheat, ripe and being harvested. In this field were a party of reapers, probably twenty in number, who were supplied with the old-fashioned hand sickle. Behind these reapers, wrapped in his blanket, came an overseer, and behind the overseer, gleaning the lost heads of wheat, was a woman. The scene struck me so forcibly that I stopped and said "Herbert, see Ruth! see Boaz! See the reapers! That certainly is a reproduction of the old Bible scene, as described in the book." And he

agreed with me. In short, in that part of Mexico, and at that time, people were living in the same stage of civilization as when the fair Moabitess became the bride of Boaz.

While in Oaxaca some American whom we met there told us the following story:

One of the sons of a wealthy landholder in that district had been sent to the United States for his education. (I will say here in passing that very many of the wealthy ranchmen of Mexico sent at least one of their sons for a period of three or four years to some good school in the United States.) This young man returned to his native state filled with new ideas which he desired to introduce, and being a man of wealth, before leaving the United States, he ordered shipped to him at Oaxaca a number of American steel plows. The natives having always plowed with a. crooked stick, shod with a point of iron, looked askance at this American innovation. In Mexico the will of the master of the hacienda is never gainsaid by the peons, and grudgingly they accepted the new implements and went to work. A day or two later the young master went abroad to his fields to examine the work being done and, to his great astonishment, found that one handle had been sawed from each plow. He said, "Why did you cut the handle?" "Why, master," answered the majordomo, "we never used but one handle on a plow; why should we leave two on these?"

On reaching Vera Cruz we really felt more fear of sickness than at any other point we had visited in Mexico. At that time there was no pretense of any sewerage system. The town of Vera Cruz, situated on the unhealthy gulf coast, was paved with small cobble stones. On each side of the streets was a gutter, down which flowed all the filth of the city. The only real scavengers the city had were the buzzards, of which there were myriads. They were everywhere—on the roofs of the houses, on the passing cars, utterly fearless, for they were protected by law. They are tamer than our domestic chickens, but to us northerners they seemed uncanny.

As we sat in our room, in the second story of the best hotel the town afforded, we could see their curious prying eyes peering in at us from the roofs adjoining and from across the street. I confess the lo ok of the filthy creatures got on my nerves. After

sitting for an hour, I said to H. P., "Those buzzards are watching us and waiting to pick our bones, and the best thing we can do is to get out of Vera Cruz as quickly as possible." He jumped up with a shout of delight and said, "Say, I have been hoping to hear you say that; I did not want to be the first one to say it." We started north at once and thought we would never go into Mexico again; but by the time we reached home the unpleasant things had, to a certain extent, faded from our minds. We thought of the wonderful opportunities the country seemed to offer and soon were enthusiastically favorable to Mr. Neeland's scheme.

Hon. H. P. Shumway and our family having announced their approval of the railroad scheme, we laid the matter before Mr. J. O. Milligan , Mr. John D. Haskell and Mr. Darius Mathewson , all of Wakefield, Nebraska, and all men of high character and large means.

After a careful consideration of our reports and also the report of an expert engineer, who had gone over the proposed line, they agreed to join us in the enterprise. At about this time, also, Walter Everett became acquainted with Mr. Max Newmark and Mr. Bertho ld Baruch, two prominent Jewish gentlemen of Los Angeles, who were also men of high character and large wealth. These gentlemen became interested in the proposition and also joined us with their advice and capital. To assist us in financing the railroad work we obtained from President Diaz a concession for the establishment, at Tuxtla Gutierrez, capital of the State of Chiapas, of a bank of issue. This concession was exclusive and authorized us to create and operate the only bank of issue in that state. Under the law of Mexico we were authorized, upon paying in a capital of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars in Mexican silver, which silver must actually be in the bank building when we opened for business, to issue paper currency based on said silver to the amount of seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Our plan was to use these bank notes in paying expense of building the railroad, the bank loaning to the railroad construction company.

I will say here that this plan failed because the peons, who were hired to perform the labor, were not accustomed to paper money and our bank notes would not circulate among them to any considerable extent. This, however, we could only learn by experience.

It was arranged that Walter Everett should be president of both the railroad company and the bank and be here, there and everywhere, as it were, looking after the general .interests. Fremont Eve rett was to be general manager of the Banco De Chiapas, Edward B. Everett was to be treasurer of the railroad company; J. M. Nee land, our promoter, was to be general manager of the railroad; Delbert E. Ly on was to go as cashier of the bank; his uncle, John B. Lyon, as skilled man and adviser in mechanical lines; and Alfred B. Ly on, as confidential agent and paymaster.

