

MOB RULE in MEXICO

Experiences of American in Bandit Haunts

How Would-be Leaders Are Struggling for Supremacy Lost by Diaz—How The Peon, The American, The Britisher and the Spaniard Alike Pay for the Support Vandilism.



American Women in Mexico



Americans in Mexico



Typical Vegetation in Western Mexico

The Mexican Cowboy in Mexico

American Section of a Mexican Frontier Town



Bandits Rounding Up Hounds

(I. T. Griffith, the writer of this article, is a Portlander, who was driven out of Mexico a few months ago after several years' residence there. He was forced to flee, leaving his property.)

THE terror of mob rule can only be realized by the person who has lived through a siege in which the life of a man is worth only the small price placed upon it by a horde of heartless bandits; where movable property is subject to confiscation or destruction at any time, and where honest and disinterested persons are forced to contribute liberally to the support of the vandilism which is wrecking the land and the prospective prosperity.

These are the conditions I found in Mexico, the land of "poco tiempo" (after while), and these are the conditions which are holding the Nation to the south in a grip of terror. It is this state of affairs which has brushed millions of American and foreign capital away with a cruel and careless hand, and has sent hundreds of peace-loving Americans to the States to live in poverty, while their Mexican holdings, representing in most cases years of saving and hard work, are either crumbling from neglect or falling from the blows of vandilism.

At this time there seems no longer to be any pretense of honest warfare in Mexico. There is a rebellion separate and apart from that which was created by honest people for the overthrow of Porfirio Diaz, the iron-handed monarch. It is the rebellion of outlaws, bandits and criminals for the overthrow of the successor of Diaz and for the establishment of what the natives call peon "libertad." Just what the peon "libertad" means I am unable to say. It is a grave question whether it is a struggle for the liberty and dominance of bandits and outlaws or of honest citizens. It would seem that the bandit class of peon is the one seeking the upper hand in the name of "libertad."

My observations, based upon a study of the conditions and the experience of going through part of the siege, led me to believe that the Mexican people were all with Madero. Perhaps they would have been with any one who stood for the overthrow of Diaz. The better class, I think, wanted a republic, not in name but in fact.

Madero had a strong following with which to overthrow Diaz, but he was not satisfied with that. He wanted to be certain of victory, so he augmented his ranks by opening the jails in every town he captured and releasing the criminals, including the worst of bandits and outlaws who had lodged in

the prisons during 20 years of struggle against lawlessness in Mexico under the reign of Diaz. With these men he augmented his forces and set about to bring to a reality his dreams of castles. It must have been that he forgot to dream on the results of his work of releasing criminals, because in doing this he built up a force that later militated against him and has caused his throne to rock and his reign to be shaken with uncertainty.

No Prisoners Are Taken.

When the glory of fighting seemed about to terminate with the victory of Madero, these men were not willing to set to honest toil. They resolved to secure a new ruler and in that way continue the lawlessness to which they were addicted. They collected in small bands led by some of the worst characters from the rebel army who were fighting, not in the interest of "libertad," but for the love of fighting and vandilism. These are the bands which are operating in many parts of Mexico today, striking to the very heart of that nation with robberies, murders, thefts and vandilism.

Their operations are always very carefully planned and executed. Never will they meet the federal troops unless they far outnumber them, and never do they take any great chances. When they get in a fight they usually kill every foe, taking no prisoners. Their practices are of the most atrocious nature. It is a rare case where the outlaw bands are satisfied to take the Rurales' horses, saddles, blankets, uniforms and supplies and allow the federal and Zapatistas, as they are called, are rare at present, because the latter are always well mounted and armed and can take a town and everything in it and be gone before the federals can arrive in sufficient force to oppose them.

The Zapatistas, during the Madero revolution, were rebels in the true sense of the word. Private property, except for horses and arms, were not molested. This, of course, was during the Madero rebellion. The "valles" did not amount to much, because the government valuation of property was small. For example, a friend of mine on a plantation adjoining one I occupied had three saddle horses ranging in value from 100 to 150 pesos each. These animals were taken, along with their saddles and bridles, which were worth about 50 pesos each. The "valle" issued by the leader of the Zapatistas to the gov-

ernment was for 25 pesos for each horse and outfit.

However, other property was not molested by the rebels or federalists, and all persons not Mexicans were exempt from contributions to the cause of the rebellion. During all of Madero's revolution I rode through the country at will and had no trouble. I was treated with far more respect and kindness by the rebels I met than by the federalists.

But now the conditions have changed completely around and the land is one of unsafety and uncertainty for every person, American, Britisher, German, Frenchman, Spaniard and Mexican included. This state of affairs is due to some big mistakes made by Madero, which gave the so-called Madero-Zapatistas a cause for starting a new revolution under the name of "libertad." These rebels have assumed the name Vasquistas-Zapatistas. Under their methods there is no pretense of honest warfare. At first they confined

left to rot or be destroyed by vandilism. An indication of the deplorable conditions might be recited in the case of men who are working on the farms. Payday, or "raya," was held every Saturday night, at which time the express companies would deliver money to the employers and the men would be paid off. Vandilism put a stop to this practice to such an extent that the express companies refused to carry money into the country and then the farmers or plantation owners faced a serious problem. It was found very difficult to get several hundred dollars to a plantation for each week's payday, as there was always a gang of outlaws hanging around eager to attack a money train. The farmers devised all kinds of schemes to secure the money. It would be hauled in boxes packed as mill supplies or in sacks carried in the form of bundles of grain bags.

