

Through the Hostile Yaqui Country

GUAYMAS, Mexico, April 15.—(Special Correspondence.)—To be roused out of a rosy slumber at 2 o'clock on a moonless morning and started on a twenty-league ride in a vehicle known as a "Mexican diligencia" is, at best, not the most cheerful of traveling propositions. And the further knowledge that the twenty leagues in question lie through the heart of one of the most hostile Indian countries civilization ever grappled with is in no sense a relief to the situation. However, such were precisely the circumstances under which we set forth—the camera man and myself—from Guaymas to the region where the Yaqui war is in progress. Moreover, unlikely as it may seem, the crew of our diligencia consisted of a trio of the ablest and withal most questionable appearing savages this self-same tribe of Yaquis could well produce.

The unique personality of our immediate custodians calls for a word of history concerning the brave old wagon wherein we were projected of ascertaining how matters stood in this long-waged conflict on the Mexican frontier. The conveyance is owned and operated by a company whose headquarters are somewhere in the heart of the Mexican Sierras, at the further extremity of the road from Guaymas. The specific name of this institution, if it has one, is nowhere in evidence along its line of travel, notwithstanding which it is entitled to pronounced credit for its magnificent nerve in having contracted with the Mexican government to carry the mail to the various army posts located at intervals throughout the hostile country. True, the dangers threatening the leagues of desert highway that must be traversed each trip are, thanks to the rigorously conducted campaign of the Mexican troops, less grave than formerly, which condition, however, does not alter the fact that the service has continued right along throughout the whole progress of the war, and with singular regularity, considering the frequency with which the drivers and their crews at the outstart had to be renewed. The reckless policy of the Yaquis in repeatedly picking off the Mexican drivers, and the consequent dearth of these functionaries, that early developed, impelled the stage company to resort to a desperate expedient. It was reasoned that the Yaquis were in the habit of sending out members of their band, from time to time, to seek employment on the various haciendas with a view to replenishing their ammunition and other supplies essential to the continuance of hostilities. Therefore, why not secure immunity for the government mails by recruiting their stage crews from among these ubiquitous tribesmen? True, such a measure promised no additional safeguard to their passenger service, but then the company had never made any pretensions, to say nothing of contracts with the traveling public, on that score. It was the postal subsidy that must be protected—the passengers could look out for themselves.

Indians Respect the Mails.

At all events there was clearly no other salvation for the company's contract, and the experiment was forthwith put to the test. The innovation worked to perfection—so far as the mails were concerned. True, the belligerent hostiles, from their roadside retreats, continued to make targets of such passengers as were so unwary as to obtrude their personalities from behind the wagon screens, but the vehicle itself, so long as a Yaqui driver was perched on the box, never once failed to get through on schedule time.

However, as previously explained, conditions had improved somewhat at the time we undertook the trip, quite two weeks having elapsed since the last massacre had been enacted on the road we were to traverse. Nevertheless, on the occasion of our visit to Hermosillo, it had occurred to General Torres that we might feel more at ease if accompanied by an armed escort over the most hostile portions of the route, to which end I carried the necessary credentials, entitling us to such protection at any of the military outposts we would pass.

For the first four hours of the journey the darkness of our somewhat spare accommodations was of an intensity that, under ordinary circumstances, must certainly have produced a corresponding degree of monotony. Not so in this case, however. The Yaqui driver and his staff were too industriously occupied with infusing life into the motive power of our equipage to admit of any such tendency to dullness. The power in question consisted of half a dozen diminutive mules, hitched two abreast in the rear and four in the van, after the prevalent custom of the country. The characteristic perversity of this curiously incorporated string explained the necessity of so large a corps of drivers. Their method was for the chief functionary to hold the lines, while his two lieutenants race along on either side the unwilling team, which they sought to terrorize into a perpetual scamper, through the agency of long-lashed whips of the blacksnake variety. This heroic process the entire trio continuously interspersed with a series of such hair-curling warwhoops as only the Indian can devise. All of which constituted a most suggestive accompaniment to our silent reflections on the long list of casualties to which we were aware our chosen route was solely indebted for its fame.

The chief point of interest we passed in



COLONEL VEGA, WHO COMMANDED MEXICAN TROOPS IN FIELD.

the course of this early morning interval was a sudden swerve in the road, where this same diligencia had been capsized on its last inbound trip, which mishap had resulted in a broken leg to one, besides various bruises sustained by other of the occupants. The details of this little incident were furnished us by a fellow traveler, who happened to be one of the passengers at the time, and who accounted for its origin as follows:

"You see," he explained, "this is a new crew—just down from the mountains—and the last trip having brought the three into contact with a military canteen for the first time, they naturally filled up on all the firewater, in the shape of native mescal, that came within their reach. Result—a smash-up of course. But," he added, encouragingly, "that was twenty-four hours ago and no doubt they're sobered up by this time."