Later a son of J.O. Milligan joined us in our work and proved himself a most efficient and energetic man.

On Christmas night of 1901, the writer, Fremont Everett, his wife and daughter, and Delbert E. Lyon left Lyons, Nebraska, to go to Tuxtla Gutierrez, capital of the State of Chiapas. About the same time John B. and A. B. Lyon went to Tonala, in the same state, for the purpose of taking up the work of railway construction. My family, Burt Lyo n and I went first to Mexico City, where we were delayed for some weeks in the necessary work of gathering up and transporting the two hundred and fifty thousand silver dollars necessary to the opening of the Banco De Chiapas. A part of this silver was bought in the city of Mazatlan and transported by steamer to Tonala. It was found impossible to buy any considerable amount of silver in Mexico City, and for weeks telegrams and letters were flying about the republic in search of the necessary silver.

As descriptive of things in Mexico City at that time I herewith copy a letter from my daughter Clara to the home paper in Lyons:

LETTER FROM MEXICO.

CLARA EVERETT TELLS of the MANY STRANGE SCENES in MEXICO CITY.

Mexico City, Mexico, Jan. 29.

Mr. Basle r, Editor of Lyons *Sun*:

Dear Mr. Basler — As you requested me to write, I will do so and tell you about some of the sights which seemed strange to me.

A short time before entering Mexico City we passed many fields of the maguey. This plant resembles in appearance our century plant, and from it is obtained pulque or native whiskey of the Mexicans. Pulque much resembles milk in color.

The other morning we visited the Mexican market. On entering we passed through a gate on a side street into an open court paved with rough stones. Seated in rows on the pavement were women and men, in looks and dress much resembling our Indians. In front of them, arranged in piles, which they were constantly handling over with their dirty fingers, was nearly everything in the line of eatables. Passing on, we saw various booths, some filled with odd Mexican crockery, such as pitchers, water jugs and bottles; others contained collections of old knives, pistols, brass candlesticks, Catholic beads of ivory and steel with a little ivory cross attached. Then here would stand a man with various colored cotton handkerchiefs for sale, another with lace dangling from his arms and shoulders.

The dress of the poor laborer of the city is usually white cotton trousers held up by a red sash, blouse of same material as trousers, and head topped with a peaked sombrero, Spanish name for hat. At night and in the morning when it is cold they wear a blanket with a hole in the middle, through which they put their head. There are a great many beggars here in the streets. Women with babies in their arms come to you and beg. The babies hardly old enough to walk grab at a centava if held out to them. It is pitiful to see how poor and ragged the poor and low classes are. Labor is very cheap. Men called *cargadores* will carry your heavy trunks from the depot to your hotel for 50 cents Mexican, a little less than 25 cents our money. Two of them, each with a trunk on his back, carried ours up to a room on the third floor after having carried them several

blocks. They use their backs for carrying anything very heavy. You may see them on the streets loaded down with lumber, sacks of straw or stone, or balanced on the head so nicely they need not be steadied by the hands, even when running, are baskets of bread, fruit and sweets.

It is not customary for people of the better class to carry heavy bundles on the street. We often hire a boy to carry our purchases, as he will carry it a mile for a centavo. The wealthy make a display of their wealth by having a fine carriage procession every night between six and eight o'clock. Down San Francisco street, a principal street of the city, where there are no electric car lines, will extend carriages sometimes three and four deep up one side and down the other, slowly or sometimes stopped in blockade. The occupants are richly dressed. The coachman and footman sit in front in fine livery. Once in a while an auto is seen in the procession.

The houses of the better class are usually three stories high and built around patios or gardens. In place of windows are double glass doors, which open onto iron-railed balconies overlooking the street or patio. People prefer living in the second or third story, as it is warmer and also more healthful.

The wealthy often rent their lower floor for a saloon or some similar purpose.

At night a street seems enclosed by high walls, as the buildings are built in a solid block, no alleys being between, and as shutters closed over the glass doors hide the lights within. Policemen are stationed one on each corner, lanterns in hand, although the light of the lantern is dimmed by the electric glare. As we pass through the street, crouched in the deep doorways, where they will spend the night, are seen various specimens of humanity.

We have only felt one earthquake, although there have been several, one rather violent one occurring early in the morning, failed even to awaken us. We found a scorpion in our room, which escaped into a hole in the wall before we could kill it, which caused us more worry than the earthquakes. We can depend upon every day being fine and so much resembling the day before that no one thinks of remarking on the

weather. As a result of this some of the peons cook and eat on the street. Seated on the pavement around a small stove, on which rests a dish of Mexican food, may be seen a family. First one dishes out a dainty portion with his hand and then another.

