

Victoriano Huerta Stands Forth as "Man of Mystery" in the Drama of Mexico's Political Regeneration

MEXICO'S "Man of Mystery" they call General Victoriano Huerta, provisional President of the Republic of Mexico. General Huerta has for forty years been identified with every military activity of the republic, and, it is his boast, always on the side of constituted government, no matter who was behind the government. He is a soldier, and, according to his own declaration, he is a soldier who owes allegiance not to persons but to a nationality. He has fought against men whom he later served when the authority of the government was behind them, and he has turned against men whom he formerly served when the constituted government of Mexico has repudiated them. This is General Victoriano Huerta's avowed creed.

There have been times during Mexico's recent troublous periods when General Huerta has been mentioned for President, times when he might have seized the reins of government, but his reply to those who urged him to place himself at the head of the government was always—

"I am not a statesman, I am a soldier. Those who are close to him and know him best say that it was only in obedience to the will of the people expressed through the Mexican Congress that this grim soldier consented to take the helm in Mexican affairs. He makes no pretense to being a statesman of power. His ambition is unlimited, and power is the motive force of his life, but it is military power the General craves. He wants to be the biggest, the best, the strongest soldier in Mexico. He wants to be the man on whom Presidents and governments lean. It may be that a taste of political power may seduce the soldier from his warlike ways and that he may now continue to lead Mexico from the President's chair, but it is predicted by his friends that should he be offered the Presidency he would decline it and would again strive to be the soldier who above all others would bolster up the government of the republic.

General Huerta was born in Chihuahua sixty years ago. From the time he knew the meaning of the word musket he was determined to be a soldier, and when he was seven years old he entered the military academy at Chapultepec, where he made a name for himself in the mastery of the theory of things military. It was not long after graduation that his

superior officers began to notice that young Huerta had a genius for the practical side of fighting as well as for the theory.

Huerta's career began at the time when in the fighting days Porfirio Diaz was hammering away at Mexico City during the revolt against President Lerdo. Diaz at this time represented all that was best in Mexico, and in fighting for him Huerta believed he was fighting for the real Mexico.

In 1874 the railroad between Mexico City and Vera Cruz was opened. The construction of this road was not the comparatively simple matter it would be today. There was great opposition to the project from bandit bands and from Indians. The work had to be constantly guarded, and young Huerta saw much service at this time. The construction of the Mexican Central Railroad, connecting Mexico City with the United States border, entailed a similar campaign, as did the pushing of a road south from the Mexican capital to Oaxaca. As a junior officer Huerta acquired considerable experience in the field during the construction of these lines.

Mexico was by no means pacified with the election of Porfirio Diaz to the Presidency. Many of the States were in open rebellion, and numerous bands of outlaws and brigands roamed the country and infested the mountainous districts. There was work for President Diaz's soldiers to do, and Huerta helped them to do it in such an efficient manner that promotion followed promotion until before Diaz resigned he had made him lieutenant general in command of all the troops south of Mexico City.

It was General Huerta who assisted President Diaz in formulating the scheme which called into existence the rurales, or semi-military police. In former days robbery with violence was but a common incident of travel in Mexico. The traveler who left the beaten trail was more than likely to be held up and relieved of all his possessions, perhaps suffering bodily injury. There seemed no way to properly police the vast mountainous and waste districts until General Diaz conceived the idea of arming and organizing a certain element of the brigands who lived in outlawry more because of the excitement and romance of the thing than for any other reason. Such a condition could scarcely exist except among Latin races, but President Diaz and General Huerta realized that it did exist and they determined to utilize it.



GENERAL VICTORIANO HUERTA

Accordingly it was proclaimed through out the republic that to those who would ride through the mountains and maintain law and order the government would supply a good horse, a carbine to sling across the shoulder, small arms, money (enough with which to gamble occasionally) and a pardon for past offences.

The capital was flooded with men who had for years eked out an existence from brigandage and highway robbery. What they wanted most in the world was a good spirited horse between their knees, a carbine across their shoulders and freedom to roam the country. Out of such timber was the great body of rurales heavy, and they have served for decades to maintain law and order in Mexico. It was President Diaz's idea, but in its fulfillment he was assisted and advised by General Huerta.

