

**A STUDY OF EDUCATIONAL
CONDITIONS IN MEXICO
AND AN APPEAL FOR AN
INDEPENDENT COLLEGE**

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A Study of Educational Conditions in Mexico and an Appeal for an Independent College by
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Committee on the Study of Educational Conditions in Mexico

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Secretary's Office

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The Committee for the Study of Educational
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FOREWORD

IT is fair to say that everyone wants to help Mexico, but that no one at present knows how to do it. We can not expect to help her effectually until we first understand her history and institutions, her people and their aspirations. What, then, does the history of Mexico teach us? What is the meaning of the series of revolutions which have been going on in that country for the last hundred years? In other words, what have the Mexicans accomplished, and what do they now want? These revolutions, including this last long one, have all, at bottom, been phases of a blind, misguided struggle of a strong, ignorant people for liberty. They have sprung from a desire of the common people to realize the benefits of democracy. They have been a struggle against a feudal system approaching slavery. They were chiefly, although not entirely, the strivings of an oppressed people to win for themselves and their children a small place upon the soil of their native land.

These blind efforts have failed of their ends largely because the people have been without learning and without true leaders. There has never been a middle class in Mexico to supply leaders for the people in their struggles with the feudal lords. Organized public opinion is the only basis for democratic government, and this has never existed in Mexico. The only newspapers are controlled by the Government, by the landlords, or by the big corporations. There are no real political parties. The only politics are wholly personal, and the only political organizations are gangs formed to advance the interests of leaders whose names they bear. There are no political campaigns to educate the voters, but only processions and rallies intended to impress them. There is, in fact, no free political discussion of any kind. Elections in Mexico, consequently, are either farces or frauds.

Organized public opinion and the free discussion of political affairs so necessary to free government can not exist where the

masses of the people are ignorant. The only solution of the Mexican problem, therefore, will be the establishment of public schools which will educate the people to know their rights, and of colleges to train men to help them in their struggles to win those rights.

In the belief that the best thing the friends of Mexico can do at the present time is to prepare to assist her in educating her people, a Committee was formed a year ago for the purpose of studying the educational conditions and needs of the country. The following paper was prepared under the direction of this Committee by Dr. George B. Winton (now of Vanderbilt University, but for thirty years a teacher in Mexico), with some assistance from Professor Andrés Osuna, formerly superintendent of schools of Coahuila and at present general director of primary, normal, and preparatory education in the Federal District of Mexico. Several of the notes were contributed by Professor Ezequiel A. Chávez, formerly President of the National University of Mexico and Assistant Secretary of the Department of Public Instruction. We are indebted to Professor I. J. Cox, of the University of Cincinnati, for revising the material thus collected and contributing additional matter.* For those who can not read the whole paper at once, the chapter summaries and "Afterword" will, we hope, prove helpful in giving a general view of the educational conditions in Mexico and our recommendations for their improvement.

CHARLES WILLIAM DABNEY, *Chairman.*

Cincinnati, Ohio, December 1, 1916.

*Notes contributed by Professor Chávez are signed "E. A. C."; those by Professor Cox, "I. J. C."

I — RACIAL SETTING

Summary

Conditions in Mexico cannot be understood without a study of ethnology. The Nahua peoples—Toltecs, Chichimecs, and Aztecs—came from the north by the west, and displaced an earlier race, perhaps the Mayas. The Nahua records were destroyed by the Spaniards; but we suppose their origin to have been Asiatic. They are oriental in type of mind and in physique. The Aztecs were the leaders for only a century or two. As a warlike tribe they developed a system of bloody religious rites. It was not really typical, as Mexicans are not sanguinary in their tastes. The line between "nobles" and "plebeians" was the most noteworthy social phase of native life. Agriculture flourished. The Conquest introduced new racial influences and two new classes, *mestizos* and *creoles*. The Spanish settlers took possession of people and lands. Education was left to the Church. Doubt was entertained at first whether the Indian could be educated. There was no attempt at education by the Government. The Spanish Crown and the superior authorities in the Church made provision for the protection of the Indians. These measures were brought to naught by the avarice of the colonists. *Repartimientos* and *encomiendas* were intended for the good of the natives, but resulted only in their oppression and the enrichment of the colonists.

ANY study of educational conditions in Mexico must take account of the racial history of the Mexican people. Not only is that history without a parallel, but there is no phase of the people's life that does not throw the student back upon the extraordinary intermingling of race currents at and before the Conquest, and the influence which those currents have exerted upon each other and upon the mass during the succeeding centuries. The ideals and practices for the training of the young, which have prevailed during the six centuries of Mexico's recorded history, have been the outgrowth of the social, military, and governmental standards existing first among the native tribes, and later modified by the coming of the Spaniards. A rapid review of these racial elements and tendencies will serve, therefore, to give the setting for our examination of the present educational status.

The Nahua peoples, who displaced an earlier stock—believed by many to be represented now by the Mayas of Yucatan and