While in Mexico City we lived at a hotel, and one day Mrs. Everett discovered a scorpion clinging to her skirts, and as we had always heard that the sting of a scorpion was deadly, we went to the landlady and gave the alarm. "Oh," said she, "the scorpions here are nearly harmless, but when you get down in the hot country (where we were going) they are deadly." I will pause here to say, while in our construction camp in southern Oaxaca, my wife was stung twice by scorpions, and when she mentioned the fact that they were deadly the natives replied they were not very bad there, but they were deadly in Texas. As a matter of fact, a scorpion sting is but little worse than that of a honey bee.

At last, after many weeks delay and within the time that our concession with the bank would expire, we succeeded in getting, or thinking we had gotten together all the silver necessary. We started from Mexico City sometime in February, 1902, for our ultimate destination, the capita! of Chiapas. At that time railroads from Mexico City southward were generally under construction and very few of them finished. We were forced to go to Vera Cruz over the Mexican National Railway where we took a dirty and exceedingly cranky Mexican coast steamer to the town of Coatzaqualquos[11] , now called Port Mexico. From there we took the Tehuantepec Railroad across the isthmus to San Geronimo, a town on the Tehuantepec Railroad about thirty-five miles from the Pad fie Coast. This town, San Geronimo, was the initial point of the Pan American Railroad construction, which we were about to undertake. The concession called for a railroad from San Geronimo to the border of Guatemala, a distance of about three hundred miles.

When we arrived at San Geronimo we found that the actual construction work was to be first started at or near Tonala, a point about one hundred and twenty-five miles down the coast from San Geronimo. We learned also that there was no method of

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1[1] Coatzacoalcos

reaching Tuxtla except to go across the country on horseback or to take a coasting steamer from Salina Cruz to Port Arista, which was the port of entry for Tonala, and thence over a mountain road by wagon. The time when the bank must be opened was so near at hand that I bought a horse and saddle at San Geronimo and undertook the journey across country, as being the quickest method of reaching the capital of Chiapas, while my wife and daughter took the easier but more circuitous route by steamer to Tonala. Fortunately we fell in with a most worthy couple, a missionary and his wife, McDonald by name, who were also going into the State of Chiapas in the course of their work. They had been in Mexico some time and spoke the language fluently. This made it much pleasanter for my wife and daughter, who traveled in their company.

The method of placing passengers on board these coast steamers was very amusing to on-lookers and somewhat startling to passengers, especially to ladies. Few of the towns along the coast of Mexico have any harbor, simply an open roadstead. The steamer would sail as close to the shore as safety permitted, and goods that would not be injured by sea water were thrown into the sea and floated to shore, while things that would not bear this rude treatment were conveyed by lighters; but the water close to shore was too shoal for even the lighters to reach the bank, therefore the passengers were usually carried to the lighters in the arms of a brawny Mexican, and when the lighters reached the steamers, the passengers stepped into a large box, to which a cable was attached, and quickly swung to the deck of the steamer like any other bale of goods. My wife was inclined to hesitate in getting into the lighter, and while she hesitated she was seized from behind by a sturdy Mexican, and before she knew what had happened was safely deposited in the lighter.

When they reached Tonala they were provided with a two-seated platform spring wagon, which I had shipped from Omaha for use there, and our party secured four horses and a driver to take the ladies from Tonala to Tuxtla Gutierrez, a distance of about one hundred and twenty-five miles across the mountains. In the meantime I had traveled in company with the Government inspector, who was, under the law, an official of our

bank and who must be present at the opening thereof, and his wife across country on horse-back.

I reproduce herewith a letter written by me at the time of this trip, which is more exact than I can give from memory:

TAKES A WILD RIDE.

FREMONT EVERETT TELLS OF A THRILLING NIGHT'S EXPERIENCE - TRIP THROUGH DARKEST MEXICO.

Hacienda, Lano Grande, Chiapas, Feb. 21, 1902.

H. H. Basler - Lyons; Nebr

Dear Friend:

I have a few hours here while my horse is resting and will write you a letter, which you may publish or not, as seems to you best. In it I will endeavor to describe my first night in the State of Chiapas.

