

THE RESISTANCE OF THE TARAHUMARAS

By Carlos Basauri.

The feat realized by the two Tarahumare Indians, Tomas Zafiro and Leoncio Sanmiguel, who covered one hundred kilometres in nine hours and thirty seven minutes—the distance between Pachuca and Mexico City—, has aroused great admiration in the sport world as well as among men of science, who are trying to find an explanation for the tremendous physical resistance of the two representatives of the Tarahumare race.

It is necessary to state that although Zafiro and Sanmiguel have proven themselves to be admirable runners, they have not the championship of the Tarahumare Sierra. There are others there who have made greater records, among whom we may cite Patricio, "the Tiger of the Sierra," who at the beginning of this year, ran during three consecutive days near Norogachic, Chihuahua, covering nearly three hundred kilometers.

There is one factor that should not be forgotten, and it is that the Tarahumare is of slight development, insufficiently nourished (his food consisting almost exclusively of maize), and with certain marks of physical degeneracy as a result of his biological environment. Nevertheless, he has in his favor for the attainment of this exceptional energy, a constant training, for the Tarahumares, as we know, occupy a counterfort of the Sierra Madre in the State of Chihuahua. On account of the very formation of this region and of the primitive life that they lead, they find themselves obliged constantly to run enormous distances; sometimes in the winter to look for warmer places in the gorges and lowlands and at others to devote themselves to sowing their fields, which consist of small widely scattered parcels of cultivable land in the sierra.

We may add to the foregoing that the Tarahumares are very fond of sports. From childhood they begin to exercise in speed races; ball, a game resembling golf, el "Kusiki," consisting of throwing rods at a distance. In this they show high skill, and also in hunting, which they practice as a sport, as well as to satisfy necessities. They are also very skillful in shooting darts.

Something very curious among these Indians and which is another proof of their enormous resistance, is the form in which they capture deer, abundant in the sierra. The Tarahumare is truly notable for finding and following the tracks of the different wild animals. In places where a white man could not possibly find the slightest traces of the foot-prints of the animal, the Indian notes them rapidly, follows until he localizes the deer. He may continue the pursuit for hours and even days, succeeding in this way in exhausting the deer, and when he is about to fall, worn out, the Indian takes him by the horns and kills him.

It appears that fatigue constitutes a pleasure for the Tarahumares; all of their activities are a manifestation of their notable endurance. In their dances, the Tutuguri, the Yúmari, which are deprecatory, and in the Mataachines, that take place in connection with religious festivals, they also exhibit resistance. The two first dances generally last from sunset until sun-