

Romance of a Mexican Peon

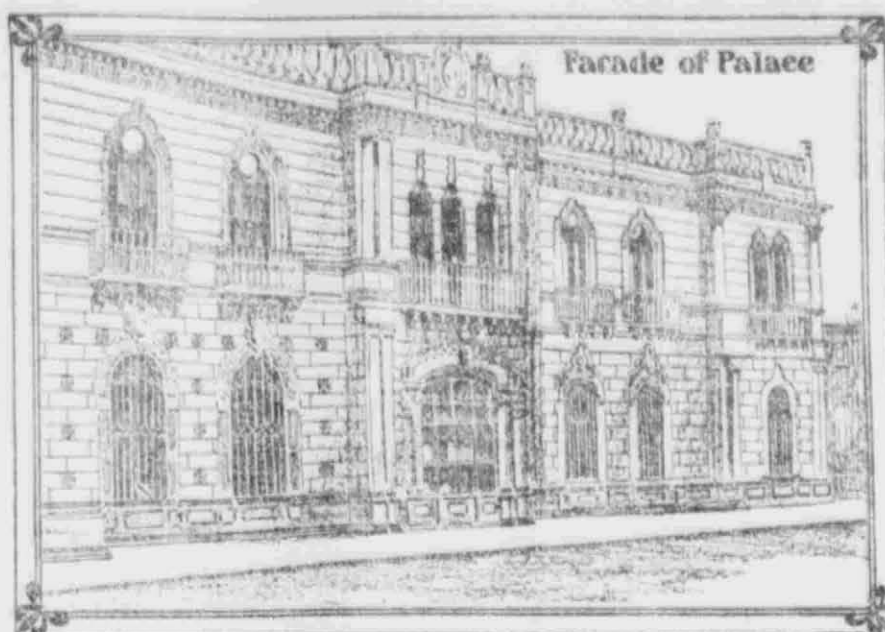
THE MAN WHO OFFERS TO PAY HIS COUNTRY'S DEBT, BUT SEEMS TO LACK MEANS TO CARRY ON HIS BUSINESS