When the money got to the plantation there arose the problem of paying the men off at a time when there were no Zapatistas around. Seldom did a week go by while I was in Mexico during the present reign of terror that the plantation was not visited by a band of outlaws numbering from 10 to 100 men on horses. We always treated them with courtesy, as to do otherwise was the same as suicide. I was lucky usually in finding some one of the band who had worked for me and he would always put in a good word which helped very materially in the outcome of the visit to the plantation.

Think They Can Whip U. S.

Upon a few occasions, however, bands came to our place which we did not know and upon such occasions we lost from one to three saddle horses and outfits. But each time we were successful in getting them back by applying to some of the bigger leaders of the bands whom we knew. Upon one occasion one of my best horses was returned after two weeks of hardships as a Zapatista mount. I had given up hope of ever getting this horse and naturally was greatly surprised one day when I saw a Zapatista ride up to the stable and turn the horse, saddle and bridle over to the stable boy. The rider was drunk, as most of the Zapatistas usually are, but I thanked him and wrote a letter to his leader

I often talked to members of the outlaw rebel bands, and found that they expected victory. They are fighting for Gomez for President and Emilio Zapata for Minister of War. The latter can neither read nor write. The so-called rebels have no doubt that they will succeed in overthrowing the government. They say that they may be delayed a little in their work if they have to stop and fight the United States, in case that country intervenes. I asked one Zapatista if he thought they had musk-loading rifles. But it is different now," he said, as he ran his hand down the shining barrel of a graceful pistol at his side and pointed to a Collins machete on the other side of his belt and a 30-20 rifle of the latest model swung on his back. I laughed a dry laugh and let the argument drop at that point.

An experience we had soon after this might be related as a good example of the method under which warfare is being conducted in Mexico. We had just succeeded in getting a payroll to the plantation in boxes shipped from a nearby town as mill supplies, and were counting the money on a table preparatory to paying off the men, when ten Zapatistas whirled around the corner on horseback and pulled up right in front of the cabin. There was no time to hide the money, so I went to the door and invited the leader and two or three of his officers in. They declined, but, instead, grouped around the window and watched us counting the money.

I knew the leader well, for when he worked for me some months before this he had taken sick and I had doctoring him and, not only saved his life, but had paid his brother \$2.50 a week for six weeks to feed him. For that reason he was under moral obligations to me and, fortunately, he seemed to realize this fact. We talked with the visitors about 15 minutes and learned that they were in need of money. Believing that the best thing for me to do under the circumstances was to offer them some funds rather than have them take everything we had in the house, I asked the leader if I could not contribute a few "pesitos." They all expressed a willingness, and I walked over to the money table and picked up a stack of 15 pesos and handed them to the leader.

Leader Killed for Decency.

I noticed that his followers were not pleased with the size of the contribution, but in their natural outward politeness they thanked me. At that moment I looked down to the stable and saw a bunch of the visitors saddling their horses. Some of the scenes are too horrible to describe.

The Americans in Mexico have long been wondering what Washington is going to do. They have been wondering what is going to be the fate of the Monroe Doctrine. There is no question about the seriousness of the conditions. The people on the border realize the conditions because they get the reports direct and they are all in favor of intervention. The Americans and foreigners in Mexico demand intervention.

What will Uncle Sam do? Will he stand idly by and see millions of Mexicans know the conditions and I think it is only a matter of time before our soldiers will be in the field bringing to an end the reign of terror which Mexico cannot end of its own accord because of her would-be leaders who are dreaming of castles.

I thanked them all and they rode off. I could see, however, that there was a feeling of dissatisfaction among some of the men.

I lost no time in paying off my men, for I didn't dare take any chances on the bandit gang's returning. A few days later I learned from another bandit gang that the leader of the former gang had been shot from behind by his own men because he had not taken all of the money and three or four saddle horses. When they were at my ranch they wanted to take the money, but not one had the nerve to take things in his own hands until they had talked among themselves and found that they were all of the same opinion. This is a sample of the treachery of the Zapatistas. When they are treated with courtesy there is no telling what they are thinking or planning.

Depredations Are Many.

One day just a short time ago after I had finished with my crops I decided to go to a nearby town, wanted to go on horseback, but knew that if I did I would lose my horse and saddle, so I took the train. This train, as is customary, had about 20 federal troops in a rear coach to protect the train and passengers from the bandit gangs. On arriving at the town I started down the road on foot and had walked but a short distance when a bunch of about 100 Zapatistas dashed by me, bound for the depot to attack the train. I stood by the road as they passed with their rifles in their hands. Fortunately I knew the leader and I was not interfered with.

They were a little too late for the train, which circumstance probably saved the lives of the federal troops and the pocketbooks of the passengers on the train. The bandit gang, according to their habit, would have slaughtered every soldier on the train and possibly some of the passengers. Of the hundred Zapatistas I should say 70 had rifles, pistols and swords and two or three belts full of cartridges each. All were exceedingly well mounted.

They remained in the town about two hours and then went down the road to a nearby pasture, where they killed a steer and held a barbecue. They did not ask the owner of the steer for permission to eat it, but simply helped themselves.

There seems to be no end to these depredations. To the people who live here in the states and get only the occasional reports from the places where news can be sent out, a very small part of the story of crime and hardships which people of all nations are suffering is known. It is in the remote districts where the outlaws have the way that the trouble is raging. I have seen trees with all the way from one to a dozen bodies dangling from ropes. Some of the scenes are too horrible to describe.

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