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J. T. WHALEN, G. W. P. A.

W. D. MURDOCK; A. G. & P. A. Mexican Central Ry., 209 House Bldg;
St. Louis, Mo.

MEXICO CITY.

28 APR 1937

17 SEP 1902



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The West American Scientist

Vol. XII. No. 13.

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Whole No. 114

INTO MEXICO WITH THE EDITOR.

Gleanings from private letters of the editor-in-chief who is three thousand miles away, will assist us in a brief trip into Mexico. There are many things of interest to be noticed on our way. Perhaps first of note to the speed-loving American is the time the trip requires. Eight years ago, from El Paso to Mexico City, required four days. Now we can accomplish the same in little more than half that time—two and one-half days.

Outside our car window as we leave El Paso, we see only grassy plains and sand hills. Mesquite trees are in leaf and form the chief verdure of the country. The Living Rock cactus is found on the hills in this vicinity, but very difficult to distinguish as it is so identical in color with the rocks on which it grows. Agaves abound in the mountains, one of these, a bulbous variety, is especially beautiful.

Further south we pass fields of young cotton plants. Yuccas are used for fence posts. Everything is dry—a desert. In some parts of the trip the mes-

quite trees give promise of being in reality what they are in name—trees.

As we reach the valley of Mexico we find ourselves in a region of broad cultivated fields, dry, much like California in aspect. The train winds around low hills, up, up. A reservoir of water with green fields of corn beneath its influence, and thousands of acres of maguey fields—a curse to Mexico; stone walls, tiled roofs, cathedral towns, the wooden plow, thirteen modern houses (huts of cast-off corrugated iron), big hats on barefooted and on sandaled men, a eucalyptus tree among the cacti; such are some of the sights as the landscape speeds behind.

Mexico City is reached at last. It has grown remarkably since a visit eight years ago and is destined to be larger still. No vacant lots in the city. Solid stone and other evidences of great wealth displayed—and of great poverty, as well. 500,000 people are living here, it is said. They are people of all sorts.

The free music and plaza promenade in one of the nearby towns brings them all out in their best. Among them some are very pretty, white, barehead-

ed girls in black lace mantillas over pink dresses, others wear Parisian hats and shoes, and the children are as pretty and as prettily dressed as the average in the United States.

But this trip into Mexico is far more comfortable than the real thing can be. In that are many trials to be met and conquered or endured. There is the dust. It is very trying at this season of the year, just before the rains set in. One night the train encountered a sand storm and in the morning the beds were covered with dust and the car was full of it. Not less trying than the dust is the heat. Activity of any sort must be suspended and the time of the greatest heat spent in the shade of trees and houses or within doors. Our Scientist, in a fit of absent-mindedness, one day, laid two plants and a snail in the sun, while with true scientific zeal he went for something else. When he returned he found them literally baked.

The condition of the people of Mexico is pitiful. Many of them are both poor and extremely ignorant. One Indian brought his little boy one evening, as bright a child as need be found, and the pride of his father's heart. A box with a dime in it was given to him. He shook the box as he went and was as happy in the music of that coin as if the home he was going to was a palace instead of a hut of mud and brush. What a future is before him! His father had worked all day for about thirty cents. He spoke in poor Spanish, had evidently never heard of the postoffice. He was looking wistfully toward the United States, but with neither energy nor knowledge will probably never reach it. It is pathetic to see the burdens these men will carry, a hundred pounds a mile at a time. And still more pathetic is their patience and their plaintive voices which are reminders of the middle ages.

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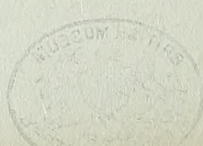
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CACTUS NOTES.

The following have been described by Coulter under the generic name *Cactus*—those which prove to be valid species we will name as *Mammillarias*, but will not yet make the transfer, as some are known to be synonyms only of old species:

CACTUS ALTERNATUS Coulter.

"Subglobose, 10 cm. in diameter, simple: tubercles long (15-20 mm) and spreading, with woolly axils: radial spines 3, rigid and recurved, 5 mm long; central spines 3, very stout and much recurved, 20-30 mm long, alternating with the radials; all ashy colored and often twisted: flower and fruit unknown: Type, in Herb. Coulter. San Luis Potosi (Eschauzier of 1891)."—Coulter Cont U S Nat Hb 3:95

CACTUS ESCHAUZIERI Coulter.

"Depressed-globose, 3 cm in diameter, simple: tubercles broader at base, 6-8 mm long, with naked axils: spines all pubescent; radials 15-20, with dusky tips, the lateral 10-12 mm long, the lower weaker, shorter and curved, the upper shorter, solitary central spine reddish, slender, somewhat twisted, usually hooked upwards, 15-20 mm long: flowers red (?): fruit reddish (?), ovate, about 10 mm long: seeds reddish, oblique-obovate, 1.2 mm long, pitted, with subventral hilum. Type in Herb. Coulter. San Luis Potosi (Eschauzier of 1891)."—Coulter Cont U S

Nat Hb 3:104.

CACTUS PRINGLEI Coulter.

"Globose (?), 5 cm in diameter: tubercles short-conical, about 6 mm long, with very woolly axils: radial spines 18-20, setaceous-bristly and radiant, 5-8 mm long, central spines 5-7 (usually 6), stout and horny, more or less recurved, spreading, 20-25 mm long; all straw-colored, but the centrals darker: flowers deep red (darker, even brownish outside), 8-10 mm long: fruit unknown. Type, Pringle of 1891 in Herb. Gray."—Coulter, Cont U S Nat Hb 3:109.

CACTUS MACULATUS Coulter. cm, simple: t

"Obovate-cylindrical, 6 by 8 cm, somewhat cespitose: tubercles ovate, terete, 10 mm long, grooved to the base, with naked axils: radial spines 10 or 11, straight and spreading, rigid, blackish (becoming ashy with age), black-tipped, 12 mm long; central spine large, more or less spotted, erect, 25-35 mm long: flower 13 mm long, pinkish: fruit unknown. Type in Herb. Coulter, San Luis Potosi (Eschauzier of 1891)."—Coulter Cont U S Nat Hb 3:117.

CACTUS BRUNNEUS Coulter.

"Obovate-cylindrical, 3 by 6 cm, simple. tubercles ovate, grooved to the base, 5-6 mm long, with woolly axils: radial spines 11-15, spreading, rather rigid and brownish (lighter with age), 8-10 mm long; central spine much larger, 20 mm long, hooked: flower and fruit unknown. Type in Herb. Coulter. San Luis Potosi (Eschauzier of 1891)."—Coulter Cont U S Nat Hb 3:117.

CACTUS DENSISPINUS Coulter.

"Globose, 7.5 cm in diameter, simple: tubercles short, with woolly axils: radia