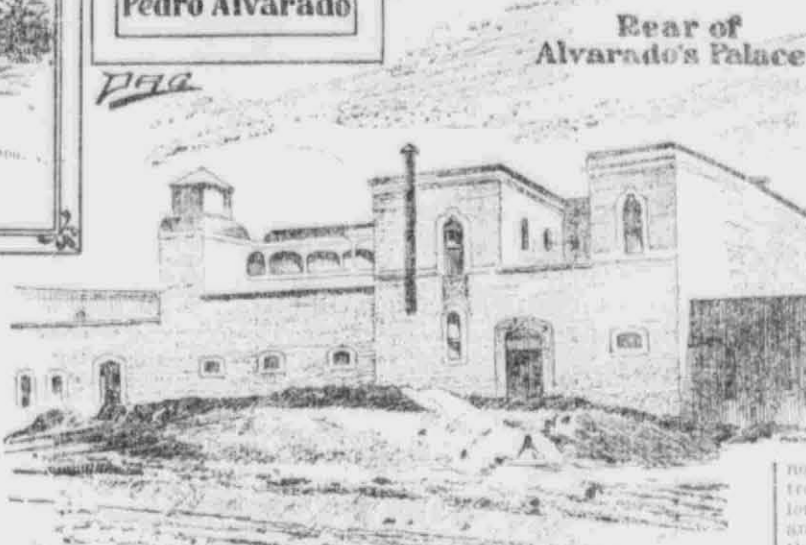
Scene at the Palmilla Mine



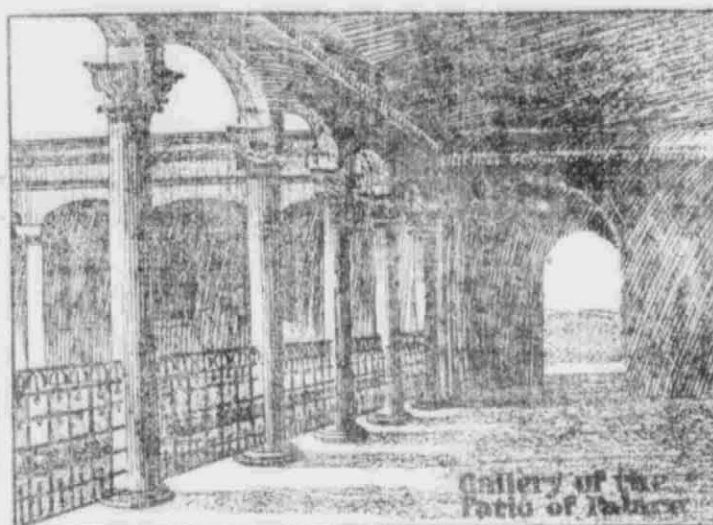
Pedro Alvarado



Facade of Palace



Rear of Alvarado's Palace



Gallery of the Palace

THE most widely discussed Mexican of today seems to be Pedro Alvarado. Pedro was born a peon, which is as near to being nothing as mortal man can be and still exist. He grew to manhood in the state of peonage and would have been shackled with his hopeless chains today if something hadn't happened.

Something did happen—Pedro struck it rich.

No uncle in India left him a fortune, his number in the national lottery did not come out at the head of the list, he did not secure a government contract—the lightning of good fortune struck him in a far more unlikely fashion.

An uncle—not from India, but of Mexico until he died and went to a better country—was the innocent promoter of Pedro's prosperity. Although a peon, that uncle believed himself to be the rightful owner of a piece of land. It was barren, rocky and covered with mesquite and the prickly pear.

He made Pedro his heir. For a peon

to inherit anything was a distinction seldom achieved. It mattered not that the inheritance was an alkali field in the Mexican desert. It made Pedro a man of property and gave him the opportunity to talk of "mía hacienda."

He did talk of "mía hacienda," talked of it so unintermittently that he became a byword among all the fellow peons with whom he talked. Pedro cared not at all for the gibes of his unbelieving neighbors. He even felt a little pity for them that they, too, were not active sharers of his happiness.

Presently he began to dream, but not in silence. The dreams that he permitted to dominate him waking or sleeping were so rosy and likewise so improbable that his fellow bondsmen ceased their mocking and shook their heads gravely as he passed them in the roadway.

"Pedro's inheritance has brought him evil," they whispered.

It had done nothing of the sort. On the contrary, it had brought him a world of comfort. Nothing that had ever come into his unpromising life had so stimulated him and made him realize that life was worth living.

So he went on dreaming and kept on talking. But he talked no longer of "mía hacienda," now he spoke confidently and continually of "mía mina."

Thus it was with Pedro Alvarado eight years ago, still a peon, toiling like a galley slave in the gold and silver mines of Mexico. He and his story were known in all the mining camps of Parral, in the state of Chihuahua. Not a man among them all had faith

in his dreams or regarded his inheritance as anything less than a huge joke.

He bore himself among his fellows with the air of a Croesus already arrived. He talked of sinking a shaft on his property, and many and fruitless were the attempts he made to secure a loan for that purpose. Nobody had money to waste on visionary Pedro Alvarado.

There is a Mexican saying to the effect that one may "bully fortune into compliance." Pedro hung on with the grip of a bulldog.

Strangest of all, he succeeded finally in mortgaging his "impossible" estate, obtaining money enough to begin the sinking of a shaft. Much time passed without bringing encouraging results. Pedro did not lose faith, but the others continued to be skeptical. The mortgagee was a wealthy Indian who had been induced to make the venture by a soothsayer of his tribe who had gone into a trance and prophesied great things for Pedro's mine.

Perceiving that there was "nothing doing," he too lost faith in his medicine man and threatened foreclosure.

This threat was also the occasion of great merriment. Foreclosure, eh? Cui bono? It was a possibility that disturbed no one but Pedro. He begged earnestly for a little more time, only enough to permit him to uncover the treasure which he believed to be there. The Indian capitalist was sulky and pronounced his ultimatum—"This day week, Señor Pedro!"

The time was perilously short, but it was sufficient. Three days later Pedro Alvarado could have borrowed all the ready money in the Parral district. He had brought to light the hidden secret of his contemned inheritance, and the glimpse of treasure unveiled was quite enough to remove the stigma of irresponsible dreamer from the name of Pedro Alvarado.

