

We did not settle very definitely into the house which we first got because we knew we would stay in it only a comparatively short period as a Dutch pathologist, who was coming out from Holland, was going to have it, but at last we found one of the really nice houses on the whole island which we could take on a lease. It was at the edge of the town in the very nice residential section and surrounded by several acres of ground, the whole being surrounded by a high stone wall. The house itself was large with two wings between which was a marble paved patio with a wine covered trellis above. The living rooms were in the front of the house while the bedrooms were in one wing and the kitchens and the very important water tank in the other. The Back of the house was a building for the laundry and for the servants quarters, and the whole house was surrounded by rubber trees, flame (?) trees, and another tree bearing a huge yellow flower (J-lambryant)

the name of which I cannot remember. During the two years that we lived in that house the windows were always open, day and night and were never closed except to keep out rain during the short rainy season, or sometimes to keep out the very hot sun. It was a constant life in the open air. The grounds were attractive in spite of the fact that there was no grass. How the flame trees and rubber trees lived I never could quite understand, for they seemed to get very irregular attention in the way of watering, and the rains only came once every year during about six weeks of October and November.

Our bathroom was a most imposing affair. The tub was a huge concrete affair below the level of the floor of the bathroom and was almost a pool rather than a tub. It was impractical to use it for even with our apparently ample supply of water, for the house was so big that its roof gathered ample rain to fill a huge tank during the rainy season, yet even this ample supply would not permit us to indulge in the luxury of filling such a huge tub. We therefore had a shower bath, and I was awakened every morning by the creaking noise of the pump which was operated by one of the servants to lift water from the tank to another small tank on the roof of the house which supplied the shower bath. The warm sunshine took the chill off the water in this tank on the roof so that we always had the water at just the right temperature for a delightful bath without any expense for fuel. We were considered very rich by the natives in our vicinity because we had such a big roof and could gather so much water during the rainy season. We felt it a terrible thing that these poor natives should have to buy water for drinking purposes, and so we began to give them without charge the water which they requested, against the severe protests of our cook, who was also the chief boss of our retinue of servants. She told us that we would have the whole neighborhood asking for water, and her fears were justified because we soon had to stop giving away water or we would not have had any left for ourselves.

clubs form a very useful nucleus for the celebration of our national holidays and through them visiting Americans, the officers of naval vessels calling at the port, or distinguished foreign guests may be given entertainment or paid a courtesy. In some cities it is the practice for the club on Washington's birthday or on some other appropriate holiday to give a dinner to which are invited the local authorities and their families. Such a courtesy is generally very much appreciated by them and is to say the least not a hindrance to the formation of friendly relations.

Clubs

*Participation in local official
or semi official ceremonies
or fetes.*

*Abstention from alleging himself
to be representing associations to
a party or faction or degree
as to time of personal influence.
In expressions of opinion on
local matters & politics.*

primary foodstuffs. These people here know that in the post-war period for at least two or three years there will be a scarcity of foodstuffs not as great as it is now but a strain on supply. The Government here is taking measures to help itself but there are certain natural conditions and acts of God against which a country cannot struggle.

First of all Larry we must remember that less than 6% of Mexico's area is arable land and that most of this 6% of arable land is poor land. There is some land which can be brought into fertility and production through irrigation and through clearing away of semi tropical or tropical forest. So far as irrigation is concerned, already before the war the Mexican Government had at least 27 irrigation projects carefully studied on a sound basis and some of them were under construction when war started. About six of these irrigation projects are under way but it has been quite impossible to start on the others although the engineering studies are all complete and the Mexican Government has the money but certain materials are needed which can only be got from us or other countries and these materials simply cannot be got even for the irrigation projects under way and nearing completion. It is impossible to get some of the equipment which is needed to continue construction although the amount involved is small. Just recently we have been writing voluminously to the Department for the information of the FEA and the WPB about an irrigation project in the State of Puebla which is well under way. Although it will bring into fertility only about 100,000 acres of land the project is going to cost about 40,000,000 to 45,000,000 of pesos and Rosoff who built the Hudson Tunnels has the contract. He needs to carry on his work some of the equipment which belongs to his contracting firm and which is not being used in the United States and which is not likely to be used but he can't get the export permit. He needs some \$70,000 worth of new equipment and he can't get the authorizations for this although the small quantities of used equipment and new equipment mean this project going forward to completion. We have the same experience with regard to some other irrigation projects which are just as vital.

The agencies at home take the attitude that as we do not grant any materials for irrigation projects in the United States at this time, we cannot grant any materials for irrigation projects here. It is obvious, of course, that the situation is entirely different because our irrigation projects are all on a tremendous scale and take tremendous amounts of materials and we have plenty of arable land and no pressing irrigation project which has to be carried through now. On the other hand, these irrigation projects are essential for increasing production in Mexico and these five or six which

are

are under way and which all need very little material which we can supply we are not supplying because we are not giving any materials for irrigation projects at home when the situation is relatively so different.

