

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

On train enroute between
El Paso, Texas, and San Antonio.
October 17, 1909.



My dearest Nellie:

I sent you a telegram to-day which merely records my progress; but I thought you might like to hear a little more detailed account of the trip, including the meeting with President Diaz of Mexico at El Paso.

After I dictated the letter to you at Albuquerque, they had a banquet at which a good many local celebrities were given an opportunity to talk, and especially a man named Fall, a Kentuckian and Texan and a New Mexican in experience. He seemed to be a man who liked to cultivate notoriety by saying something rude and out of the ordinary rules of courtesy, and I had to take him and spank him, which I think I did pretty successfully - at least everybody in the party seemed to think so, and it set him down where he ought to be politically. He has had aspirations for the Senate, upon the inauguration of statehood, but I don't think those aspirations are likely to be gratified.

From Albuquerque we came through to El Paso, stopping at eight o'clock in the morning for some little time at Las Cruces, where there was a very large crowd, and a collection of school children, as well as the pupils of a convent and of the so-called university. They had made great preparations, and I was glad therefore quickly to dress and to go out and talk to them.

DLC
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Reaching El Paso about nine o'clock, we had a ceremonious breakfast, at which no speeches were made. Then wearing a light grey tie and light grey gloves, I proceeded with my body guard to the Chamber of Commerce building, which had been decorated with a view to the reception of President Diaz. We had here congratulated a full regiment of Infantry, two squadrons of Cavalry (the three making a regiment) and two batteries of Artillery, under the command of a Brigadier-General. The town of El Paso has a population of about forty thousand, of whom perhaps six or seven thousand are Mexicans. It is a very enterprising place, and while in Texas, is really more connected with New Mexico than it is with Texas, and as it is the crossing place for the business between Mexico and the United States by rail, its business is assuming large proportions. The Chamber of Commerce is a very enterprising body. They took charge of our side of the reception.

Diaz arrived with his suite and with a small escort of his mountain guards who were gorgeously clad in helmets and feathers, and he himself had a uniform with decorations emblazoning his appearance, which quite outshone your husband's civil garb. The old man, who is said to be about eighty years old, is really most remarkable in point of agility, quickness of perception and dignity of carriage. There is great fear, and I am afraid a well-founded fear, that should he die, there will be a

revolution growing out of the selection of his successor, As Americans have about \$2,000,000 of capital invested in the country, it is inevitable that in case of a revolution or internecine strife we should interfere, and I sincerely hope that the old man's official life will extend beyond mine, for that trouble would present a problem of the utmost difficulty. I am not quite sure at whose instance the meeting was had, but I do know that I received a communication, perhaps directly from the old man, of an informal character, saying how glad he would be to have such a meeting brought about. He thinks, and I believe rightly, that the knowledge throughout his country of the friendship of the United States for him and his Government will strengthen him with his own people, and tend to discourage revolutionists' efforts to establish a different government.

Mack Dickinson, the Secretary of War, and Frank Hitchcock, the Postmaster-General, were with me to assist me in the reception. I had a private conversation with the old man through Mr. Creel, formerly Ambassador to the United States, who speaks English beautifully, and who is part American at any rate, and who was complimented at my suggestion that he act as interpreter in our confidential interview. I cannot be mistaken from every sign that General Diaz was very much gratified by the interview and the willingness of the United States to testify to its friendship for him. I returned the visit within twenty minutes or more, and was received in the Custom House of

the city of Juarez on the other side of the Rio Grande. I experienced no particular emotions in crossing from our territory into that of a foreign government and certainly encountered no danger. Reports of the presence of cranks, socialists and revolutionary people were rife, but Wilkie, the head of the Secret Service, was here with a number of agents, and everything was done which ought to have been done to protect us. Indeed I think there was probably more than enough, but all is well that ends well.

Returning from the visit, we had a military review of the United States troops and some of the state troops and civic bodies, and then I made a speech to an audience of perhaps five or six thousand people who had gathered in the park. Then I went back to the hotel and had a little lunch and went to bed and got one and a half hours sleep or more. Then I saw some Yale men and some Ohio people. The Ohio people gave me a sombrero of Mexican manufacture, which will hang upon the wall and form one of a number of reminders of this trip.