The period of development of Mexico following the establishment of the Diaz regime saw the construction of many railroads, the building and repairing of highways, the installation of telegraph lines, all of which tended to facilitate the movement of troops and the speed of communication. It was a period of militarism, for Mexico needed an iron hand and severe methods. The army was capable of accomplishing things which it could not have done without the railway and telegraphic facilities. Accordingly, the army became more than ever an important factor in all of which sided Victoriano Huerta.

It was a month before the resignation of Diaz that Huerta was appointed lieutenant general, in command of the Department of the South, including all the troops south of Mexico City. To the end General Huerta counselled Porfirio Diaz against resigning and offered to take Juarez with three thousand men, but the President declined to sanction this proposition. He wanted General Huerta at the capital because he felt that he could depend upon him. Whatever may be said of Victoriano Huerta's loyalty, it cannot be denied that he was the big military figure of the Diaz regime and that there was no man in the army of Diaz who could so support the tottering Presidency.

To the bitter end Huerta fought for Diaz, but when Francisco Leon de la Barra was chosen provisional President of Mexico he transferred his allegiance to

the new government and supported it until the election of Madero, against whom he had fought tooth and nail. Huerta never had kindly feelings for Madero personally, but he supported him and his government.

After Madero's inauguration General Huerta retained command of the Department of the South, where he defeated the rebel chief Orozco when he pressed the federal chief General Salas in the north. After a locomotive loaded with dynamite had been sent into the midst of his troops and exploded General Salas went into an empty box car and killed himself. Victoriano Huerta was sent to take his place.

There were repeated rumors that Huerta and Orozco were to combine forces, but until the very last Huerta seemed to be loyal to Madero. During the Madero revolt when Huerta was fighting on the side of Porfirio Diaz he showed his own personal courage. With three or four aids he dashed through the rebel lines in an automobile and returned with troops who relieved a band of foreign residents who were in danger from the threatening rebels.

When Huerta saw that the Madero government was tottering, when friends were advising the President to resign and the Congress was trying to force him from office, Huerta transferred his allegiance to the opposing forces. His act might be viewed as allegiance to the Congress. At any rate, he consented to communicate with General Blanes, and apparently a scheme was devised for the overthrow of the Madero regime.

For ten days he defended Madero against heavy odds and in the face of strong popular opposition from certain quarters. Then came the tottering of the Madero regime, he saw that the President was doomed and to-day he is provisional President of Mexico.

Students of Mexican affairs cry out that the republic is in need of a strong man, a man like Porfirio Diaz. Many surmise that Victoriano Huerta, soldier, man of mystery, may be that man. All Mexico is on the qui vive watching him. Which way will he turn? Is the question on every man's lips. More than any other living being he holds Mexico's destinies to-day and none knows what he will do. He is the quiet, forceful, iron soldier, a man whom Mexicans fear, yet look to as a liberator.

Miss May Irwin, Actress, but Farmer by Choice

WHEN comes the time that the contemporary history of the American stage is enriched with her memoirs, Miss May Irwin, actress and farmer, will record in the opening paragraph of the preface that she is entitled, on information and belief, to claim the distinction of being the first person success-fully to alfalfa north of the forty-fourth degree of latitude.

Which is to say that Miss Irwin, when prevailed upon one night last week to talk about herself, pushed aside, discarded, repudiated and taboos any in-clude she might have had to mention her numerous achievements during a stage career of thirty-eight years and a life that has been just one useful thing after another and chose to talk about the mysteries of alfalfa.

It is a subject on which learned men and women in rural districts have heated debates. It has caused many a youth to return home with a blackened eye. Alfalfa has revolutionized the agricultural business of this the greatest country in the world, says Miss Irwin. Three crops of alfalfa in one year. Just think of it! In some places they get four crops (it's stupendous, overwhelming—a knock-out).

"And if you should make a noise like growing alfalfa in the environs of Broadway," exclaims Miss Irwin, "there would be a run on the public library and the calls for the work of Noah Webster would outnumber the demands for the best sellers. In this city there are persons who never heard of alfalfa. Some who have think it is a new breakfast cereal. If I were of a vagrant disposition I'd chance something that you don't know what it is."

"What, alfalfa?"

"Yes, alfalfa. See, you don't know." And the actress threw up her hands in a manner that suggested she believed her interviewer to be hopeless—a belief, by the way, on which she could not take out a copyright.