Maybe so. But considering the hideousness of their yells, I felt at liberty to doubt the theory. The fortitude of my informant, however, in undertaking another trip with the same outfit, in the face of the experience he had so recently undergone, could not but excite my admiration, and I straightway proceeded to cultivate him. My new acquaintance proved to be a civilian resident of an army post in the heart of the Indian country and, being thoroughly conversant with the territory through which we were passing, his companionship constituted a most enlightening feature of our trip. Added to this, he was something of a philosopher, in his own way, which fact he demonstrated about the time the darkness began to disperse. Observing by the faint light, which sifted in

through the drawn curtains, that this denizen of the frontier was to all appearances unarmed—a most unconventional circumstance for these parts—I took occasion to express my surprise at the fact, to which comment he responded, in his somewhat unique vocabulary: "Oh, I reckon I'd be heeled fast enough anywhere outside this particular wagon. But I've figured it out that the less valuables you show along this road the better your chances are for getting through with a whole skin. Now, there's nothing a Yaqui Indian will covet quicker'n a good shooting iron—like either of those you an' your partner are sporting, for example. And he'd a heap sooner pick you off for the chance he'd stand of bagging your gun than he would me if he knew I had a million dollars in my clothes. You see, money's no object whatever to the Yaqui, while shooting utensils are both his capital and religion. Besides," he added deprecatingly, "there's no use spoiling your ride by looking for trouble from beginning to end of it. For if the Yaquis happen to spot you anywhere along the line they'll sure get you, and without giving you a shade of a chance to argue the point with 'em. Is there any record of a live Yaqui ever having been seen from this stage? Not one. But on the other hand, he's spotted no end of travelers in his time—as the dead list will show. There was the American photographing outfit from Hermosillo, for instance; two in the party and the last ones in here before yourselves. Well, they were armed to the eyebrows and undertook to get through to Alamos, at the other end of the route, but the Yaquis got them before they were an hour out of Torim—killed in this same wagon, and on the very seat you're sitting on."

Assurance Not Reassuring.

Here was an altogether new version as to the proper conventionalities to observe while enroute through the Yaqui domain. During the progress of my interlocutor's theorizing I repeatedly caught myself in the act of casting skeptical glances at my erstwhile trusty revolver, which, to insure convenience, I had switched around on my belt to a position immediately in line with my right eye. And the camera man, meanwhile, was equally distrustful of the policy he had espoused, for he eyed the rifle that rested athwart his knees in a way that convinced me he heartily wished it were his tripod. There's a deal more of truth than jest in these random details of that brief but singularly impressive discourse on the one-sidedness of Indian bushwhacking ethics. And the character of the country, with its ominous jungles of cactus and chaparral, through which the road at intervals plunged, tended to enhance our respect for the philosophy of our compatriot of the Sonora frontier, in no small measure.

While continuing on our way the individual in question pointed out to us various spots of historical interest connected with the present war. As we approached an especially dense thicket he suddenly observed, "I think I said awhile back that a live Yaqui had never been seen by travelers along this route—but there's a dead one over in yonder tree that anyone can look at."

We followed the direction indicated and, sure enough, beheld a bleaching skeleton dangling from the limb of a mesquite tree.

"You'll see others like him at various points along the road," was the uncanny assurance vouchsafed by our friend. "They've been hung up there by the Mexican troops," he explained, "as a warning to the live hostiles. This particular one marks the spot where a whole battalion of Mexicans were wiped out, at the outstart of the war, in a fight with the Indians. You see, their devils decoyed the soldiers into one of their ambushes, and then picked them off one after another from their hiding places in the cactus beds, where nothing that human could reach them. That's their favorite style of fighting. In fact, a Yaqui will never show fight unless he has the sure drop on his intended victim. Their time for bushwhacking on a large scale, however, like the bloody massacre at this point, is past now, for the Mexicans have cut up what's left of them into small disorganized bands that go skulking about in the chaparral, or lie in wait near the roadside for travelers without escort."

Evidence of Good Faith.

At another point we were shown a large mesquite tree, between two top branches of which a board was secured. This rude contrivance had been intended as a lookout tower by a company of soldiers sent to patrol the district. The intention, however, had speedily proved a failure, for the first sentry who mounted to the perch was picked off by a Yaqui sharpshooter before he had secured so much as a preliminary

We stopped the diligencia long enough



YAQUI WARRIORS IN CAMP.

to secure a photograph of the gruesome thing in the mesquite tree, and then resumed our journey. A little further on we drove into the village of Las Guasimas, the first military post of importance in the Yaqui country. The place consisted of an adobe cuartel, or barracks, surrounded by a wretched assortment of thatched Indian huts. Here we had expected to secure an armed escort, as the remainder of our journey lay through the very hottest of the hostile district. But, upon applying to the officer in command, we were informed that his entire garrison had gone in pursuit of a band of Yaquis that only two days before had visited the suburbs of the village and made off to the mountains with a bunch of fourteen cattle belonging to the post. This raid was supposed to have been made by the largest of the various marauding bands, in retaliation for the defeat they had sustained at the hands of the Mexicans a short time previously. On the occasion in question the troops had tracked the hostiles to their principal stronghold in the Sierras de la Bacatete and in the fight that ensued ten Yaquis were killed, forty women and children taken prisoners and the village destroyed. The casualties sustained by the Mexicans in this engagement were but four wounded. The captive Indian women and children were confined in the cuartel at this place, where we were permitted to photograph them. When first brought to the post they were in a pitiable condition from lack of food and harsh treatment at the hands of their aboriginal lords and masters. Hence their present captivity, insuring them, as it does, plentiful food and kindly protection, is in the nature of a boon to them.

