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Baseball and Bullfights in Vera Cruz

***Mexicans and American Sailors Make a Coney Island of the Beach
While Awaiting the Decision as to Peace or War***

Vera Cruz May 17.—National sports as indulged in by Mexicans and Yankees were tried out today and national sports of Mexicans lost the decision. They began early with a much advertised cock fight, the mains taking place in the cockpit of Senor Melendez.

I am proud to record that, with the exception of two lieutenants led astray into accompanying me, I was the only American who disgraced himself by attending, and I did not stop long. After watching one rooster chase another around the narrow circle of the pit, while three hundred Mexican true sports yelled, swore and bet, and finally seeing that rooster peck the other to death, our desire for blood was satisfied and we left.

Without giving details the cockfight can best be described in the words of a midshipman, who was told by his admiral to make a report on the morals and customs of the Fiji Islanders. "Morals none," he wrote, "customs horrid." It was like that.

From the cockpit we went to the ball game where the 4th Infantry met the engineers and took them into camp by a score of 6 to 4. We need not describe baseball. Mexico cannot weather its infinite variety, the tropics cannot put their spell upon its thrills, its punches, its years of suspense, its moments of action.

The shock that is felt when Corporal Tanner lines out a home run flashes down your spine, but with all its beloved and time-honored observances, such as bawling out the umpire and rising in the lucky seventh to stretch, the game possessed novel features. One was the sight from the bleachers of sixteen warships and the fact that a portion of the spectators wore bathing suits.

These were bluejackets from the bathing beach two hundred yards away. On Mexican ponies, clinging to the pommels, they galloped from the surf to the local Coogan's Bluff, or Deadhead Hill, and from that point of vantage, dripping with sea water, stripped to the waists, their bare toes stuck in stirrups, they made a picture of healthy, clean limbed masculinity that would have delighted Augustus St. Gaudens and William Muldoon.

Leaving them racing like cowboys over the downs and in the surf like porpoises fighting the waves, we went to the bull ring. Why is it whenever you leave a ball game something of intense interest happens? As we rode away we could hear the astonished, deep-throated roar as some one lashed out a three-bagger, the shouts of advice, entreaty, the yells of triumphant welcome as some one crossed the plate.

At the bull ring also they were shouting, yelling advice, hurling curses. These curses were directed at a trembling, terrified animal. From loss of blood, from weariness, the bull staggered and stumbled, his great head swinging, his eyes glazed. His only instinct was to avoid his tormentors.

In a panic, seeking to escape, he half pressed, half leaned, against the barrier. In gold, in pink, in green, his assailants stabbed at him with unskilled, angry blows. From these his blood leaped in jets, covering his flanks. In the blatant, glaring sunshine it flashed like a crimson mirror. He wanted only to be allowed to die. They wanted only something to torture.

We went back to the ball game.