

Pancho Villa - General Who Twists Lion's Tail and Plucks the Eagle's Feathers.

With the orders to the American fleet and the possibility of the United States occupying Tampico and Vera Cruz, the situation in Mexico becomes abnormal. The internal wars, revolution and counter-revolution, are merely the normal condition of the country. Since 1821, when the Mexican nation first appeared, there have been more than 200 so-called revolutions and thirty times the Government has been violently overthrown. Huerta was recognised by Britain, but apparently the United States placed more reliance on Carranza, the leader of the Constitutionalists. But though Carranza is nominally the leader, it is General Villa, whom "The Times" military correspondent described as a born soldier, that leads the revolutionary forces.

Murder.

It is true that hard names break no bones, but that does not prevent Americans using strong expressions about Villa. Professor A. Bushnell Hart, of Harvard University, writes in the "New York Times" that General Villa is "a man who combines the lofty qualities of a professed bandit and train robber, a safebreaker, and a captor of a nunery. A man who habitually, deliberately, and in cold blood, kills fellow Mexicans who have opposed him, musket in hand like men, and who have surrendered. There is no use in mincing words."

In international law, in ordinary morals, in the sight of Almighty God, that shocking business is nothing else but plain, despicable murder. Murder without any military advantage; murder for the sake of killing! One of his latest achievements has been to order the homicide of two hundred

men who had thrown down their arms on the plea that unless he shot them they would form up again, automatically arm themselves, and attack him in the rear. Villa's plea is that of the bulldog, that he must eat the rabbit because otherwise that animal will bite his tail off. He has as much capacity for civilised government as a bull in a ring.

The Tiger.

The French papers consider Villa not quite a villain. According to the "Temps," "He can organise victory, create an army out of a ragged horde, and stand gloriously at bay." The "Matin" also finds much that is worthy of admiration, and the "Figaro" has an admirable study of the man and his life.

A translation appears in "Current

Opinion," from which I take the following. There is a genuine tiger in this man, says the writer, a something feline and, odd as it must appear, even feminine. The Indian mothers of Mexico have handed their savagery down to their sons, their suppleness going with it and their cat-like furies and their indirections.

Porfirio Diaz had an Aztec mother, like Huerta, and those men can be cool, calculating. Villa is on the mother's side pure native Indian. Hence his hopeless illiteracy, his moments of blind rage, his incapacity to act rationally instead of instinctively. He has the blood-lust of the tiger when brought to bay and the vigour of that animal in aggression. There is a suggestion of the tiger in him as he eats,

holding a bone with two fingers and crunching it ferociously.

He is absolutely incomprehensible to a European mind, but to his followers he is an idol. The peasantry feel that he is one of them, understands them, has suffered their wrongs. He is alien to the well-bred Spanish stock which has ruled the land in the capital for so many years. Villa creates no army in a German "pipe-clay sense" with its disciplines and drills. He heads mobs, every member of which obeys him implicitly.

Early Years.

The early years of Francisco Villa were spent on a farm in the State of Durango and he was born in a neighbouring mountain village. He was given a pious Catholic training. Without acquiring the alphabet or arithmetic—Villa's head is impervious to ideas—he grew into such a vigorous youth that when he was eighteen he cultivated the fifty acres of his patrimony with diligence. The family comprised besides himself his native mother, an aged grandparent and a sister of great beauty.

acted as a crusader. The Madero rising afforded Villa his opportunity to assume a recognised place in Mexican society. He had married and matured, and he was sick of sleeping in the open air, of killing rurales, of robbing haciendas. The Madero policy transformed the bandit into a hero of the revolution.

A Pen Picture.

In this, his thirty-sixth year, Villa's hair and stubby moustache show a trace of grey. The dark eyes, like the wide nostrils, suggest a hot temper. He is excitable, good-natured, slovenly, and disposed to moods of piety and drunkenness. The strong jaw, even, yellow teeth, heavy ear and swartly complexion, proclaim a genuine mestizo type.

He is quite unteachable in the pedagogical sense, and knows only his half-bred Mexican-Spanish, with a few words of English picked up in public bars. His figure is clean-cut, and his voice raucous. He is a patriot, and as such is revered by his followers.

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Francisco, known familiarly as "Pancho," went about in flimsy cotton drawers and a wide sombrero, ploughing, herding, hunting. His diversions were the cock-fight and an occasional spree in the village on the fierce local intoxicant which no European can taste without sickness. The life was hard, rude, but active.

Even then, says the "Figaro," the lad was referred to in the local jargon as "the tiger." The only money he ever saw was the fruit of an expedition over the mountains when he drove cattle to market for the neighbouring ranch owner. He had never seen a book or worn a pair of real trousers. He saved money for two years before he was rich enough to buy a gun. He slept in a blanket on the ground. He killed his first man when he was twenty.

His Sister's Honour.

Returning from a cattle expedition to the market town over the mountains, Pancho learned one day that his beautiful sister had disappeared. The girl had many suitors. Suspicion fell upon a jefe politico who held sway far and wide as an instrument of the Diaz despotism. Pancho sought the village priest at once. He assembled a band of kindred spirits. He loaded his weapon bought with so much thrift. The pursuit over the mountains developed unexpected qualities in Pancho. It was the crisis in his career, the episode which made him what the world has come to recognize—Mexico's strongest military leader. The couple were caught in a week. The girl had been dealt with as spoil of war. The priest married her off-hand to the magistrate. The bridegroom, as the only official available with legal powers to do such thing, was told to sign a death certificate. Pancho stood his sister's husband against a wall and shot him dead. The priest had given absolution and the corpse was interred with the rites of the church. The widow, her brother, the priest and the members of the expedition retraced their way across the mountains and the old life on the farm was resumed.

A Price on His Head.

For a native Mexican to kill a magistrate was a thing unheard of under the regime of Diaz and the officials were furious; a price of 10,000 dollars was put on Villa alive or dead. For fifteen years he roamed the mountains. His companions were half-breeds. His food was what he could pick up or beg or steal. He slept in caves and lurked in thickets. There were times when he dared not fire a shot lest the pursuers discover his whereabouts.

At last he turned bandit openly. He stopped travellers on the highway. He invaded farms by night. He took cattle. His fights with the rurales made him a famous character for miles around. Every time he killed a man he made a mark in the gun he bore night and day. In time no less than forty-three nicks in the weapon made it as notorious as the man who bore it. His hiding-places were known to scores, yet none betrayed him, and at last he found a friend in Raoul Ma-

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