On February l6th I left Mrs. Everett and Clara to go with friends by steamer from Salina Cruz to Tonalá. This I did that they might be spared the 200-mile ride on horseback, that I was about to take. I bought in San Geronimo a lazy, obstinate little mountain horse, of which I at once formed a very poor opinion, a very good saddle and a pair of saddle bags. These latter I packed with a change of underclothing, the important papers which I carried, and a package of small silver coins and copper centavos, the money current among the poor Indians of the mountains which I must cross to reach Tuxtla, the capital of Chiapas. Then, in company with Sr. Don Clemente Castillo, the Government inspector, of our bank, his wife, child and two servants, started up the valley of the White Water River, called in Spanish the Augua[2] de Blanco.

The journey for the first three days was uneventful. The river valley is mostly covered with small timber, but the country is semi-arid and very large .trees, are not numerous. However, the rainy season lasts four months, so that good cereal crops can be

2 Probably *Agua*

raised where the people are not too lazy to plant and cultivate them. Although this is the dry season, the valley is well watered by streams from the mountains and we never rode far without crossing a rapidly flowing' brook. Many of the trees are loaded with beautiful flowers and there are growing wild many canas, begonias and other house plants of the north. Cocoanuts, oranges, lemons, limes and bananas are plentiful. But my story: These three days were in Oaxaca; the third day near night we entered Chiapas and camped at an Indian hut just over the boundary. As the sunshine is very warm in the middle of the day, we had planned to sleep until midnight, then get up and ride by moonlight. At two o'clock in the morning we were mounted and Señora Castillo led the way, riding an ambling little mule. Suddenly from the roadside bolted a pack of Indian dogs, causing the mule to shy and she was thrown heavily. We got her back to the hut, and as she was unable to ride, it was decided that Sr. Castillo and the child and one servant should remain with her while the other servant, an Indian mountaineer, and I should ride to this place, thirty-three miles, for a carriage. As Sr. Castillo and his wife had during our journey together treated me with a kindness and courtesy that I have seldom seen surpassed or equaled, I was very anxious to get assistance for the injured lady, and the guide and I set off at a round pace over the mountain road, for we had now left the valley and were crossing a very rugged mountain range.

I soon began to. fear that my Indian guide was possessed of a devil, for he dashed along in the dim light of the moon in a way that made me think that my apparently awkward and obstinate pony would surely fall and break my neck. But that broncho was mountain-bred and, like Abe Lincoln, he always rose to the occasion. On and on went the Indian and on and on I followed, hugging close to the overhanging mountain walls, along the brink of the fathomless gulfs into which I dared not to look, winding and twisting among crags and trees, dashing through mountain torrents, the loose stones of their beds rolling and slipping under the feet of our horses. Still all this time we. did have a road, a rough road, it is true, but still a road. Suddenly the wild man in the lead turned at right angles and forced his horse down a faint trail of the mountainside, down,

sliding, slipping and stumbling, until at last we reached the bottom of a deep canyon where the moonlight scarcely penetrated. What did the guide mean? Was he leading me away to rob and murder me? I was unarmed and he was a powerful fellow. Still I was completely lost and there was nothing to do but follow him. We rode for a long time along a mountain stream, crossing and recrossing it, as the dim trail wound in and out to avoid overhanging cliffs. Slowly the moon sank in the west and the canyon became so dark that I could not see the guide, who hurried along, leaving me at times far behind. Fearing that I should miss the trail and get entirely lost, I twice called to him to wait, which gave him great amusement and he chuckled at my discomfiture in a most exasperating way. He could not speak a word of English and I very little Spanish, so I could not give him the blessing he deserved. At last he left the torrent bed and turned, in the thick darkness, up a trail that showed dimly on the mountainside, so steep that we dismounted, that our horses, unencumbered, might scramble up. Every moment my respect for my broncho increased; not once did he stumble in the darkness, not once slip. Up and down inclines, over boulders, along black gulfs that would have tried the nerve of a mountain sheep, that pony carried me, quaking with fear, but perfectly unharmed. On the open road in broad day, he was an unbroken cayuse. On the mountainside, in thick darkness, surrounded on all sides by terrors real and imaginary, I would not have exchanged him for Maude S. or any racer that ever trod the turf. Higher and higher we climbed. Now we were skirting the mountainside at a great altitude. At my left the mighty shoulder of the Sierra, beneath me a thread of a footpath. At my right a black and mighty void like that which separated Lazarus and Dives, and faintly from its depths came the roar of a mighty river. About me were giant pines, their leaves sighing softly in the night winds. My fear had passed away, but a great awe fell over me, for, dimly seen in the faint light of dawn, the scene was of stupendous grandeur. A quick turn, a sharp upward scramble, and we were at the summit of the pass and on comparatively level ground. The guide condescended to tell me that he had brought me across the range on a

burro trail—a short cut. A burro trail, in the thick darkness that precedes dawn, and on horseback.

