

"Villa---Man of Destiny" And The Mexican Problem

A Series of First-Hand Facts by John Reed, The Metropolitan's Special Correspondent.

Chapter I.

Villa's Genius for War.

In the field, Villa has had to invent an entirely original method of warfare, because he never had a chance to learn anything of accepted military strategy, and in that he is without the possibility of Mexico has ever had. His method of fighting is astonishingly like Napoleon's. Secrecy, quickness of movement, the adaptation of his plans to the character of the country and of his soldiers—the value of intimate relations with the rank and file, and of building up a tradition among the enemy that his army is invincible and that he himself bears a charmed life—these are his characteristics. He knew nothing of accepted European standards of strategy or of discipline. One of the troubles of the Mexican Federal army is that its officers are thoroughly saturated with conventional military theories. The Mexican soldier is still mentally at the end of the eighteenth century. He is above all a loose, individual guerrilla fighter. Red tape simply paralyzes the machine. When Villa's army goes into battle it is not hampered by salutes, or rigid respect for officers, or trigonometrical calculations of the trajectories of projectiles, or theories of the percentage of hits in a thousand rounds of rifle fire, or the function of cavalry, infantry and artillery in any particular position, or rigid obedience to the secret knowledge of its superiors. It reminds me of the ragged Republican army that Napoleon led into Italy. It is probable that Villa doesn't know much about these things himself. But he does know that guerrilla fighters cannot be driven blindly in platoons around the field in perfect step, that men fighting individually and of their own free will are braver than long volleying rows in the trenches, lashed to it by officers with the flat of their swords. And when the fighting is fiercest—when a ragged mob of fierce brown men with hand bombs and rifles rush the bullet swept streets of an ambushed town—Villa is among them, like any common soldier. From "Francesco Villa—The Man of Destiny," in the June Metropolitan.

Chapter II.

In considering the objects of the Mexican Revolution, we must first understand what kind of people are revolting. In Mr. Hamilton Ryfe's inaccurate book, "The Real Mexico," he says that this is a revolution of the middle class, because Francisco Madero led it. This is a gross misstatement of fact. There is no Mexican middle class. Eighty per cent of the population are peons, and ten per cent more are Spanish aristocrats and Mexican landowners of almost pure

Spanish blood. The remaining ten per cent consists of professionals and small businessmen, mostly dominated by foreign ideas and foreign employers. The revolution is simply and purely a revolution of the peons, which has continued, more or less intermittently, for four hundred years, and this particular outbreak was described and predicted ten years before Madero ever thought of leading it.

You will say that if eighty per cent of the population opposed only ten per cent—for the middle class, except for individuals, has taken no part in the revolution—it is strange that they couldn't get what they wanted. But the peons were not opposed by only ten per cent of the Mexican people. They were opposed by the entire civilized world. Porfirio Diaz systematically looted the Mexican people for thirty-five years. In the first place, he and the cientifico party which surrounded him sold the national resources of the republic to foreigners on the pretext that foreign capital was needed to develop the country, and pocketed the prize. In other words, President Diaz sold the Mexican people to the highest bidder.

But, after all, the cheating of the people out of their rights and their national heritage did not rankle so deeply and so long as did the stealing of their lands. Slowly and methodically, the great estates created originally by the Spanish land grants absorbed the communal fields around the villages, the open ranges and the small farms. By the land law of 1896 passed by the influence of Diaz himself, all lands in the republic not secured by legal title were thrown open to denunciation by any one who wished; and since most of the small farms were worked by peons whose families had worked them sometimes for four generations, without any question of their tenure—too illiterate to have ever heard titles—it was an easy job for the land grabbers. With the aid of Federal soldiers thousands of peons were evicted from their homes, with no choice left but to become virtual slaves on the big haciendas, and no hope for the future. For instance, in the San Carlos district, Chihuahua state, four hundred farmers were ordered to leave their homes by Don Luis Terraza, who already owned 15,000,000 acres of land. When they refused to do so, two regiments of soldiers were sent against them, and they were shot down in cold blood. I could give twenty such cases, but the battle of San Carlos was "the shot heard round the world." The news traveled all over the republic like lightning, and five years later the government of Porfirio Diaz fell forever.—John Reed in the June Metropolitan.

(To be Continued.)

WHAT IS FEMINISM

By Miriam Russell.

There is constant talk these days of "The Feminist Movement," and great confusion as to what it means. There are those who shy from it because they think it includes "free love." There are those who think it is confined to militant suffragism, and those who think it means working mothers and neglected babies, or strong-minded men hating with no babies at all. What is Feminism, anyhow?

Less than forty-eight hours after the taking of Vera Cruz by American marines, I was present in Cooper Union, New York, at a great mass meeting. Hastily arranged, advertised only by obscure paragraphs in two or three newspapers and by a flaming poster on the walls of the hall, the "Women's Meeting to Protest Against War" had attracted an immense and eager audience, about half men, half women.

The speeches were all by women. Diverse in character and appeal as the personalities of the speakers, yet they all struck repeatedly the keynote of what has been called "The Larger Feminism." The resolutions adopted to send to President Wilson struck it still more strongly: "Whereas, since time began, women have been devoting their best efforts to the saving of human life, it is eminently fitting that at this crucial time in our history we should protest in burning words against the tragic folly of involving this country in war with Mexico."

Strongly, too, was it struck in the decision of the meeting to form a permanent committee to pass the tidings of that meeting to women all through the country with the purpose of repeating the women's meeting of protest against war in every town and hamlet throughout the land.

It is not new that women have tried to protect and conserve life; it is not new that they have risen to do their duty as they saw it, even at a sacrifice. But there is one thing in all this that is new:

It is the consciousness of women that they are half the world. It is their consciousness that individual duties no longer suffice in fulfilling woman's destiny as half humanity—social duties must now be added to them. It is no longer

a matter of the woman's instinctive protection of the life of her own young; it is a deliberate recognition of herself as protector and conservator of the lives of the nation.

And it is the demand that all ways be open to her in order that she may in her housekeeping of the cities, in her fight against child labor, in her war against war, against filth and against disease, do her work worthily and successfully.

There is no hint in the writings or speeches of the real leaders of the feminist movement in substituting a woman's world for man's. But there is an unceasing demand for woman's right to take her place as the co-operator of man, for freedom to do her larger work as woman.

It is for this that she asks a voice in the councils of the nation.

Woman alone, say the feminists, does not make a complete or successful home. Man alone has distinctly failed at conserving the human interests of the outside world. But when man and woman walk hand in hand in freedom, equality and comradeship, when each aids instead of hindering the other in doing the great work for which each has been fitted by nature, then only will the race march forward as it should towards goodness, happiness and prosperity.

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