

## **"TRAMPING THROUGH MEXICO"**

**It is a great pity that Mr. Franck cannot, amœba fashion, make twins of himself and so double the number of his always delightful and informing books about phases of life in other countries that are a sealed volume to most travellers. His method of going on foot and fraternising with all he meets along the way, working a week or so now and then and making friends of his fellow-toilers, studying the country and its people at intimate first hand, gives him a knowledge of the very heart of its heart to be gained in no other way. And he has a most happy and fortunate faculty of enabling his readers to see whatever he sees with his own clear and honest and**

unprejudiced vision. He does not go on his vagabond journeys for the purpose of proving a theory or gathering arguments to bolster up anybody's case. He goes to see the country and its people in their daily life and habit and he describes them just as they are without the slightest reference to the effect of his narrative upon any reader's beliefs. If you do not want the absolute truth about a country, as nearly as it can be seen by an honest man and told by a sincere writer, Harry Franck's books will be caviare to your taste.

This new volume records the incidents and observations of a journey he made, largely on foot but partly by train, southward through Mexico in the autumn of 1911. Therefore it was shortly after the end of the long rule of Porfirio Diaz, and the reader must bear in mind that what the author saw was the result of what most Americans believe to have been his strong and beneficent administration of Mexico's affairs. Those who say, as nearly all Americans do say, parrot fashion, that Mexico needs the Diaz kind of a ruler are bound, if they read this book with honest thought, to revise either that opinion or their American ideas of the basic rights of humanity. Mr. Franck himself does no philosophising or drawing of inferences. He leaves all that to his readers. He is concerned only with making mental photographs of what he sees and transmitting them, clear and true, to his readers.

Mr. Franck went south from Nuevo Laredo, tramped about, worked for a time in mines in the Guanajuato region, slept in the huts of peons by the roadside, made friends with fellow-travellers in village inns, talked with men, women and children as they journeyed together along highway or trail, fraternised with any and all of friendly disposition in the day coaches, wherein he sometimes travelled by rail. And the sum total of the impressions he gives the reader is that of a land of wonderful richness, still undeveloped, whose resources ought to support a large population in plenty

and content, but nearly all of whose people are sunk so deeply in poverty, ignorance and squalour so appalling that one shudders even to read of it. It would be good for the soul of any American who thinks this country ought to send an army of intervention and conquest into Mexico to read Mr. Franck's description of the market in San Luis Potosi—"Such a surging of pauperous humanity, dirt and uncomplaining misery," he says, "I had never before seen in the Western Hemisphere,"—and then ask himself soberly, "Do we want to fight that?"

Mr. Franck visited a school here and there, and his account of what he saw and heard in the school-rooms is a grotesque travesty upon any modern system of education. And almost everywhere he found a depth of poverty well nigh beyond the conception of any American. But the book is not all so sombre as that might imply. There are many charming bits descriptive of interesting adventures and fraternisings along the road and many of the people whom he meets are delightful in their simplicity and sweetness of nature. Moreover, Mr. Franck tells his stories well, with a sense of genial humour that rarely fails him even when his experiences are highly unpleasant, an eye for the picturesque and a human sympathy that vitalises his every page. His book is a contribution of the greatest value to the very slender list of works that make any attempt to get below the obvious in Mexican affairs and conditions and to write the truth about them. It is copiously illustrated from photographs by the author and has a map of his itinerary.