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The Trouble Makers of Mexico

THE commonest, as well as the gravest, mistake in human intercourse is that very human weakness of creating all other individuals in one's own image. What "I like" I can see no reason but what everybody else should like. What is good for me is good for you. If I am fascinated by a certain book, I am astounded to learn that you do not like that book. If I find vegetarianism provocative of good health in me, ergo, it will be provocative of good health in you. If black coffee produces sleeplessness in me, I am appalled when you drink two cups of black coffee in the evening.

When my wife and I fall out, it is because I ignore the fact that she feels, reasons, and acts in ways different from my ways. She, likewise, makes the same mistake about me. Her entire family and mine may fail to patch the matter up, and, in the end, a judge, equipped with wisdom of the race embodied in our law, may divorce us because we are different from each other—incompatible, in short. I once knew the dearest, sweetest, and most sympathetic of women, who was unable, when she lacked in appetite, to comprehend that anybody else could be hungry.

Useless Tragedy

IN THE same way different groups of people, of the same race and country, fail to understand one another. The cowboys of the open range never understood the settler with his barbed-wire fences. The East does not understand California to-day in her attitude on the Japanese question. The East thinks California is like the East and that Californians are like Easterners. In brief, the East recreates California in her own image.

Since such mistakes of understanding are common among groups of people of the same breed and country, it is patent that deeper and more disastrous mistakes may be made among people of different races dwelling in different countries.

The chief cause of our misunderstanding to-day of the Mexicans is that we have created them in our own American image. With a comfortable sense of fairness we have put ourselves inside the Mexicans, along with our morality, our democracy, and all the rest of our points of view, and accepting therefore that the Mexicans should think, feel, and act just as we would under similar circumstances, we are shocked to find out that they won't do anything of the sort. Instead of having our eyes opened by this cardinal error, we proceed to reason that their conduct should be made to become like our conduct, and that we should treat them and deal with them as if they were still just like us, with a history behind them similar to ours, with institutions similar to ours, and with an ethic similar to ours.

Here, in the portals of Vera Cruz, the talk about Mexico and Mexicans buzzes high all day long and far into the night. Never was there a more animated and indefatigable debating society. One listens to the talk and wonders what it is all about, what bearing it has on the

situation. I, for one, cannot comprehend how it is germane whether Madero was a patriot or a grafter; whether Huerta is a heroic figure of an Indian or a lunatic black Nero; whether Huerta murdered Madero or Madero committed suicide; whether the Huerta government should have been recognized by the United States long ago or that United States intervention should have taken place long ago.

What I see, with all the talk of little things filling my ears, is a torn and devastated Mexico, in which twelve million peons and all native and foreign business men are being injured and destroyed by the silly and selfish conduct of a few mixed breeds. I see a great, rich country, capable of supporting in happiness a hundred million souls, being smashed to chaos by a handful of child-minded men playing with the tragic tools of death made possible by modern mechanics and chemistry.

A Republic Where Nobody Votes

THESE child-minded men are playing with the tools of giants. It is like a family of small children playing with sticks of dynamite on the front porch, in the basement, and up in the attic of their dwelling. One can see a hurry call sent into the nearest police station by the good citizens of the neighborhood for a squad of police to take the dynamite away from the children.

From garret to basement the dwelling of Mexico is being torn to pieces by the dynamite in the hands of the contending factions. The stay-at-home American listens to the slogans uttered by the various leaders of this anarchy, makes the mistake of conceiving the leaders in his own image and of thinking that "Liberty," "Justice," and a "Square Deal" mean the same to them that they mean to him.

Nothing of the sort. In the four centuries of Spanish and Mexican rule, liberty, justice, and the square deal have never existed. Mexico is a republic in which nobody votes. Its liberty has ever been construed as license. Its justice has consisted of an effort at equitable division of the spoils of an exploited people. That even thieves' honor did not obtain among these thieves is shown by the numerous revolutions and dictatorships. In a country where a man is legally considered guilty of a crime until he proves himself innocent, justice must mean an entirely different thing from what it means to an American. And so it is with all the rest of the bombastic and valorous phrases in the vocabulary of the Mexican.

Now the foregoing must not be taken as a denial of any right or good in the people of Mexico. On the contrary, the great mass of the Mexicans have nothing to do with the matter at all; but, being different from the American, being unversed and uninterested in the affairs of government, they sit supinely back and let the petty handful of leaders despoil them and the country.

Proclivities

ALSO, there have even been isolated cases of leaders, such as Juarez, to go no further, who were animated by ideals somewhat resembling our own. In the Madero revolution there were similar men. The test of the matter is the whole matter, and the whole matter is that no measure of liberty, justice, and the square deal has been achieved in all Mexico in the last four hundred years.

