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The Red Game of War

WAR and rumors of war. That, and naught else, was what was to be heard flying across the country from west to east along its southern border. Conductors, brakemen, porters, and the desert-dusty cattlemen who boarded the train at the last stop seemed unaware of anything else under the dome of heaven but war. And none so humble that he did not know how to conduct that war impending to the south; and none so reticent but that, on the slightest provocation, he would proceed to exposit just how that war should be conducted.

Of course, the passengers, having nothing to do, talked war all the time. It was difficult, speeding through the peaceful country, to realize that these well-tailored, well-mannered, courteous men—some of them even with spectacles—could be so easily divorced from their spectacles and clothes and become raw savages, as ferocious as their talk.

Up-to-Date Destruction

THE cool way in which they discussed battleships, submarines, aerial bombs, torpedoes, and all the rest of the wonderful up-to-date machine contrivances and devices for the abrupt and violent introduction of foreign substances into the bodies of their fellow mortals would have been peculiarly edifying to the contemplative mind of a philosopher. For, come to think of it, that is just what war is—the introduction of foreign substances into men's bodies with violent and disruptive intent.

The hunting animal so introduces claws and fangs. The savage so introduces arrowheads and spear points. We, in the clear white light of the full dawn of the twentieth century, so introduce pieces of iron which we propel enormous distances by virtue of our laboratory method of chemically mixing gunpowder. Also, we introduce pellets of lead, at high velocity, said pellets being cunningly jacketed with steel so that, while being still disruptive, they will not spread and be too disruptive.

So a concession must be made, after all, to the refining influence of civilization. Basically, the game is the same old red game of introducing foreign substance. But today we at least introduce it according to certain set rules, agreements and conventions. The intent, as of old, is to destroy the fellow creature who blocks our way of life or desire, but we do it with more technique and consideration.

Hearts in the Game

THE foregoing is not urged in the slightest spirit of sarcasm. What is, is beyond all peradventure. And the genus Homo is just precisely what he is—a highly intelligent animal with an amazing spiritual endowment that, on occasion, individually and collectively, functions in

violent and destructive ways. War must be dreadfully human, else why did all those well-cultured, ethically trained men in the smoking room and observation car talk the way they did?

Far in the sands of western Texas our soldiers, who have been policing the border for the past two years, rode in to meet the train at every desert station in order to buy and eagerly read the newspapers for the latest war quotations. Where the heart is there the treasure is, and, to judge by the delight shown in their faces as they scanned the bull market in war stock, these soldier boys of ours certainly had their hearts in the game for which they were drilled and uniformed.

Yes, and it is a safe wager that in the heart of the last one of them, weary from long waiting was the query "How long, O Lord, how long ere things break loose and we are started on our way?"

War and the rumors of war—there was no escaping: one breathed it, read it, heard it, dreamed it—yes, and ate it. For did not the primitive humor of the negro waiter in the dining car achieve the following sally: "Good morning, sah. Two nice scrambled Mexicans this morning, sah?"

We Are Still Warriors

SAID the Pullman conductor to me: "Lucky you're getting off at Houston. Big celebration to-day. Twelve thousand of our regulars are going to parade. San Jacinto Day, you know."

Verily, it is so. We set aside holidays for the celebration of old wars and ancient battles. And we thrill, and get tickly sensations along the spine and moisten our eyes as we remember those old days and the deeds of our fathers. Not until we have evolved sufficiently to set aside days in honor of the inventions of industry and the discoveries of science will we cease going to war. In the meantime we are what we are, and it is most evident that we are still warriors.

But Houston was disappointed. The feet of war—or rather, the feet of twelve thousand of our young men—did not tramp along Houston's streets on San Jacinto Day. The feet of the young men even then were speeding south. The night before, Houston had seen them to bed in their wide-pitched camp. In the morning they were gone. Houston rubbed its eyes and stared at the great martial vacancy left on its landscape.

No finer meed of praise can be given to the evacuation of Houston, when the word came over the wire from Washington, than to state that it was equal to the celerity and dispatch of our American circuses in their palmiest days.

For Girls Will Weep

FROM Houston to Galveston, flying fast as electricity could drive, across the green flat land one caught the first far glimpse of long lines of moving, canvas-topped commissary wagons and marching columns.

In the electric car were three girls who looked as if they had been weeping. For ever girls will love a soldier and ever girls will weep when the war medicine is made and the young men go forth.

While many of the men marched, those of the Fifth Brigade, having been selected to lead the way to Mexico, were hurried to Galveston by train. One such train, a long one, we overtook and slowly passed. The windows were crowded with the bright, expectant faces. Just boys they were—a long, moving picture of live, laughing faces. Young fellows, that was all, just young

fellows—all trim, fine-bodied huskies, smooth-shaven, boyish, bold, eager-eyed, efficient-looking, capable, adventurous, serving out their wanderlust of youth, as youth will do; for youth will be served, whether at Tampico or Vera Cruz, and youth is prone to like its service to be in foreign parts and oversea.