Miss Irwin was in her apartments in the Woodstock Hotel, where she has lived for many years when in New York. From her windows on the seventh floor she has a first class view of considerable of her New York state.

Five women who have chosen the stage as a profession have been as prudent as Miss Irwin. In the neighborhood of Broadway, Forty-third and Forty-fourth streets, she owns a number of select lots. (One always speaks of real estate as "select.") She began to buy New York property years ago with her first savings. And she has been adding to her holdings right along. There are numerous lots in Lexington avenue adjacent to the new building which have been aiding and abetting Miss Irwin's income for a long, long time.

By making her audiences laugh Miss Irwin has accumulated a fortune, and she has not the slightest intention of stopping now, for she says she is going to continue playing for a good many years to come.

Off as well as on the stage, Miss Irwin is the embodiment of good humor and fun. Her acquaintances are numerous, yet she refuses to recognize dull care. For thirty years a star before the American play-going public, she has pleased her audiences season after season and now she is back in New York in one of the funniest parts, it is said, in which she has appeared.

"Not changing the subject from alfalfa, Miss Irwin, but you must have noticed last Monday night how happy your friends were to see you back on Broadway again in the farce 'Widow by Proxy' at the Cohan Theatre," it was suggested. "You get all the facts are contained in the one sentence."

"And the author's name is Mrs. Catherine Chisholm Cushman," added Miss Irwin with a laugh. "I can't say too many kind things about her. I have added few lines and less 'business' to my new part than in any play for a long time. Yes, I noticed my friends, bless their hearts, and I was very happy to get back. But to be honest some of the things that have been said about the new play and the old star one would think that I had been away for a decade. A friend stopped me to-day and said, 'I'm glad you were able to come back.'"

"And what did you say?"

"I said, 'I never have been away.' It is true I did not play in New York last season, but I was at Wallack's the year before and I never was accused of shirking my share of the fun of entertaining the public. In the summer, of course, I get away to my farm on Irwin Island, in the St. Lawrence River. It is there I get the most out of life."

Miss Irwin was getting back to alfalfa. "The records show," it was said, "that you made your debut as an actress at Rochester, N. Y., in 1875. Is that right?"

"Quite right. With my sister Flora I appeared on the variety stage. Mr. William Harris was on the same bill, playing in the team of Harris and Carroll. I mention it as a coincidence because in later years I starred under Mr. Harris' management. Rochester was not far from my home town, Whitby, Ontario, which is near Irwin Island, where I pass my summers."

"Several years ago I became interested in alfalfa growing, but was told my place was too far north for the product. However, I studied my land, prepared it with great care, had it ploughed and sown and waited for rain, all of which took time and patience. At last when I believed the soil ready for the seed I sowed alfalfa, and would you believe me if I told you something?"

"What?"

"It grew!"

"No!"

"Yes, and last summer we had three crops, and when we left the island in the autumn there was a field of alfalfa eight-teen inches high."

Here, then, is an object lesson for younger players. Miss Irwin proves it is possible for an actor to be really interested in something foreign to the stage. Something even so foreign as alfalfa.

"In charge of my place is an interesting old character," continued Miss Irwin, "who has been in my employ for some years, but never has seen me play. I was

in Watertown, N. Y., a month ago, so I sent a message to him to come to the theatre. He sat out front close to the stage and his face was a revelation. There was in the play a line which has since been changed. Speaking of one of the persons in the play I said, 'He's not over forty, and I'm not that.' It always brought a laugh. But 'Toys' didn't laugh.

"After the performance I invited him to my dressing room. He said he had enjoyed the play hugely, but he did not like the line I refer to."

"Why not?" I asked, surprised.

"Well," he said, with a drawl, "why start a discussion? There will be some persons who will say you are much older than forty."

Women Here Prefer American Men to Titled Europeans

As a lover the American man appears to the least advantage.

This is that most excellent development of the human race, American manhood, arraigned before a select number of the Paris models, assembled to hear about "The Pursuit of Happiness in the United States." And who do you think is grasping the handle of the toasting fork, holding her countrymen up where they might be, while if they were foolish enough to take the charge seriously? That persistent little sensationist, Miss Marie Van Vorst, novelist and general juggler of social problems! Naughty! naughty!