There is all the difference in the world between fighting and government. Anybody and anything can fight. Dogs and cats, centipedes and scorpions fight. Fighting is a very primitive sort of exercise. Governing is a high achievement, especially governing with peace and honesty

and fair dealing, and this is something which the Mexicans have never succeeded in doing from the day they broke away from Spain's palsied grasp.

After the fall of Iturbide, in 1824, a republican constitution was adopted and promulgated. In the forty-seven years between 1821 and 1868 the form of government was changed ten times, federal republics, central republics, and dictatorships alternating one with another. In those forty-seven years over fifty persons succeeded one another as presidents, dictators, and emperors. One authority states that in the same period there were three hundred attempts, more or less important, at revolution. Clearly, the Mexicans have demonstrated a penchant for fighting, but what they have not demonstrated is the high ability requisite for governing.

The Turbulent Element

EVEN the deeper read and widely traveled American, able somewhat to refrain from seeing Mexico in his own image and in his image of his own country, is guilty of the error of seeing Mexico in the image of a Latin country. The people of Mexico are not Latins. They are Indians. And they are Indians, only somewhat resembling the Indians of the United States. They are not merely a different tribe. They are a different race of Indians.

Sixty-five per cent of the inhabitants are pure Indians; 15 percent are pure Spanish, Americans, English, and other foreigners. The remaining 20 per cent are mixed Indian and Spanish. It is this mixed 20 per cent that, according to the stay-at-home American notion, constitutes the Mexican, and practically the totality of the Mexican population.

And it is just precisely this 20 per cent half-breed class that foment all the trouble, plays childishly with the tools of giants, and makes a shambles and a chaos of the land. These "breeds" represent neither the great working class, nor the property-owning class, nor the picked men of the United States and Europe who have given Mexico what measure of exotic civilization it possesses. These "breeds" are the predatory class. They produce nothing. They create nothing. They aim to possess a shirt, ride on a horse, and "shake down" the people who work and the people who develop.

These "breeds" do politics, issue *pronunciamentos*, raise revolutions or are revolutionized against by others of them, write bombastic untruth that is accepted as journalism in this sad, rich land, steal pay rolls of companies, and eat out hacienda after hacienda as they picnic along on what they are pleased to call wars for liberty, justice, and the square deal.

They claim the government of Mexico is theirs, these gentlemen with shirts, on the backs of stolen horses. And government, to them, means just precisely the license to batten upon the labor and industry of the country. The trouble is, so lacking are they in the ability for government, that they cannot maintain for any length of time the battening government of their dreams. They continually quarrel over the division of the spoils, and fight among themselves for a monopoly of the governmental battening privilege.

Devoid Even of Thieves' Honor

AS I have said before, they are devoid even of thieves' honor. They cannot trust one another. They cannot believe one another. For once, each correctly conceives the next one in his own image. Aware, in his heart of hearts, that he wants nothing less than 100 per cent of the swag, that only by accident could he ever be guilty of telling the truth to a fellow robber, that he

is continually bent upon overreaching and double-crossing his fellow comrades of looters, he cannot expect anything else from his fellows.

To paraphrase Kipling, the consistency of these half-breeds is to know no shred of consistency. Because of this they are not even successful robbers. Tammany could give them cards and spades in the game they play and win out against them hands down.

They are brave on occasion. But they are not courageous. Their honor and valor reside in their tongues. They are turncoats from moment to moment. They will dine in the homes of their gringo friends one evening, and, before daylight, go gunning for their gringo friends and for the pay rolls and gold watches of their gringo friends.

They are what the mixed breed always is—neither fish, flesh, nor fowl. They are neither white men nor Indians. Like the Eurasian, they possess all the vices of their various commingled bloods and none of the virtues.

It is impossible for the average American to understand them. Honor is one thing to them, another thing to an American; so likewise with truth, probity, and sincerity. There is no comprehending them by the rules of conduct and forms of reasoning habitual to the American. As a sample of this, I relate the following Federal explanation of the killing of six Americans at San Pedro, in the State of Chiapas.

A Topsy-Turvy Attitude

THIS is the way the Mexican authorities explain the mishap: When the Americans took possession of Vera Cruz, the authorities in Chiapas, fearful for the safety of the handful of American small farmers because of the inflamed condition of the populace, sent a detachment of *rurales* to rescue them. When the Americans saw the armed body of *rurales* approaching, fearing they were about to be attacked, they barricaded themselves in one of their houses. So intent was the rescue party on saving them that a hot fire was opened on the house. For three hours the *rurales* toiled heroically at the task of rescue, pouring a heavy fire into the house from every side. At the end of this time, the six American men being dead, the *rurales* stormed the house and saved the lives of an American girl of eighteen and an American boy of fourteen, whom they bore away to be mobbed through the streets of Tuxtla Gutiérrez ere they were safely put in jail.