In a day Alvarado the peon became Alvarado the man of millions. It did

not take long for the story to penetrate the mining camps and not much longer to reach the outside world. In an incredibly short time it had passed the boundary of Mexico and was the property of everybody.

Gold and silver came bodily into view—so much of it that the men of the mining camps fairly gasped and rubbed their eyes as if with uncertainty. Although the estimates of his wealth were magnified a thousandfold, there was vastly more than Pedro could measure by any of the accepted standards. Those who profess to know declare that in a few months he drew on his inheritance to the extent of at least \$18,000,000.

Then Pedro began to do things. Emancipated peon that he was, he did not long remain ignorant of the new power which had come to him. All at once he awoke to a realization of the magnitude of the wealth which was pouring out daily from the great black hole he had made in his property. It filled him with a sudden terror to think of it. He must get rid of it before the accumulation crushed him, he told himself.

Once determined, he hit on a happy plan to carry it into effect. He built

a palace, a genuine, not to be doubted palace, in the Mexican desert. For a site he chose the center of the very poorest section of Parral, a region of huts and primitive thatched shanties.

Here, on the left bank of the Parral river, Pedro put some of his millions into a noble structure of stone and marble, a building that would serve admirably as a lodging for the proud and ostentatious in modern Christendom. It is massive in its proportions, its facade is a dream of architectural elegance, and its carving is as artistic as anything achieved by modern art. The great central doorway leads into a spacious patio, a telling feature of all Mexican houses of the better class. There is nothing at all deceptive about Pedro's palace—it is the real thing.

Grand as it was when completed, it brought little comfort to Pedro. Its rearing had exhausted only an inconspicuous portion of his constantly increasing riches. He put vast sums into rich furnishings, and when they were laid down at his door he did not know the meaning of them. The dining room of his palace became a veritable storehouse of costly and incongruous objects of art. He procured two massive dinner services of solid

metal, each worth more than \$35,000, but he has never served from them. Disdaining the rich damask made exclusively for his use by the most famous European looms, he covered his mahogany table with olefin and ate his cornmeal tortillas from dishes fashioned by the native workers in clay.

So much money that he didn't know what to do with it—that was the fate that overtook Pedro Alvarado. He believed that the source of it was inexhaustible, and it made him uncomfortable to think of it.

So he proceeded to give it away. He gave to everybody who could invent the slightest excuse for the asking, and frequently he made no point of being asked. He gave liberally to all his relatives, to those of his wife and to any man who professed to be his friend. No one was turned away empty handed.

The golden stream continued to flow irrepressibly. Pedro actually feared that it would cease this very day. He bought all the best seats in the Parral market. He built a grand hotel in the town, established a hospital for the poor and erected a splendid church for the parish of which he was a member. Every month he distributed more than \$25,000 to the needy.

Then he asked permission of President Díaz to pay the national debt. The old Mexican autocrat received Pedro's proposition with fine scorn. Pay the national debt indeed! Wipe out the obligations of the republic! What, sure, newfangled meddling with time honored institutions was this? Mexico out of debt! No, sir! No, sir!

A little later on a tourist in that part of the country said this to say of Alvarado:

