

THE CHARLOTTETOWN GUARDIAN

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1910.

MEXICO.

The Centennial of the Independence of Mexico, which is being celebrated this month with historic pageants, and other festivities, directs special attention to a nation of remarkable history and character. It is unique, at least among the nations on this continent, in that it can trace its history to as early as the seventh century of our era. It was at that period, according to tradition and ancient records that have been recovered, that a band of immigrants known as the Toltecs entered the territory of Anahuac from the north and established their capital, Tulo, fifty miles north of the Mexico Valley. They had reached a considerable degree of civilization, were well instructed in agriculture and many mechanical arts, had a complex arrangement of time—dividing their year into eighteen months of twenty days each, with five days intercalated—cut and polished gems, worked skillfully in metals, and above all else were builders, many of the ancient buildings still in existence being attributed to this vanished people. A legend tells that, like many other nations and individuals, intoxicating drink proved their ruin. On the discovery of 'Pulque'—still used in Mexico—they neglected for it their arts, agriculture and the warlike practices that had enabled them to maintain a national existence among the surrounding barbarous tribes, and easily fell a prey to various invaders.

The result was that finally the related tribes of Acolhuas and Aztecs held the country. They inherited a good deal of the civilization of the Toltecs, along with their palaces and temples. The Aztecs were the stronger and more ambitious of the two peoples. Their cities and towns increased in number and in wealth. The tributes levied by their kings comprised cotton dresses and mantles of leather work exquisitely made; ornamented armor; vases and plates of gold; gold dust, hands and bracelets; crystal, gilt and varnished jars and goblets; bells, arms and utensils of copper; maguey paper; grains, fruits, copal; amber, cochineal, cacao; wild animals and birds, timber, mats and other articles. Garrisons were established in the larger cities and the domains of the empire were constantly enlarged. Communication was maintained with the remotest parts of the country by means of swift couriers. Post houses were established at regular intervals upon the great roads. They maintained a great army, well-armed and handsomely uniformed. They believed in the existence of a supreme creator, whom they addressed in their prayers as "the God by whom we live," but they had also a great number of subordinate deities, to each of which a sort of "saints' day" was devoted. In earlier days their religious rites were humane, but long before the Spaniards reached the country they were stained by frequent human sacrifice.

It was on March 25, 1519, that Cortez and his Spaniards touched at Tobacco, after which they sailed up the coast and landed in force where the city of Vera Cruz now stands. These 'conquerors' were of the type which Spain produced so plentifully at that period. Daring, fanaticism, cupidity and cruelty united in the formation of a strange character, part soldier, part robber, part crusader. The story of the conquest of Mexico by Cortez is a thrilling and dramatic one. He sunk his ships and with his little force of less than five hundred men penetrated to the capital. The horses of the Spaniards, their steel armor and fire-arms led the people at first to regard them as gods or messengers of the gods. Soon, however, trouble broke out. Montezuma, the Aztec 'Emperor,' half guest, half prisoner, of the Spaniards, was killed by an arrow from his own people. Cortez and his men, with as much treasure as they could carry, attempted a retreat by night, but were ambushed as they crossed the great causeway which spanned the lake and almost cut to pieces. Reinforcements were, however, secured from Cuba, and Cortez returned with six hundred Spaniards and a great army of allies from Tlaxcala and other native states which were glad to throw off the Aztec yoke. After prodigies of valor and prodigies of cruelty, the Aztecs were utterly defeated, their magnificent city destroyed, and 'New Spain' was added to the territory of Castile. The history of Mexico continued from then forward a fierce and stormy one. The rapacities and cruelties of the Spanish Government provoked discontent in various more or less abortive insurrections. Finally, in 1810, a brave parish priest of Dolores, Don Miguel Hidalgo Costilla, driven beyond endurance, roused his people with the cry 'Viva la independencia!' The struggle was finally successful. General Augustin de Iturbide being proclaimed Emperor in 1822. Next year he abdicated, and for thirty years revolution prevailed. There were other troubles, war with the United States, resulting in large loss of territory, occupation by the French, proclamation of Maximilian of Austria as Emperor. Then revolt against and execution of Maximilian. Then the Republic again. In 1877 General Porfirio Diaz was elected president. He was succeeded by General Manuel Gonzalez, but was re-elected in 1884, and has been repeatedly re-elected since. He indeed appears to be one of those strong men beloved of Carlyle. His methods of government are not always perfect, but he has given peace and stability to a nation which suffered turmoil and misrule for almost five hundred years. He has encouraged industry, promoted education, and in common with many other figures in the story of Mexico, has shown that mixed Indian and Spanish blood is capable of great achievement. Canada, to the north of the United States, has many points of sympathy with Mexico to the south, and at this season wishes her abundant success and a future of peace, prosperity and progress.—Montreal Witness.

THE HAGUE REWARD.

Broadly speaking, the decision of The Hague Tribunal is a victory for Great Britain, for Newfoundland, for Canada and the principle of settling international disputes by peaceful arbitration rather than by resort to arms. On the whole the verdict is a vindication of the position steadily maintained by British diplomats for something like a hundred years. Not less important is the consideration that the last chief cause of friction between the Empire and the Republic is now removed. Henceforth the ancient fisheries question will be a less powerful lever in the hands of the United States in its tariff and other negotiations with the Ottawa Government.

The prime result of the ruling is that Newfoundland may regulate the time during which, the methods by which and the implements with which fishing may be conducted off its coast. Secondly, the three-mile limit does not follow the coast indentations, but is calculated on the basis of a straight line drawn from bay headland to bay headland. A number of exceptions are specified, but the upholding of the headland-to-headland principle means much for the protection of Canadian as well as Newfoundland fisheries. The benefit will be felt on both the Atlantic and the Pacific coasts of the Dominion.

From the British standpoint it is regrettable that the American fishermen retain the right to fish in bays, harbors and creeks on large stretches of the Newfoundland coast and the Magdalen Islands. This privilege leaves some room for discord in the years to come. The United States fishermen are not liable for lighthouse or harbor dues, and they do not have to enter their vessels at custom houses. We, however, win the salient points of the reference, and credit is due to Sir William Robson, Mr Aylesworth and Mr Ewart for their skill in the preparation and conduct of our side of the case. Finally, it is highly satisfactory that the two great Anglo-Saxon peoples have been able to set the rest of the world the example of settling acute differences by peaceful arbitration.—Toronto News.

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