They were distinctively American faces, the great majority that laughed to us from the troop train. The percentage of blonds was high, and numbers of them were astonishingly blond. The brunets sparkled amid the blond types—ranged all the way from fairest yellow hair and palest blue eyes down through the richer tones to dark gray eyes and deep brown hair.

And as we passed that line of bright faces, first one girl, and then another, and, finally, the third, recognized her lover and was recognized. Greetings and love calls flew back and forth, until we drew ahead whereupon the three girls dissolved in fresh tears. But I'll wager, just the same, no lucky young dog in that lucky Fifth Brigade, vanguard of the advance across the Gulf of Mexico, could have been persuaded by all the lovelorn lassies in the United States to stay behind, even though staying behind could be accomplished with honor. How was it that Laurence Hope voiced the plaint of the woman against the soldier lover? ". . . Desiring in my very arms the fiercer rapture of the fight."

And war rolled south on revolving wheels while the feet of the young men dangled and rested. Yes, and the iron-shod feet of War rested likewise, for car after car was loaded with army wagons and army mules.

Galveston was buzzing. Boys were crying extras, and fresher extras. The Hotel Galvaz buzzed. Spurred officers came and went.

"Plenty of war talk in the village, eh?" queried the elevator boy.

Said the barber with impressive solemnity to the boot-black: "They's goin' to be something' doin' inside twenty-four hours—you listen to me."

Every porch in the city was a-clatter. Youth everywhere strained at home ties and duty in its desire to stampede to the nearest recruiting office. Old mothers who had lost sons and husbands in the Civil War days wept reminiscently in their rocking-chairs. And while the youngsters were eager to volunteer, the oldsters were sitting back saying:

"Let the youngsters go. When the pinch comes'll be time enough for us. Hell, ain't it, how a fellow gets patriotic when any other country gets gay with ourn?"

One soldier: "Well, what are they waitin' for? We're ready, ain't we?"

Other soldier: "Been ready two years an' over."

Not Holy War, but Adventure

AND both gaze yearningly out across the blue waters of the quiet Gulf and already see themselves upon it and steaming south for Tampico and Vera Cruz, or any other place so long as it is not this piping place of peace.

I remember the young men of Japan when they went out to war. Never did any generation of young men desire more madly to go out upon the red way. But they went almost holily to encounter the White Giant of the North, and they little expected and less desired to return.

Now our young men taking the sea path south are going out differently. Primarily, it is adventure. As a matter of course they are patriotic, but they have no sense of any seriousness before them. They feel they face no giant enemy in the south. They tell over again the tale of the Alamo, and recite with glee how Sam Houston lambasted Santa Anna at San Jacinto. Why, what they won't do to the Mexican is . . . and they discover that speech is a most frail and inadequate means of expression of young blood and rollicking spirit.

What Is Youth Without Danger?

OF COURSE, if one were to pin them down to it—these bright-blooded boys of ours whose feet itch to tread wider spaces and far-places—they would admit that a few, a very few, are going to get hurt. But their next thought, which is scarce a thought but rather a blood count of emotion, would be: Aw, what's the use of youth and where's its wages if risks are not to be run in the high tide and heyday of life?

What Texas Could Do

A SORT of picnic, that's what, a sort of picnic . . . somewhat different, of course, from a Sunday-school picnic, and on a colossal scale, but still a picnic.

"A short campaign at the outside," say the youngsters.

But the oldsters shake their heads: "Look at the Civil War—called for three-months' volunteers. You know how long that fracas lasted. You never can tell what you're goin' to do once you take holt. You can't leave go in a hurry."

A youngster: "Why, we could promenade through Mexico from end to end with twenty thousand men."

An oldster: "Yep, and take five hundred thousand men to police Mexico behind you while you promenaded on your way."

A young Texan of the Seventh Infantry: "Huh! Not if they was Texans. Why, I want to tell you we've threw the fear of—well, of Texas—into them so they ain't never forgot us. Say, d'ye know, I've heard more than one Mexican swear they could lick the whole United States if Texas was cut out of the scrap, an' d'ye know, I guess that's just about right."

"You mean . . . ?" I dared to query.

His words still ringing in his ears, he saw the trap his quick speech had led him into, and he laughed, disclaimed, and said: "I guess what I mean was cut out the whole United States and Texas could lick Mexico."

"Sure thing!" applauded the group; and the youngsters had the decision.

The Looming Figure of Huerta

A MINUTE later they were agreeing with the oldsters in one detail of managing the war, namely, that simultaneously with the movement on Tampico and Vera Cruz, the National Guards and Rangers should cross over and take possession of every Mexican border town and water hole clear to the Pacific.

