

# THE BATTLING YAQUIS

BY SAMUEL H. PIERCE



W HAT little the dollar loving American has done in prying and peeping into the great natural treasure houses of Sonora convinced him years ago that that western Mexican province was a country well worth exploiting. If more than half of the silver of the world has come out of Mexico, as is probably the fact, then, from all reports, when the argentiferous deposits of Sonora are properly opened up three-fourths of the world's silver will come from the land of Diaz. Sonora has been exporting \$12,000,000 to \$15,000,000 of silver a year and could have exported five times that amount and an incalculable quantity of gold but for one reason—the country has not been safe for white people, except in the larger towns, because of the warlike Yaquis, who have been battling for generations against the Mexicans.

But now the good news has been flashed over the wires that the long drawn Yaqui war is at an end and that a treaty favorable to the Indians has been negotiated, so that soon there will be such an influx of greedy gringos, as the Mexicans call us, into Sonora as has never been seen before. For there will be no more night attacks upon ore wagon and supply trains, no more terrorizing of the miners in their prospect holes and no more rushes to the gun rack in the lonely cabin on the mesa.

It is characteristic of our commercial age that the chief interest of the white people in the Yaqui uprisings has not been a humane but a financial one. Although Americans have obtained concessions from the Mexican government of mining, cattle and farming lands, they have never been able to hold undisputed sway over them. Now the hardy gringo will descend upon Sonora, bent upon a conquest far more thorough than that of Gen. Scott in 1848. He lusts for the silver and gold hidden under the Sonora mountains, for great bands of cattle and for the fruits of the fertile valleys, and he will have them.

Not that the Americans have been essentially hostile to the Yaquis, for many guns and much ammunition have been taken over the border to aid them in their desperate fight, but that when Diaz has seen fit to parcel off a comfortable section of Yaqui land here and there to an enterprising Yankee for a consideration it has been only natural that Yaqui and Yank should have become embroiled at times.

"The Yaqui Indians are the most stubborn fighters on earth," said President Diaz of Mexico eight years ago. "and if ever we are to put them down we must strike at the root of their race—we must exile their women and children."

So, month by month, since then thousands of the little brown women of the Yaqui nation in Sonora have been torn from their homes on reservations and elsewhere, rounded up at Guaymas, on the west coast of Mexico, and, with their children, deported to San Blas and thence across country to the far fever lands of Yucatan, where many of them have died. None have ever returned to Sonora.

This means of subduing a race that has been in almost constant warfare against the Mexican government for more than 30 years has at last been effective, although it has been necessary at the same time to keep from 2,000 to 5,000 troops in readiness or in the field to fight the diminishing band of Yaquis, who have proved themselves as valiant and as unyielding as the floors.

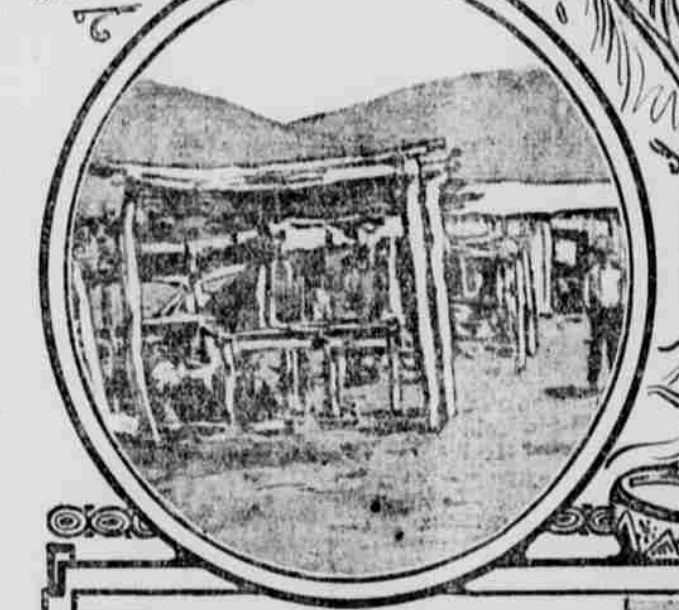
The last two stands of the Yaquis have recently been reported in the dispatches. One of these was in a mountain canyon just north of Altar, where the Mexicans and Papagos lured the Yaquis into ambush and killed a large number of them. The other and concluding engagement followed a skirmish that was made by the Mexicans southeast of Hermosillo, the capital of Sonora, in which it was reported that Bule, the chief of the Yaquis, was killed and 100 of his men were slain. After this bloody battle the remnant of the Yaqui forces engaged in that fight marched into Hermosillo and surrendered.

of Mexico by the Spanish in 1519, and from an estimated population in 1629 of 203,000 the race has steadily declined, chiefly because of its almost incessant warfare, to about 40,000 at the present day.

Having regarded the Yaqui at close range and having studied him and marked what manner of man he is any one may be excused for an admiration of him that surpasses my appreciation of any other of the native races of North America. Assuredly these people are the most industrious and most civilized of all Indian tribes, being for the most part farmers, miners and craftsmen, and far superior to the average Sonoran of the haciendas and villages, who will not work while he has a peso in his pocket and while mescal can be had at the



YAQUI HABITATIONS



YAQUIS IN PRISON YARD



YAQUI WOMEN



READY FOR DEPORTATION TO YUCATAN



YAQUI BATTLEGROUND

while in a warfare that has not been that of savages—has, in fact, been fully as humane as that of its foes.