Evidently the fellow had got, by reason of my calling out for him to wait for me, a very poor opinion of my nerve, for he proceeded to attempt to frighten me by saying "Tigre akee," that is, there are tigers in this place. I have no doubt it was true, but after the real danger through which I had passed, imaginary mountain lions were rather a relief, and I promptly informed the smart fellow that tigers were "muy bueno" (very good), but precipices were "muy malo." He had nothing further to say, and we reached this place, where we were most kindly received and provided with a good breakfast, and a carriage was promptly sent for the injured lady. We had ridden eleven leagues over those mountains in five hours.

I expect to reach my destination tomorrow.

The injured lady was brought safely to the ranch, where I wrote the foregoing letter, and there her husband secured a carriage to transport her the rest of the distance to Tuxtla. One more incident of this trip I must give as illustrating the handicap under which a stranger, unacquainted with the customs of the country he is entering, often labors.

On the day following our leaving the ranch above described we reached the home of another wealthy land proprietor and were invited to stop for dinner, the day being Sunday. It had been heralded abroad that Los Americans were to establish a bank at the capital, and our Government official introduced me as the head of the bank. I was received with extreme kindness and deference, and when it came time for us to eat was placed at the head of the table. Accustomed, as we all are in America, to accept the place to which we are assigned when dining in the home of others, I innocently accepted the place of honor, and without the least thought that I was breaking one of the most sacred rules of Mexican etiquette, calmly proceeded to eat my dinner. During the journey I had become very well acquainted with the wife of the Government official, she having been educated in San Francisco and speaking perfect English. We had conversed much of the

time, and she had been interested in learning all she could about the United States, and in turn told me many things about Mexico. Her husband was unable to speak much English and joined but little in our conversation. The lady and I became quite friendly and, after the dinner was finished and she got an opportunity to speak to me aside, she said, "Oh, Mr. Everett, I am so sorry; you made a terrible mistake!" Her evident perturbation alarmed me considerably. "Oh, said she, you should not have accepted the place at the head of the table; by all the rules and customs of our country the honor guest must be offered the head of the table, but he must never accept it, but must decline it with courteous thanks, as the host always occupies that position himself." Well, it was done and could not be helped, and I didn't let it worry me very much.

The next day we reached our destination to find that we were still many thousands of dollars short of the necessary coin to open the bank, and on the next day but one we must either open it or forfeit our concession. J. M. Neeland and Walter Everett had both reached the capital before I did, and somewhere between the coast and Tuxtla, which is situated high up in the mountains, Bert Lyon was struggling with a band of mules and peons, bringing an additional fifty thousand dollars. Neeland had bought every dollar in silver that could be bought in Tuxtla. As he expressed it, "The merchants here have scraped their tills to sell us every cent of silver money they had." The night before the time for opening the bank had arrived, and Walter and I slept in a room in the best hotel the town afforded, which would be considered a fairly good livery stable in our country. All night long we heard the clink of silver dollars as gamblers plied their trade in the next room. Walter whispered to me the next morning, "They have been counting our money all night. I am afraid poor Bert is gone." This showed the state of anxiety in which we were. The morning of the day of opening was dawning; fifty thousand dollars in silver and our trusted and faithful friend were missing. We went to the bank building early in the day and made all the preparations we could for opening. Mr. Neel and had even invited all the notables of the city to join with us in the afternoon to celebrate the opening of the bank, but we were unable to open because of lack of silver. Hour after

hour dragged by and we waited with the most intense anxiety for the appearance of Bert and his mules loaded with silver. We did not at that time know, as we afterward learned, how absolutely safe the country was under the rule of Diaz, and it seemed to us highly probable that our pack train had been waylaid, the silver taken and Bert Lyon killed. .

At 12 o'clock, as we sat in the bank room, talking over our troubles, a great shout arose, and we rushed to the door to meet Bert with his peons, mules and silver all intact. Poor Bert had scarcely slept or eaten during the trip in his anxiety to carefully guard the treasure, and he was one of the worst looking white men I have ever seen. His face was covered with two weeks' growth of beard; his hair and beard were matted with dust, his clothing in rags where they had been torn by the thorny brush along" the trail, but he was triumphant and exultant; he had achieved the result sought, and arrived with his silver in time. At three o'clock in the afternoon, in the presence of all the notables of the city, we formally opened the Banco de Chiapas.