Among the questions this charming, self-expatiated soubrette of social depths asks herself in her talk is, "Why do American girls prefer European husbands?"

But do they prefer European husbands? Isn't it assuming too much for any definite conclusion to rise up and declare a preference where it is blatantly evident no such preference exists?

Pardon for disputing the word of a wise woman, Paris, but we don't want you to get it wrong. Our vote is cast for the tall, broad-shouldered, clear-eyed, frank-hearted, open-handed son of Uncle Sam every time. If now and then love, ambition or one of the motive powers of the universe sends the American girl across seas to build her nest she is the exception that proves the rule, and only a minority of her sisters display any green flags of envy. They are too busy engaging the affections of some man of their own age and station to bother about decadent castles and tattered coats of arms.

To every foreign alliance there are a hundred home love knots being tied. To call a certain segment of girlhood brought up on a califfon and orchid schedule, and whose ambitions outstrip their heart, the American girl is unfair to that vast majority of wholesome, healthy young creatures who are glad to let love go where it is sent and who prefer a handkerchief apartment with the right man to battlements and towers with the siren of a "Tragedy" or even a glittering nobility. Sentiment may scoff, but it is being done every day.

"The American man as a lover lacks audacity," says Miss Van Vorst. "As a child he is under the domination of his mother and sisters. A school mistress demonstrates to him female superiority and later in life, no matter to what class he belongs, his education is directed by women. He has learned to shape and control his destiny, but has not yet learned to dominate the heart of a woman."

If there is any man under the sun more audacious than the boy back East who asks the maiden of his fondest fancy to turn her back on the past and go with him empty-handed to the mining camp of the Western valleys, the apple orchard of the Western plain, has not shown up of the Western girl. And yet, it's being done daily. Call it courage or pluck or just a name for that temerity of love as any other name.

Neither is it true that young America is dominated by her mother. She merely

guides him. As for sister, give her a jumping rope and brother a "cocked" hat and in three minutes he will have the rope around her arms playing horse, with a smile in the character of a family stamp and about as in every respect conducts himself like the lord high commander of the community.

"I notice the charge was made against the American suitor rather than the American husband," said a happy wife, smiling down upon the plain gold band she twisted around her third finger. "When it comes to a comparison between husbands I guess the United States leads the world. Some girls might prefer the sort of a man who would fall on one knee and kiss her hand while breathing vows of eternal devotion, but unfortunately this variety is likely to be long on words and short on deeds."

"The volatile suitor whose eyes flash with the fires of jealousy, who is always standing beside your chair ready to serve you and who is prone to drop the mask with the marriage service, is not to my liking. Most real girls realize their young countrymen are out trying to make a position worth while for themselves. Work to them is a refining influence. That is why they do not object if the man is late for a dinner engagement, or if he has been too busy at the office to take in the last operatic sensation. Surprises, culture and refinement are pretty shifty sands upon which to build the ideal American home."

Concerning the fascination of the European title, the typical American girl is no more caught by it than she is by the plain Mr. who presides over the name of the man she has found irresistible above all other men. Also, though it is true there are no "princes" in the titled sense of the word, there is no reason why any vaulting young citizen of this land may not have Governor, Senator, Representative, Chief Justice, or even President hitched to the front of his name. When it is there he will have the satisfaction of knowing he had something to do with the placing of it, that it is a mark of merit rather than an accident of birth.

Meanwhile the girl has chosen will have the pleasure and privilege of climbing with him every step of the way. When he finally arrives, here is the satisfaction of being the brightest jewel in his crown of glory, his comfort, his pride, his consolation, his helpmate.

Miss Van Vorst would have her audience believe that the American girl is a cold, calculating bit of femininity who sits aloof when the amorous Latin declares his love in words of liquid flame, and from her ghastly height indulges in a laugh up her sleeve. All the time she knows he is doing out a lot of bunk, but for the sake of the art in the delivery she appears to believe and even injects an equal amount of warmth into her own answer.

Pure puff, as any spirited American girl will bear witness. Ask the next husband you meet what is their notion of an ideal avowal, and if you get their confidence you will find it's those same little words—just three—with none of the flattery flourish of foreign affections. We want ours straight out from the shoulder.

The more you read Miss Van Vorst's plait the more you want to grab a flag like George Conan and shout "America for Americans!"