"The first line of defense is the enemy's territory," was the unanimous judgment.

Little they reckon, these younglings of our nation, of what is before them. Their feet are a-tingle to be out on the old red way of man. Colts and calves play in the pastures. Our young men must also play, must romp, must be doing something, either sowing their wildness of youth at home, or, preferably, fighting abroad, vindicating themselves, and the fighting machine of an army which they compose—and, deeper, unreasoned, and unguessed, vindicating the institutions which have molded them and which are woven into the fibers of them.

But always, over it all, back of this glorious dance of youth, one vision the group of the old ones at Washington, the wise ones, the graybeards.

And, over it all and back of it all, most significant and sinister of all, looms the tragic figure of the man known among men as Huerta. And a well-known man is he. This day they are

chattering his name from London clubs and the war offices of world powers to the bazaars of India and the deep-matted, twilight rooms of the temples and tea houses of Nippon.

The current theory of Huerta's conduct in embroiling Mexico with the United States gives one pause to contemplate as amazing a situation as is conceivable in a particular man's affairs. Huerta, according to the classic Mexican custom established of very old, old time, has securely slated down in Europe 10,000,000 of pesos as a nest egg—or so runs the rumor on which is builded the theory. Huerta, it is said, was born a peon without a penny or a hope for two pennies all at one time to his heritage. Huerta, in the course of his dictatorship, by the devious ways long established of Mexican rulers, has accumulated and cached in Europe 10,000,000 of pesos extracted from the toil of his brother peons.

Madero saved Villa's life when Huerta desired to execute Villa. Huerta, by custom established of old time, contrived to have Madero shot to death without witnesses, while Madero was in the act of attempting to escape in the darkness of night from a guard of Huerta's soldiers. This, by the way—this attempting to escape on foot by prisoners—is also a custom of old time invariably never practiced by Mexican captives of Mexicans. Yet statistics would tend to show conclusively that it is quite generally practiced. Only—well, sometimes statistics just must be doubted.

Could the Dictator Escape?

VILLA, still the theory runs, remembering the murder of his benefactor, red of beak and claw from many victories, is advancing south upon the failing Huerta with the sworn intent of avenging Madero's death. This means taking the life of Huerta. Perhaps not exactly that. There is the possibility that Villa will merely take Huerta prisoner and that Huerta, some dark night, in an automobile, without witnesses, may inadvertently emulate Madero's feat with the same unfortunate and unforeseen end that Madero met. The how of Huerta's passing, if he falls into Villa's hands, is immaterial. The fact that he will pass is ordained.

So grows the picture and the theory of the tragedy of Huerta. Huerta, sometime peon, rules in Mexico. His ten millions reside in Europe. Death, in the form and visage of Villa, draws closer to him day by day from the north. Problem: how then may Huerta escape Villa and win to his treasure oversea? It is an interesting problem. To Huerta it is mighty interesting.

Might he not, the objection is sure to be raised, have escaped to the coast and away to Europe before ever the American flag was affronted at Tampico? Certainly not. Before he could have covered the distance between the palace and the railroad station he would have had a mob at his heels. The likelihood of getting away alive from the station would have been remote; and, even if successful in riding out his train from his capital a living man, the likelihood of his reaching Vera Cruz still alive, much less of embarking alive from Vera Cruz, would have been too remote for consideration.

At Dice With Fate

SO HUERTA remained in Mexico City with his problem. And, granting the theory, we get the picture of that desperate man in his high capital; ten millions of treasure awaiting him across the salt sea, ruler and prisoner in his great palace, playing the big game of life with death in the toss, Villa, who will kill him, sure as fate, drawing nearer day by day from the north.

And Huerta plays the game. The gringo is civilized and a humanitarian within the limits of technique. There is only one way for Huerta to escape. The gringo must come and get him.

The gringo would never turn him over to the tender mercies of Villa. The gringo would see him safe out of the country and turn him loose to connect with his ten millions.

Very well. Isn't the gringo doing it? Hasn't the gringo already started to come and get him? Huerta was no idiot over the technique of formal saluting of a flag.

It is a pretty situation. Primitive, 'tis true, but splendid pictorially and dramatically.

Incidentally, it will be rather an expensive rescue of one man on the part of the United States. The price will run to hundreds of millions of money, while no one dare forecast how many of the lives of our young men will be paid—all for the saving of the miserable life of a man who is himself already redly responsible for so many miserable deaths of other men.

But, correct or not, theory or fact, that mixed-blooded man is playing a big game of some sort there in his palace on the site of the ancient Aztec palace where Cortez long ago so magnificently played a freebooting game. Strange, also, is it to contemplate that in the veins of this mixed-blooded man runs the strains of the blended races of Cortez and Montezuma.