Bert Lyon, my family and I speedily settled down to life in the little Mexican city. As is the custom with nearly all the business men in Mexico, we lived in the same building in which we did business. The building was a large adobe, well built, and had formerly been a Catholic boarding school. In the kitchen was a huge Mexican stove, and if any of our American young people had seen it they would certainly wonder what it was. It consisted of a long bench built of brick, standing about as high as an ordinary table, and at regular intervals along the center of the top were small holes or depressions in which small charcoal fires were built, and over these fires was cooked all the food used by the school at the time it was running. We were obliged to use the same means of cooking to some extent, but secured a small stove as soon as possible.

Our isolation, owing to our lack of knowledge of Spanish, was made more bearable by the fact that the missionary. Rev. McDonald, whom I have mentioned, and his wife had decided that Tuxtla was as good a place as any for their missionary work and settled there near us. They were most excellent people and the lady and my wife became close friends.

Bert Lyon learned the language very rapidly, as did also my daughter Clara.

The Mexican people have customs that are altogether different from our own, so far as social matters are concerned. In Tuxtla no young Mexican would have thought for a moment of calling upon a young lady, nor had he attempted to call upon her, would he have been permitted by her parents to see her; but young people must get together somehow, and it was the custom on almost every evening, (for the evenings were always pleasant there), for the young people to go to the plaza. Around this plaza were extensive brick walks. The young women would link arms, just as American girls do, in twos or threes, and march around the plaza in one direction, and the young men and boys of the town would walk around the plaza in an opposite direction; but as they passed each other they would smile and look all sweet things which they were forbidden to say to each other.

I have so far failed to mention that a wealthy lady of Los Angeles, a widow, Mrs. Coronell, who was half Mexican and half American, and spoke both languages perfectly, had joined our party and taken some stock in our enterprise. She being familiar with the customs of both countries, took Bert Lyon, who was young enough to have been her son, under her maternal wing and got huge enjoyment out of leading him to break the ironclad Mexican rules of etiquette. For example, she became acquainted with the daughters of the most wealthy and influential citizens and would invite them to her house, where she introduced them to Bert and to American ways of doing things. So one night, in company with Mrs. Coronell, he went out to the plaza and marched with the young ladies. The young men of Mexico looked on in astonishment and envy. I said to a young Spaniard, who was working for his uncle in the city, "Antonio, why don't you do as Bert is doing ?" (for by this time he and Be rt had become friends) "and walk with the girls?" "Oh," said he, "Señor Everett, that will do for Bert, he is American; but it would not do for me."

The Mexican people thought it very wonderful that my wife and daughter should go freely about the town entering the stores to do their trading, and of course we could

not know how badly they may have thought of us. However, as we represented the financial power of the town in the bank, we were always treated with the utmost courtesy, at least to our faces. Next door to us and separated only by the adobe wall was the residence of Senor Ramon Rabas a, State Treasurer, one of the few honest Mexicans whom I met while in that country. He had a daughter named Guadalupe, whose pet name was Lupie, a girl about Clara's age, and they immediately became fast friends. Clara would go over to Lupie's at any time she felt like it with perfect freedom, and after we had lived there a few weeks Lupie actually came to our house, a distance of about three steps, without a servant following her, and she felt as if she had had about as much adventure as an American girl would to make a trip to Europe alone. I tell these things that you may know something of the manners and customs of the new country to which we had come.

Bert Lyon and I had just got the bank opened and fairly running when I began to receive letters from Mr. Neeland, who was acting as general manager of the railroad company, and Mr. Ed Piantoski, who was our chief engineer, each one desiring me to come to Tonalá and make the other be good. Each claimed that the other was hampering him. Piantoski, who was supposed to be in charge of the actual work of construction, stated that Mr. Neeland was constantly interfering with his plans and countermanding his orders. Mr. Neeland in his letter claimed that Piantoski would not do the work as he wished him to do it. I had no real authority in the railroad company, for I had gone there as a bank manager and not as a railroad official. .However, they both thought that in the absence of Walter I represented the Everett interests, which was true, and that I ought to settle the troubles between them. It was one hundred and twenty-five miles over the mountains to Tonala, and an ox cart or a saddle horse was the only means of transportation. I finally left the bank in charge of Bert and made a hasty trip to Tonalá where I talked with each of the two men, and as is usually the case found that both were somewhat in the wrong. Of course, I tried to point this out and to get them to work together in harmony, giving each of them a little friendly lecture which, also is usually