Now it is not the killing that is the point of the illustration. It is the explanation made by the Mexicans of the horrible mistake made by the Americans in not understanding that the *rurales* were rescuing them. Surely no American brain nor north European brain could conceive of such an explanation. Our reasoning processes are different. We could no more imagine that such an explanation would hold water than would we commit a three hours' attack on persons we were trying to save.

I should be inclined to doubt my harsh generalization on this half-breed class in Mexico were I alone in my opinion. It is because of this that I give the following extract from the "Encyclopædia Britannica," which epitomizes the condition of affairs obtaining in Mexico from the time of Mexico's independence to the beginning of Diaz's rational despotism:

"On both sides in Mexico there was an element consisting of honest doctrinaires; but rival military leaders exploited the struggles in their own interest, sometimes taking each side successively; and the instability was intensified by the extreme poverty of the peasantry, which made the soldiery reluctant to return to civil life, by the absence of a regular middle class, and by the concentration of wealth in a few hands, so that a revolutionary chief was generally sure both of money and of men."

The Self-Destroyers

NOT only is this half-caste class but one-fifth of the total population of Mexico, but only a very small portion of this half-caste class is actively engaged in fomenting the anarchy that is destroying the country and merits the harsh strictures applied to it. Educated Mexicans assert that Huerta, Carranza, Villa, and Zapata do not represent more than one hundred thousand people. There is no such thing as a national movement or a popular movement.

Here is a spectacle of fifteen millions of people, without equipment or ability for government, being harried and destroyed by a group of one hundred thousand who likewise have neither equipment nor ability for government. Surely, there can be no discussion of this. What is is. What is is incontrovertible. And the unhappy situation of misgovernment in Mexico to-day is a fact and is incontrovertible.

Two Indians at the Head of Mexico

THERE are three millions of the half-castes. When they permit, as they do, by their passivity, the pernicious and anarchic activity of the small group of one hundred thousand of them, they are themselves negatively responsible for the present state of affairs. The point is that they likewise have no aptitude for government.

Heavens, when it comes to the mere matter of ability to make organized trouble, the very half-breeds themselves are dependent on the peons! The two strongest men to-day in Mexico are the ex-bandit peon and Indian, Villa, in the north, and Huerta, the Tlaxcalan Indian, in the south.

The attitude of the hundred thousand active half-breeds is that the government belongs to them and not to the fifteen millions. It is their government, and, by the Eternal, they are going to do what they please with it. Civilization? They are not interested in civilization. Civilization can go smash, and, i' faith, they will smash it themselves if they have a mind to.

These men have talked republic since the year 1824, yet Mexico has never been a republic. Certainly it was not a republic under the capitalistic dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz. Elections here are either slates put through by dictators and their cliques, or straight-out revolutions, in either case the one object being unadulterated loot. Now they do not say this, these child-minded men. They spout patriotism and valor, liberty, justice, and the square deal—all of which glorious phrases mean nothing of the sort, but are synonymous with loot.

They are not men in a world of men, these half-breed trouble makers. They are child-minded and ignoble-purposed. The stern stuff of manhood, as we understand manhood, is not in them. This stern stuff is in the pure-blooded Indians, however; but it manifests itself all too rarely, else it would be impossible for the many millions of Indians to have endured slavery for four hundred years at the hands of their tiny group of masters.

If Only He had Settled Villa

HUERTA is the flower of the Mexican Indian. Such Indians have appeared, on occasion, in the United States. Huerta is brave. Huerta is masterful. But even Huerta has never betrayed possession of high ideals nor wide social vision.

And Huerta has made mistakes. Two of these mistakes, to be mentioned in passing but which are not apposite to the contention of this article, are: (1) his not killing Zapata when he had the chance; (2) his very grievous error in not killing Villa the time he had him backed up against a wall facing a firing squad. It was on this latter occasion that he compelled Villa, on his

knees, arms clasped about Huerta's legs, to beg Huerta for his life. Villa has not forgotten that little episode. And it is fair to assume that sometimes the memory of these two mistakes flits regretfully through Huerta's mind as he sips a drink at the Country Club and contemplates Villa moving irresistibly down on him from the north; both his coasts blockaded by American warships and all arms and war munitions embargoed; Zapata at his back to the south and west like a hungry tiger; his credit exhausted, but a small portion of his own country left in his hands, and his own people in his capital city ripe to turn on him the instant he totters. I should not like to be Villa or Zapata if only for five minutes Huerta should get hold of me. Nor should I like to be Huerta if only for five minutes Zapata or Villa should get hold of me.