Oh, well, not so long ago, and certainly a considerable time after Cortez and his captains were dead and dist, we, too, went a-freebooting, pilfered the owners of most of a continent of their land, and enunciated that working axiom that the only good Indian was a dead Indian. Yet there is a difference. We are reformed, and have developed quite a different and indisputably a better technique.

The Order Comes

THE last days at Galveston saw war glower red and redder. Extras appeared with increasing rapidity on the streets; and street boys, made giddy by such sudden wealth, took advantage of the excitement to sell any old paper as the very latest extra. The buzzards—for so are war correspondents named—began to gather. It is interesting to note that, within ten hours previous to the receipt from Washington of the order for the Fifth Brigade to embark, correspondents who had been on the way from New York and Chicago descended upon Galveston in a flock.

Scarcely had they arrived when the order came. The whisper invaded the dining room of the Hotel Galvez, but the news was received without excitement. Here and there an officer rose from the table and went out quietly to begin a night of unsleeping activity. That was about all.

In the ballroom the Fourth Infantry band continued to play and those officers danced who were not lucky enough to belong to the Fifth Brigade. Also, in the writing room every desk was occupied for a few minutes by young lieutenants getting off letters to the girls who just couldn't help loving a soldier at a distance.

In the misty gray of early morning the columns of marching soldiers in their dull olive drab had the seeming of long, lean torpedo-boat destroyers. They were not individuals to the eye, but war projectiles. Upon coming closer they showed a goodly, sturdy lot of trim, well-set fellows, clean and fit, marching as veterans march.

Off for Vera Cruz

THE twenty thousand spectators that flooded the transport docks did not seem to be at all in the way. There was no confusion, no shouting of orders. So quiet and orderly did the embarking of three thousand men with all their necessary gear proceed that one almost wondered if any orders were being issued.

Army wagons, buckboards, motor cars, and reluctant mules streamed steadily on board. It seemed that near the whole city was pouring into four transports without crowding them.

One pathetic note was the soldiers' dogs. Now it must be understood that soldiers' dogs are different from other dogs. They always accumulate about the fixed camps where the men remain for months. They are very wise. They know unerringly an officer from a soldier. They know enough never to presume or to intrude on an officer. Where officers walk they never walk.

They recognize that an officer's tent and the vicinity of an officer's tent are taboo, and never are they guilty of drinking from an officer's water bucket. And they—soldiers' dogs of the Fifth Brigade—were bound for Mexico along with their masters. They crept demurely up the gangway in the thick of the lines of ascending soldiers, and when detected by a vigilant officer at the head of the gangway, they obeyed, as soldier's dogs should, and marched back down the gangway. And when so detected they betrayed no recognition of their masters, for no soldier can recognize his dog—so heinous a circumstance is attempted stowaway. Nor did they whine or complain or voice a bark. They disappeared, these soldiers' dogs, and further deponent sayeth not, save that these same dogs ran down the gangway at Vera Cruz.

It may be nice to be an army woman in time of peace, but in war it is not so nice. Have our army women learned the control that plays so large a part in their husbands' business? Everything was quiet with them: there were no scenes, no violent sobbings, no hysteria. There were heavy eyes and moist eyes, last words, and yet again last words after, and that was all.

In short, in this act of saying farewell to their men folks the army women are splendid. Some I saw acceding to their husbands' wishes—saying a last good-by and departing before the whistles of the transports blew. One in particular I noted—a captain's wife. He led her down the gangway to the wharf and kissed her a long good-by, after which he returned on board. Then, her lips trembling, she turned and went straight down the dock to the shore. Not once did she turn her head and look back. A color sergeant, his wet-eyed wife beside him, held a very young baby in his arms. For a long time he gazed down on the tiny mite of life and said nothing. A young lieutenant hung about his mother, pressed the last lingering kiss on her lips, and, hand lingering in hand and loath to sever, he bowed his head in old-time gallantry and kissed her hand.

On the Face of the Waters

HIGH in the Gulf of Mexico, the lights of Galveston astern, the four transports, massed with lights from stem to stern, are being formed into a square, two abreast, under direction of destroyers that glide like a long row of shadows out of the gloom; that give orders through megaphones, and that glide away into the gloom, talking across the sea to one another in the medium of chimes and lights—red lights and white that flash and disappear in blinding lucidity on the short signal masts. Up above in the wireless room of the transport the words of the war men back at Galveston are being snatched out of the air.

Day on the Gulf of Mexico! All is peace under an azure sky. The sapphire sea is scarcely rippled by the trade wind gently blowing, and across this placid sea stream the white transports—soldier-loaded—with an ominous destroyer convoying on either flank, while a third destroyer scouts ahead.

A blur of smoke rises on the horizon and we know that the battleship *Louisiana* has come up from Vera Cruz to meet us. We know while all that is visible of her is the blur of smoke, for her name and errand have long been snatched out of the air by wizards' apprentices in the wireless room.