the case, had no other effect than to get them both down on me. Having no authority to order anything and neither of the two men having any inclination to listen to my advice, I returned to Tuxtla, having accomplished nothing except to satisfy myself that without some change in the management the road would never be constructed. In the meantime, J ohn B. and A. B. Lyo n were down at the railroad work; but because they were friends of the Everetts, they were regarded with jealousy by Neeland and Piantoski and were pointedly ignored by both. They were deeply interested in all our plans, having taken stock with us; and had come there to do something or anything that could be done to push the work. They wrote me, and they also wrote to Walter, stating the conditions, urging that something be done, because the time within which the first fifty kilometers of the road must be finished was rapidly passing and we were liable to lose our concession. Walter responded promptly and when he reached the scene of action took personal charge, ignoring Mr. Neeland as general manager, because we had discovered by that time that he had no qualifications for the position he held and that he simply hampered the efforts of others without doing anything himself. For days and weeks he sat in the office at Tonalá reading and writing letters without going out upon the work or giving any assistance in any way, his excuse being that he had eniwas in his feet. Now, en iwas are the product of an egg laid in the skin by some insect, which, by the way, I never saw. The eggs hatch and form themselves a little pouch or pocket just beneath the skin and feed on the living flesh and blood of the victim. However, they are not the least painful, and the first intimation you have of their presence is a small swelling about the size of a pea. The treatment is very simple, consisting only of opening the skin sufficiently to remove the pouch, which, strangely enough, causes no bleeding, and washing the opening with some antiseptic. The wound quickly heals.

Walter pushed the railroad work vigorously for some weeks and Mr. Piantoski cooperated well with him. The work went rapidly forward, but Walter had duties that called him away and out of Mexico, and as soon as he went away the old strife between the manager and chief engineer started again. I found that I was powerless to remedy the

trouble, being without any legal authority, and I notified the men who were furnishing the money, father, Mr. Milligan and the others, which resulted in a meeting in Mexico City, at which all the interests were represented, and it was agreed, with the consent of Mr. Neeland, that Mr. Piantoski should be given full and autocratic power. In short, he was to be the commander-in-chief; the rest of us were to take orders from him. He promised that if he could have full power he would push the work to the limit, and I wish to say for Mr. Piantoski that he made good. He worked with feverish energy and the work went forward rapidly. Piantoski was an able young man. His chief fault was an excess of vanity and an overpowering fear that his merits would not be fully recognized.

About this time it was decided that it was best to sell the bank at Tuxtla so that I might give my entire time to the railroad work, our force of Americans being so exceedingly small, and I moved my family from Tuxtla to Jalisco. I had no authority except to handle funds. It was my business to see that the money was there, that the men got their pay every Saturday night, and so far as possible that nothing was wasted. This work I performed to the best of my ability and with fairly good results.

Mr. Piantoski and a special friend of his, who acted as conductor of the train, a Mr. Came ron, and they and their wives arrogated to themselves all the authority in the camp. I could not ask the simplest and most harmless question about business without being snubbed. If I happened to ask an employee a question he was likely to say, as some of them actually did, "I am working for Mr. Piantoski." Naturally, as one of the men who was putting in money to construct the railroad. I resented this treatment, feeling that while Mr. Piantoski was entitled to all authority, we having delegated it to him, I, as a representative of the men who were building the road, was entitled to respectful treatment. However, the all important thing was to finish the fifty kilometers before the expiration of the time fixed by our contract with the Mexican Government, and I took quietly all kinds of snubs and disrespectful treatment, but I did not forget.

On Sundays when work was not proceeding, Piantoski, his pet conductor, and their wives, would take the construction train and go some distance along the partly

constructed line, and hold a picnic, on which joyous occasion the men who were building the road were sneered at and dubbed farmers—which we were, and of which we were proud—but which was intended by the speakers as a term of contempt. On one occasion the pet conductor remarked, "Well, I guess we will build some road this year. I hear they have a good corn crop in Nebraska." These things always got back to the men who were concerned and they did not fail to reach our ears. When the fifty kilometers were finished and done in time, I informed Mr. Piantoski that his services were no longer required; for the finishing of the fifty kilometers ended the period for which absolute power had been granted to him. When I told him of his discharge he said, "Mr. Everett, I was hired by the president of this company, and I decline to accept a discharge from any one else." Now, Walter had paid us a flying visit a few weeks before, had learned of the insults to the men who were doing the work and was just as indignant as I. He gave me a letter addressed to Piantoski discharging him, but suggesting that I not deliver it if Piantoski accepted a verbal discharge from me; so when Mr. Piantoski made his not unexpected answer, I replied: "Ed, I wanted to spare your feelings all I could in this matter, but since you must have a formal discharge, here is a letter written to you from the president, to be delivered upon the completion of the fifty kilometers," and I delivered it to him. I never saw a man more crestfallen. It was evident that he believed that his successful completion of the fifty kilometers would outweigh any influence that I might have.