It is not necessary to go back any further than 1873 to get a good idea of what the Yaquis have been doing in trying to hold their own against the people of Spanish descent in Mexico. In that year, because of trespass upon their lands and because the Mexicans had taken large numbers of them to work upon their ranches in practical slavery, these tremendously tenacious fighters resumed hostilities after a short period of peace. Gen. Cajemi, their governor, took command and for seven years held the passes and strongholds against 5,000 troops under Gen. Pesquera.

Although the Yaquis gave a good account of themselves, they lost many men and Gen. Cajemi was captured and shot. Still the defensive war was continued, and when at last the Mexicans drove them out of their strongholds and captured their mines there came a period during which only desultory raids upon the haciendas were made. During that period the Yaqui women and boys and some of the non-combatant men of the tribe went out to earn money in the mines, ranches and fisheries to buy arms and ammunition to carry on the fight.

A number of American miners who had been unable peaceably to work their mines brought about the peace of Ortiz in May, 1897. The government then began to take Yaqui boys from the reservations and send them to Vera Cruz, on the other side of the continent, to make soldiers of them. These boys were as good if not better sharpshooters than the Boer youth, and the Yaquis saw that in thus depriving them of what would be a great source of reliance in future battle they would eventually have to give up all hope of ever holding their own. So that the peace of Ortiz only lasted a few months before there was another uprising and more fighting, chiefly of a guerrilla nature, which continued for several years.

Meantime every cent that the non-combatants of the tribe could earn and save was handed over to the chiefs, who bought with this money enough Mauser rifles and mountain howitzers to equip very decently an army of 5,000 men, under Gen. Tetaviate, who, in April, 1899, took the field after having made this statement:

"We Yaquis are a peaceful and industrious people. When the Mexicans want workers for their mines or factories they come to us. We do not want war. We have never wanted it, but we want our rights. We made a treaty of peace with the Mexican government, our hereditary foe, in May, 1897, after a long series of wars, the last of which was more than ten years in duration. We intended to keep faith with the government of Mexico, but it has pursued a course of cruel encroachment and menace. We are now ready to fight it again, and all the battles of the past will be as nothing compared with the bloodshed that will follow our entry into the field."

Gen. Tetaviate began operations in the lower valley of the Rio Yaqui, where his men drove out the white settlers upon Yaqui lands. They cut the telegraph wires and destroyed other means of communication, and it was

some time before the hastily summoned Fifth cavalry and Eleventh and Twelfth infantry companies could be marched against them. Then followed a series of battles which generally concluded unsatisfactorily for the Mexicans, though there was an occasional rounding up of the rebels in which large numbers of them were slaughtered. On the approach of the troops the Indians usually took up strong positions in the mountain fastnesses. One large band fortified itself in the Bacatete range, between the Yaqui and Matopo rivers, and another in the Sahuaripa mountains. Efforts were made to keep these two bands apart, but the working Yaquis all over Sonora and in California and Arizona were constantly coming in and joining with their brethren and the depredations upon the ranches and villages were widespread.

Meantime the Mexicans gathered in the women and children of their foe for deportation to Yucatan, following the demand of Diaz to "exterminate the Yaquis." Maddened by this and by the reports that the women and children were not merely deported, but that they were taken out into the Gulf of California and thrown overboard from the troop ship Oaxaca, the desperate Indians attacked the haciendas and also threatened the larger towns. Terror mad, the citizens of Nogales fled from their homes, and for a time martial law was proclaimed over the fear-stricken city of Hermosillo, the capital of Sonora. During the height of the excitement, troops were coming in bringing women and children for deportation, and also an occasional band of Yaqui soldiers, who were generally thrust into prison over night and in the morning taken out, lined up and shot.

One of the most terrible slaughters during the last war upon the Yaquis occurred in June, 1902. One evening 300 armed Yaquis descended upon four haciendas near Hermosillo and took away 600 of their tribe, including women and children, who were there employed. The band marched toward Ures, reached Mazatlan mountain, and while waiting for the Mexican soldiers made bows, arrows and spears for those who were unarmed.

On June 15 900 Mexican soldiers came around the mountains, surprised the Yaquis, chased the armed warriors down the mountain, killing many of them and taking all the hacienda folk prisoners. Soon after the skirmish Alas Hrdleka, representing the American museum, found in a little ravine on the mountain side the bodies of 64 of the Indians, including a number of women, a little girl and a baby. The skulls of nearly all the victims were so shattered by Mauser bullets as to be of no use for the museum for which Hrdleka was collecting.

In the hospital at Hermosillo in 1902 there were as many as 12 wounded women and a girl of seven with three bullet wounds in her body.

As another example of brave Mexican warfare 300 women and children who were captured near the Rancho Viejo were kept in a corral under guard for two days, during which time they were given nothing to eat but two and one-half bushels of raw corn, on which they subsisted until night, when they were marched to Hermosillo, 32 miles away.

In July, 1902, an attempt was made by the Mexicans to surround 200 Yaquis in the San Mateo foothills, but the Indians learned of what was afoot, slipped into a side valley before the advance of the troops, and in the night strangled the sentries and, proceeding over to the sleeping soldiers, slew the whole column in the darkness and bound the officers to the trees, where they were found when relief came.

One reason why the last ten years' war has been more bloody than any that preceded it was that the Mexican government decreed that every Yaqui living on the prairies or working on ranches or anywhere else was to be treated as a prisoner of war.

**Qualities in Men.**  
A sad nature sheds forth twilight. A merry and mirthful nature brings daylight. A suspicious nature insensibly imparts its chill to every generous soul within its reach. A bold and frank nature overcomes meanness in men. Firmness makes them firm. Firmness makes them fine. Taste directs, stimulates and develops taste. —Henry Ward Beecher.