Will the Peon Get the Land?

EGYPTIAN and Mayan hieroglyphics cannot obfuscate the mind of the stay-at-home American as do the phrases and slogans of the Mexican "breeds." A hieroglyphic means nothing. The phrases and slogans of the Mexicans do not mean what they seem to mean. Countless Americans think the present revolution is an expression of the peon's land hunger. Madero raised that cry. Zapata still raises the same cry. Orozco promised the peons free farms in his plan of Tacubaya, when he was already the bought tool of the great hacienda land owners who had employed him to cause confusion to Madero. Carranza, in veiled words and vague promises, shied at the division of the great haciendas. Villa still shouts "free land."

But how about the peon? There are twelve million peons. They have had four centuries to get interested in the subject. Considering the paucity of the numbers of their masters, they have evidently not considered the matter to any purpose. I doubt, by a count of noses, if one-fourth of one per cent of the peons of Mexico are bearing arms for the purpose of gaining free land or gaining anything else their leaders desire.

Villa confiscated the great estates of Chihuahua. To each adult male in the State of Chihuahua he gave sixty acres of land. But there was a string on the gift. For ten years the land was to be inalienable. His explanation of this string is that the peon has lost his ancient land hunger, and that, if given the land outright, he would immediately sell or gamble away his holding.

Of course the peon should have the land. Some day he will have it. But when no more than one-fourth of one per cent of the peons have risen to take the land, the feebleness of the peon land hunger is fully told. So another magic phrase means one thing to the American mind and quite a different thing to the Mexican mind. It is impossible to conceive of twelve million Americans, gnawed by the land hunger, arming and sending into the field one-fourth of one percent of their number to fight for the land. Either the peon is different from the American, or land hunger is one thing to the one and another thing to the other. Apparently both contentions are true. The American is an Anglo-Saxon. The peon is an Indian, and a Mexican Indian at that. Furthermore, the Mexican Indian, before the Spaniard came, did not hold land individually; he held it communally.

Born Guerrillas

FURTHER to discredit this one-fourth of one per cent of peons bearing arms, two things must be taken into account. Numbers of them are restless and rough-natured only, rather than sustained by a belief in the rightness of the war they wage. Numbers of them are criminal and disorderly individuals. Numbers of them fight on either side according to the fortunes of battle.

Numbers of them are happy-go-lucky, preferring the fun and adventure of guerrilla warfare to the stay-at-home, plodding life of the farmer.

The second thing is no less important. They like the job. They have got the habit of revolution. What peon, with any spunk in him, would elect to slave on a hacienda for a slave's reward when, in the ranks of Zapata, Carranza, or Villa, he can travel, see the country, ride a horse, carry a rifle, get a peso or so a day, loot when fortune favors, and, if lucky, on occasion kill a fellow creature—this last a particularly delightful event to a people who delight in the bloody spectacles of the bull ring.

The totality of the Mexicans being so incapable of government that a handful of disorderly and incapable “breeds” can play ducks and drakes with the whole land, poor Mexico is in such a situation to-day that, unaided from without, the game of ducks and drakes can be played interminably. There is no other Porfirio Diaz in sight. There is no strong “breed” capable of whipping the rest of the disorderly “breeds” and the country into shape. There is no popular movement on which such a strong man might depend for support. Nor is there a national cause. The educated Mexicans, the wealthy Mexicans, the business and shopkeeping Mexicans, hail American intervention with delight. The vast majority of the peons ask merely to be let alone, and not to be drafted into the fighting ranks of this leader and of that leader and of the many leaders continually arising. Victories, presidencies, and dictatorships can be only temporary. The handful of anarchists cannot pacify Mexico, because Mexico does not need pacifying. They cannot pacify themselves, which is the actual need of Mexico, because they are too weak, too inefficient, too turbulent, too disorderly.

Spain, despite her world empire, which she picked up at a lucky stroke, much as a Hottentot might pick up a Koh-i-noor, never possessed any genius for government. The descendants of the Spaniards in Mexico, interbred with the native Indians, have likewise displayed no genius for government. Facts are facts. What the Spaniards and their descendants have not succeeded in doing in Mexico during the last four hundred years is an eloquent story.

Mexico must be saved from herself. What Mexico really needs is to be saved from the insignificant portion of her half-breeds who are causing all the trouble. They should not form the government at all. And yet they are the very ones who insist on forming it, and they cannot be eliminated by those who should form it, namely, the twelve million peons and the nearly three million peaceably inclined half-breeds.