By this time I had learned something of the actual work of railroad building and something of the Americans who were in that part of Mexico, and we were fortunate in securing the services as chief engineer of a Mr. Bowman, who had all the ability and but few of the faults of Mr. Piantoski; but what was far more important, we secured the services, as superintendent of construction, of Henry Heintz, a young American of German descent, one of the most energetic and effective workers I have ever met. He had had, at that time, fifteen years' experience in railroad work in Mexico. He spoke the language fluently and knew Mexican character to a nicety. To him we granted the same

full powers that had been granted Piantoski, but gave him frankly to understand that the men who were backing the enterprise must be treated with respect. However, in his case this was entirely unnecessary, as he knew his place and kept it. None of us ever attempted to interfere with his management or override his authority, and he on his part gave us the most respectful treatment, and we became his firm friends. To him more than to any other one person is due the credit of our successful completion of the first division of the road. It was no uncommon thing for him to get up in the middle of the night to ride from the camp where he was to some other camp to see that the men got to their work at the proper time in the morning and that all things were going well.

I seemed to possess something of the faculty for smoothing down rough places and satisfying men who had become dissatisfied, and I looked after the paying out of the money. For the actual construction work I was entitled to no credit whatever. The first division of the road was completed under Mr. Heintz's management within the time specified, and the road was, for a new road, a very good one. However, we were tired of Mexico, its hardships, its privations, and I may add, its dangers, for during the three years in which we were building the road we lost by death out of the handful of Americans who furnished the brains for the work John B. yon, who died of a liver trouble, undoubtedly induced by the tropical climate; young Mr. Milligan, who had become division superintendent, and was a most estimable and efficient young man; William Mann, brother-in-law of Walter's, who was with us but a short time before he was stricken by one of the fierce fevers of the country and died in a few hours; our master mechanic, a Mr. Jennings, who was a wonder in his line, also died suddenly of fever. These men died natural deaths, and in addition thereto we had two startling tragedies. First was the death of our humble but trusted employee, old Chinese Tom, our cook. Tom had been with us from the start and we all regarded him with affection, because of his faithfulness and zeal in protecting the interests of the company; also he was always kind and accommodating. One night, after every one had left the cookhouse, excepting Tom and his helper, another Chinaman, the men in the office, some fifty feet

distant from the cookhouse, were aroused by a tremendous hubbub and outcry in the cookhouse, and rushed there, to find old Tom dead, literally chopped up with an ax, and his helper desperately wounded, with one arm entirely cut off, but still living, and the cookhouse turned into a shambles. Who did the murder we never knew. Indeed, we could hardly form a theory as to who did it or why it was done. The wounded Chinaman died in a few days, but absolutely refused to tell us who was the assailant or why the crime was committed.

The other tragedy occurred something like a year later and was the shooting in the night of our chief engineer, Mr. Bowman. He was found dead in his room after the sound of a pistol shot, and it has always been a question of doubt whether he shot himself accidentally or whether someone from the outside killed him by shooting into the room where he slept. He was dead and that was all we could learn about it. So both those murders have passed into history with their mysteries absolutely unsolved.

More than half of the white men who went from the north to assist in this work went to their graves within three years. These things and the tremendous strain of financing the project began to get upon our nerves. This Pan American Railroad is the only road, that I have ever heard of, which was built without the issue of bonds. The construction work was all done and paid for out of the pockets of the men who took up the work until we had finished this first division, but we began to want to get out from under the burden. An opportunity came to sell the road to people in Kansas City and the sale was effected. At about that time and before the road was delivered the bonds were placed upon it and a part of our pay for the road was taken in these bonds. At the finishing of this first division, also, the Mexican Government paid the first subsidy, and we drew at that time about twelve hundred thousand dollars in cash from the Mexican Government.

All of the survivors of the expedition, excepting A. B. Lyon, returned to their homes in the north, but A. B. remained in Mexico and married a beautiful young Mexican lady, who has since visited with him in his old home town and made a most

favorable impression among all of Fred's many friends. We were all glad to return to our native land and to be relieved of the pressure which had been upon us, but after all there is no period of our lives to which we look back with so much pleasure as the three years in which we struggled with all sorts of difficulties in the wildest part of Mexico.