I have gone into this detail because the very people in some of the agencies at home who say that Mexico is not doing anything to help herself in this food problem at the same time are denying the small quantities of equipment which I know that we can supply without any injury to the war effort but which for the reason above mentioned we are not licensing.

In the same way there is a certain amount of land which can be cleared, particularly in the tropical areas of Mexico but it means machinery for clearing the land because it is impossible to clear some of this land without certain kinds of machinery such as bulldozers, stump pulling equipment, etc. This equipment, of course, is quite impossible to get now from us and there is no other source. There is some clearing of land going on at tremendous effort just by human labor without the aid of any equipment but it is slow work. I am merely mentioning this because they are only too anxious to clear some of these lands if they could get the equipment which so far they can't get and I don't see when they will get it.

You know that the division of the lands led to a situation where the ejidatarios are too poor to buy phosphates and fertilizers, which when the lands were held in larger areas the big landed proprietor could buy. The result is that at the same time Mexico is one of those countries which is poor in fertilizing materials and has to get fertilizers from the outside and you know what the difficulties are with respect to transport and cost. The Mexicans have done a lot towards improving their agricultural methods but they can't get the agricultural machinery which they need nor the fertilizers and as long as this is not available per acre production of certain crops, such as corn and wheat, cannot be increased.

I have studied this agricultural situation here enough and have gone into it closely enough to see what good agronomists have been developed. Some of the finest young men I know here are young men who have gone to our agricultural schools in the United States and they are eager and enthusiastic and well equipped but they are working against great difficulties.

In

In many ways these people are doing what they can to increase their food production and I have tried to point out some of the odds against which they are working and which are imposed by nature and by the conditions of the war. The Mexicans are not insensible to the aid which we have given them even if the activities of some of their representatives in the United States may have caused us through their bungling a lot of irritation. At times we may think that we get a lot of incomprehension and lack of understanding from these people here but I can assure you that at the top there is a thorough understanding of this foodstuffs problem and they are doing what they can.

The Mexicans realize that although they may not be cursed this year as they were last with a bad crop and lack of rain that their situation will still be difficult and that the imports from the outside may have to continue. They are desperately trying to increase their production of corn and I get about the country enough to see what is being done. So far as wheat is concerned, Mexico has always been a heavy importer of wheat and I think she will be always an importer of wheat even after these irrigation projects are completed because Mexico is simply not a wheat country.

I think I pointed out in one of my letters to you that the corn situation here was aggravated by the fact that agencies of our Government encouraged the Mexicans to go into the production of oil seeds for the war effort and that these very oil seeds took up some of the best lands that had been devoted to corn. Oil seeds are a better paying crop than corn and naturally the peasants took to it. Now the Government has had to restrict these areas for oil seeds again and these lands which were turned to oil seeds are being turned back to corn.

I am sorry to impose so long a letter on you but there is still a great deal more which could be usefully said but I thought I should bring some of these situations in this summary fashion to your attention because it is really very unfortunate that this impression has gained ground among so many of our people that the Mexicans are not doing anything to help themselves.

I agree that in many respects there are things which they should do to help themselves which perhaps they are not doing but we can't expect a people to grow up into maturity in a few years. So far as agriculture is concerned, Mexico has to

deal

deal with conditions created by God which man can only change over a period of years and that a considerable period of years.

You will appreciate that I am not turning into a defender of the Mexicans but I think in view of the fact that this situation here is so important for us that it would be just too bad for us if we do not take the real facts into account and not act on the impression of too many of our people which are without foundation and based on altogether inadequate observations and knowledge. I say again, this is no criticism of your remarks because I am sure that in what you say in the last paragraph of your letter you are reflecting the information which has come to you from certain agencies of the Government where I know that this idea so definitely prevails that the "Mexicans are not helping themselves".

I again emphasize the fact that great changes are taking place in this country and it is not extraordinary that the country should be passing through these difficulties, economic and political, out of which I am sure it will work itself and what I am trying to do is to keep before some of our people the basic importance of this country to us and how unfortunate it would be if we do not consider sympathetically her problems. She is one of our nearest neighbors and we can't forget that. I confess I get more excited about keeping bellies full here than I do about filling the bellies of some of the people who have been fighting or prepared to fight against us if the circumstances permitted in more distant parts of the world. We have all these problems before us but in considering the more far away problems I think it would be unwise for us to forget those of our nearest neighbors.

With all good wishes,

Cordially and faithfully yours,

G. S. Messersmith

GSM:NA