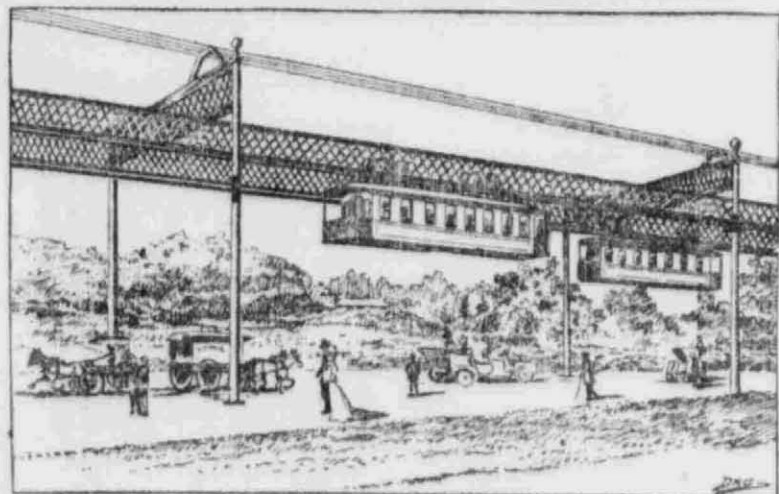
"I spent several weeks at Parral and saw Alvarado almost daily. The latter of every man, woman and child in that city seems to be contented in the man. In a few months his net profits from his mine, which is named the Palmilla, have aggregated \$1,500,000. He will not put his money in bank, but keeps it at home, where it is constantly guarded by a large force of armed men. He has from \$50,000 to \$100,000 on his person whenever he goes out on the street or elsewhere, and an armed guard of eight men always accompanies him. The members of his guard are dressed in fantastic Mexican costume, and Alvarado is always attired in the height of fashion. He pays a Mexican tailor a high salary to keep him clothed properly."

Pedro was learning the game. "Alvarado spends his money with a lavish hand. A few days ago a traveling jewelry and diamond peddler struck Parral with his wares. He was going along the street when he attracted the attention of Alvarado, who, with his armed guard, happened to be passing. He showed his goods to Alvarado, and the latter asked how much he would take for his whole outfit. The peddler replied that he would sell for \$15,000. Without any quibbling over the price asked, Alvarado drew out the money and came into possession of the cheap watches, ornaments and false diamonds. Alvarado seemed as pleased as a boy with a new top over the trade he had made."

And only recently, as a finale to this wonderful tale, comes the news that Pedro has succeeded in his effort—that he has acquired the trick of spending money more rapidly than he can make it—and that he has leased his magical Palmilla mine to a New York syndicate, which will see to it that no further violence is done to the goose that lays the golden eggs.

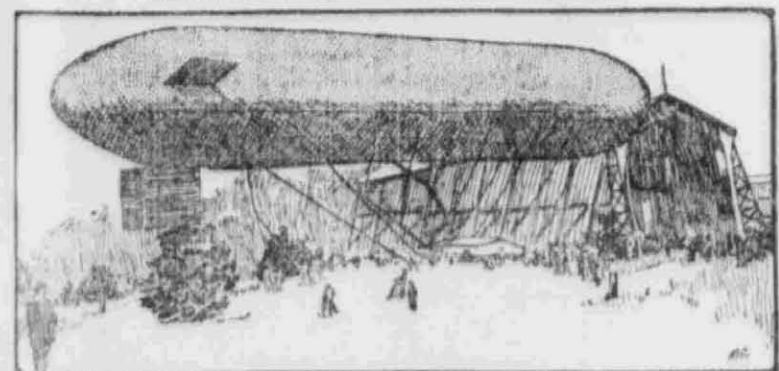
GEORGE P. HENRY.

NEW TYPE OF ELECTRIC SUSPENSION RAILWAY.



A company known as the American Suspension Railway company of Philadelphia, with a capital of \$5,000,000, has been formed recently whose object is the building of suspension railroads operated by electricity. The cars are to run on two rails, and each car is connected with a steel drop stairway, by means of which passengers may be taken on and let off between stations.

GERMANY'S NEW MILITARY AIRSHIP.



The picture shows a big airship acquired recently by the German war department. It is called the Parseval and is 160 feet in length and twenty-eight in diameter. The steering apparatus resembles the rudder of a ship, and the four-bladed propeller is driven by a ninety-horsepower gasoline motor.

Men Who Want Good Shoes

Should try us. All kinds, heavy or light weight shoes at prices everybody can afford to buy.

\$2 TO \$5

Let us tell you why our shoes are better.

Vincent's Queen Quality Store

110 MAIN STREET.

Ye Olde Tyme House Furnishings

Are very popular this season

Our stock contains a goodly assortment of these substantial and stylish pieces. They are made by craftsmen of the highest skill.

Old Mission types, are very artistic, built solidly and finished in Weathered and Fumed Oak.

NOTHING MORE SERVICEABLE OR HANDSOME WAS EVER CONSTRUCTED

Don't fail to inspect this line.

H. Dinwoodey Furniture Co.