On our way from Las Guasimas to the Rio Yaqui we passed through one of the most desolate regions I have ever traveled, its chief danger lying in its close proximity to the mountains, from which the Indians can command a view of the road for miles at a stretch. In the course of the afternoon our traveling companion pointed out to us the spot, opposite a deep ravine near the roadside, where two weeks previously one of the cruellest tragedies of the war had been enacted. Here a party of travelers, consisting of two men, two women and two little children, were fired upon by the Yaquis, who were secreted in the ravine, and all but one of the two women killed outright. The woman who survived had a most miraculous escape, her child being killed in her arms, at which she fell fainting among her dead companions in the road. Here she lay for hours before recovering, and meanwhile the Indians, thinking their awful work complete, had made off, thus enabling the bereaved wife and mother to gain the nearest post of safety.

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glimpse of the surrounding country. Thereafter the soldiers took it for granted there were Indians in their vicinity and the sentry stand in the mesquite tree was condemned as a superfluous evil.

Night was far advanced before our diligencia rolled into Torim, the chief outpost on the Rio Yaqui, which was to be our headquarters during our sojourn in the Indian country. Here we were courteously received by Colonel Vega, chief of General Torres' staff, who is immediately in command of the 4,000 Mexican troops in the field. On the following morning we were given an escort, consisting of a lieutenant and five native guardsmen, and, thus equipped, at once proceeded on our journey through the Rio Yaqui basin. The Yaqui is a beautiful crystalline stream of considerable volume, and winds its tortuous course through a valley of surpassing fertility. It was this region that the Indians were formerly allotted by the Mexican government as their exclusive domain. There is absolutely no evidence, however, that its rich lands have ever been cultivated by them, as it is to a great extent densely overgrown with mesquite trees. In the midst of these thickets the Yaquis have dwelt for many years, constantly fostering their deep-seated hatred of the white man and his civilized tendencies. The missionary priests have labored among them in vain, as the more earnestly they would strive for the uplifting of the Yaqui the more bitterly they were despised by him. And notwithstanding his perversity he has been suffering for years to retain control of this beautiful region—until at length his barbarous policy of death and destruction could be no longer endured. And this is the story in brief of how the Yaqui came to be expelled from the land of his fathers—and why his heritage is henceforth destined to become the heritage of others.

JOSE DE OLIVARES.

Pulpit Stories

Rev. Alfred Waller, a clergyman whose church is located in Southend, a few miles down the river from London, is an enthusiastic temperance worker. He offered a local saloon keeper \$10 for the privilege of hanging up behind the bar a temperance placard. The saloon keeper is a bit of a wag and he replied: "Certainly, parson, and I'll give you the same amount if you let me hang up on the pulpit an advertisement of my bottled ale."

Over at Durango last week, relates a Colorado exchange, the good ladies of the Methodist church contributed a supply of all kinds of good things and proceeded with the same to the home of their pastor, Rev. C. E. Webb, to feed that a bright baby boy had just preceded them to the parsonage.

The women concluded to stay and take supper with Mr. Webb, and therefore transferred the tables from their baskets to the dining table and then informed the parson that supper was ready, wondering as they did so if in returning thanks he would remember their gifts.

When all were seated at the table the good man bowed his head and thus approached the throne of grace, "O Lord, we thank Thee for this timely succor," and the ladies are still in doubt as to what he meant.

On the last night of a series of "pre-arranged meetings" in the Methodist church of a little New Jersey village, relates the New York Sun, the visiting evangelist was making a special effort to obtain a showing of anxious souls. He had preached his best sermon, and reached an emotional fervor that he had seldom equaled. But nobody responded to his invitation. They sang a hymn and then the evangelist rose again and called upon the congregation to "enlist for the service of the Lord."

A battle-scarred, wooden-legged veteran who had dropped into the back seat watched the proceedings with interest.

For the third time the perspiring evangelist rose and asked:

"Is there no one willing to enlist in the Lord's army?"

Then response came from the back seat: "Draft 'em, parson; d-n it, draft 'em."

Irritating

Detroit Journal: The Bear pressed his bayonet against my breast.

"Quarster, forsooth!" sneered he. "You, who devastate our farms, burn our homes and, as if this were not enough—"

Here his voice rose to a shriek.

"To wear these dinky tozenke hats with the latchet under your nose!"

I could see that he was awfully angry, but my British blood was up and I laughed in his face.



CAPTIVE YAQUIS LEAVING THE MOUNTAINS.