Then having put on evening dress, I went across the river again, and was received by President Diaz in the same place, but they had fitted up in the patois of the Custom House a most beautiful banquet hall, ornamented in admirable taste and having every appearance of a State salon. The President sat in a big chair on one side of the table, and I sat in a big chair just opposite him. On my right was the Minister of Fomento, and on my left Governor Creel. On Diaz' right was Secretary Dickinson, and

on his left the Postmaster General. The dinner was beautifully served and excellently cooked according to the French style. You will see the menu when I come home.

The Chamber of Commerce of El Paso took occasion, just before the dinner, to make a beautiful gift to us both, which I esteem as highly as anything that has come to me on the trip. They were two golden goblets, one properly inscribed for President Diaz and one for me, and each derives double value from its association with the other. This is the second goblet I have had presented to me on the trip, the first one being by the people of San Francisco. I have too a golden bell with which I opened the Gunnison Tunnel, and there are some other relics or mementoes.

Wilfley was here and tired me. He is as conceited and as bumptious as ever, and was very anxious to have me say a good word for him to Diaz, in order to facilitate his bringing of a claim for a mine which he hopes will be successful. I don't know anything of the justice of his claim, and I did not say anything to Diaz about it and don't intend to. Wilfley pressed himself forward when General Diaz and I withdrew after the dinner for a little private conversation, hoping that I might say something to Diaz about it, but I was blind and did not see him, or at least effected not to see his desire to have me present him to Diaz. He has the cheek of a government mule. I am getting really quite disgusted with him.

General Diaz had brought up all their plate and their

official carriages, which are handsome equipages, and he had his mounted body-guard of very showy dragoons, as well as some cavalry and infantry; but we had greatly more in number than he. I think the Mexican Government must have gone to great expense in preparation for the welcome, and certainly they manifested every possible pleasure at my coming. I am glad to have taken part in this event, which is unique in the history of the two countries, or indeed in the history of any country in connection with this. I am quite sure that the meeting will make for good in the relations between Mexico and ourselves, and in the strengthening of the power of the existing government there. I told President Diaz that I hoped he might live for a great many years, and that I looked forward when you and I got into private life, at the pleasure of visiting him in the City of Mexico. He seized upon this with avidity that indicated that he would be glad to carry out the proposition, and explained his great regret that you could not be with me at this time.

We left El Paso last night about nine o'clock, and we are now riding through the most God-forsaken part of Texas, hoping to reach San Antonio about half past seven tonight. I shall have a few short speeches to deliver on the way but nothing I hope to trouble me. The alkali dust is rather offensive and I breathed in a lot of it last night on the way. I had to tumble out of bed quite early this morning in order to make a speech to some people who

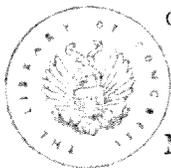
had gathered at Sanderson. I have a feeling that when there are any people who are willing to get up early to see me, they are entitled to see me. This sometimes breaks into my slumbers.

I am looking forward with great interest to meeting Charley and Annie and Louise at the ranch. I have heard nothing recently from them, but hope to get word at San Antonio. Of course I am aware of the mutability of their plans and shall not be surprised, though I shall be greatly disappointed, if I find that neither Charley nor Annie has come down.

Jack Hammond is with us still and will go as far as Charley's. Whether he will go down the Mississippi River I don't know. It is now the 17th which leaves but fourteen days remaining of this month, and ten days in November, which will bring me to the White House and to you. I believe the trip has been a success. It may be that I am not a good judge. It may be that it has not accomplished the purposes which I started out to accomplish. One can hardly tell in respect to this until some little time has elapsed. But whatever happens, it will be a delight to be with you again and to settle down more or less quietly under the roof of The White House.

With lots of love for Eleanor and Jhonny and a great deal for yourself,

*Your loving
Will*



Mrs. William H. Taft,
The White House,
Washington, D.C.