

A Desert Concert for General Pershing

A Pen Sketch of the Mexican Peon's Character as Seen by The Tribune's Correspondent at the Headquarters of the Man Who Is Hunting Villa.

At Front with General Pershing, April 3 (by wagon truck train to Columbus, N. M.)—It appeared, that bass viol, like an apparition along the morning flush of the vast mesa. We were returning from a night with the passing cavalry. Not a dobe shack, trace or steer was visible on that level, lean-colored waste, bounded by the faded Sierra Madres. Our whizzing car almost collided with the wagon.

But the huge woman in calico who drove it only pulled up her two mules and blinked. The slant-eyed youth before her rolled a cigarette, and the two girls whose little pates had been bobbing over the sideboard behind merely started.

It was a curved hoop of wood was raised there, and against this were tied the keys of the instrument, its red reddish belly bulging below. Had it been a phonograph, a bedstead, even a grand piano, the effect would have been less grotesque. But a bass viol!

Just absurd, monstrous sounding board that growled at the end of theatrical orchestras. And here it had seemed to locate itself directly before the low gap in the mountains of Villa's famed stronghold, El Oso.

"Buenos dias," we called. "Where are you going with the music?" "To the felicitation," answered the young man, "at the rancho San Luis."

"It seemed odd then. A felicitation meant a birthday celebration. But the man was headed in our own direction, toward General Pershing's field base, beyond which lay the mountains full of scattered Villistas.

A party in the heart of the devastated, deserted, invaded valley. Mexican to the finger tips, that!

The Felicitation Indian. In camp the general was still asleep in his white canvas sleeping robe. We parked the car and lit a fire for our coffeeless breakfast. I went over to borrow a knife to cut bacon from the boxer, the general's dark cook, who served in his Philippine campaigns.

An Indian on a big bay mule ambled by. Straight through camp he rode, unhallo, humming, careless, as though not a gringo soldier were here in the valley. His face was wan, childlike, his hair was braided into queues like Chinaman's and looped about one ear under his straw sombrero, and he had a small pot. Slung across his back was a guitar.

"Good morning," I said again. "You are going to the felicitation, eh?" "Si, mi jefe," he nodded, smiled and passed on. Surely that party at San Luis was an event all the valley must know. An anniversary with which no wounded Villistas, motor trucks, limp ambulances, even unpredictable solar eclipses, could possibly interfere.

After dinner I went out to gather wood for the day. Up the little hill across the Santa Maria River I met a fellow with a sharp nose and black eyes. He might have been stamped out of the Grimm legend, been Rumpelstiltskin himself. He was leading a cow horse loaded with wood, and hanging from his arm was a dented silver vase.

Discretion Conquers Valor. "Aha! I know where you are going," this time I said. "Give them my best regards at San Luis."

It was very bad Spanish—likely worse Mexican. But the brigand face beamed at me, understanding. "Gracias, señor," he started. "Is it a Villista felicitation?" I asked with slight irony.

"Aha, no," his grained face set like iron—"no more."

He was gone and I felt uneasy. If these three men on the way to the once party that I had met were party to a deed, who were they not traveling together? Why should they be different routes toward the base camp where the last horsemen of the desert were lurking?

Perhaps I had been too long on the spy-mad European battle lines and heard too much of their shepherds, innkeeper spies, I grew suspicious. Since the day we entered the valley had felt haunted. I thought of Villa's famed underground folk-telegraph. Was some stroke being planned against our scattered detachments? Even Germans had never made signals by musical instruments, and I laughed.

Back at camp General Pershing was disappearing in a dust-whirl, his big red driven by the young Mormon with the large round felt hat and scarlet band. This gave me the one chance to escape. Two nights had for a week lured me to visit the organ-pipe cliffs to the east. One was a pale streak in the volcanic rock up yonder—surely had a singer of song. The other a road that rose straight through the live oaks, as if a short cut to La Oso itself.

I borrowed the general's mirror and shaved. Then I told my intention to the athletic young aid-a-victor in the last Olympic games, by the way. "Remember, if you go up there," he said with military frankness and dignity, "I don't know it. And it's at your own risk."

I grinned. "There can't be any danger." "Don't you believe it? How do we know? Every peak here has its eyes. Each camp we've been in has been watched."

"I'm armed," I said, touching my dagger. "Oh, all right, if you like that sort of thing."

It was adventure, and for a moment I forgot the four itinerant players who I forced the river, walked up the slope to where the clattering airman land. None were there.

eyes, like the one who had been driving the base viol. He wore long, worn leather chaps, though no horse was in sight. He might be hurrying to reach his mount. "You are late," I said, thinking again, "for the felicitation." "Much," he replied. "But it will not be until night." He pushed on at a run.

I don't believe in hunches or premonitions, as a rule. Yet coincidences can be too closely linked for logic. Suddenly all interest in the cliffs and the objects of my excursion left me.

Back to camp I faced and turned in. Sleep through the small hours in this thin, chill upland is well-nigh impossible. Like many officers, I would get my snooze early, and at the next ram—if there were anything in musical wigsaps—certainly not be caught napping.

Oh, Listen to the Bands. But when I woke it was only dusk. The air filled with the wildest sounds ever heard on a bandit chase. A noise of roared horsehair scraping upon catgut, a tubelike bump-thumping, and silver squeaks. The cart with the great hoop behind stood behind Bookers' fire and our motors. But the bass viol was gone from it.

Each of the travelling musicians was lined up against the team. Separately they had tolled on the way to San Luis but now were conjoined, a complete band, just starting to play. For the second time I laughed, as that feeling one often has come over me, of the impossible thing having become all at once the most rational. No one else in camp had met any of them. It could not be strange that all had returned together, a roving band merely out for the gringos' careless peso.

Airmen, scouts, Mormons, privates of the general's bodyguard, surrounded them. The big red-bearded cowboy, whom we call the "cave man," was asking for the "Cuckoo" with its hundred verses. The band stopped its melancholy, ancient strains to play.

The Cockroach, the Cockroach, he cannot longer march Because he has no more to smoke of marijuana. All the women in their breasts have the great hoop, etc.

I drew the slant-eyed man of the cart aside for explanations. His word, as a householder, was best to be trusted. Certainly it was too early for the felicitation at San Luis to begin. The violin had declared that it would not be until late. It seemed more outrageous than suspicious that the quartet should have travelled so many miles, only to go back without performing at the party.

"The felicitation?" he started. "But there was none." "And why not?" I demanded, almost angrily. He answered, quite grave: "There will be no more anniversaries in the valley. Everything in the world (Todo en el mundo) has changed again."

That was no reason, I realized, and tried another tack. "Did you see any Villistas about San Luis?" He hung his head. "But we were met with some fear, yet all is over now," and he rejoined the playing.

They gave "Las Tres Pelonas." The stout woman stared out stolidly from up on her seat. The two kids peering over the sideboard nodded drowsily. Other favorite songs of the peon here followed in the shifting freight—"El Toro," "La Golondrina." One of the soldiers developed great musical acuteness, and nudged my arm whenever Rumpelstiltskin of the cornet struck a "hum note," as he called it. His criticism seemed cruel beside their savage earnestness.

A shout came from the general's campfire. The band was asked over there to perform. Eagerly they consented. The fire was built behind a willow windbreak thickly thatched with goldenrod. General Pershing sat on a box that once had held canned tomatoes.

The programme was played exactly as before, except that he who had had smallpox placed one knee on the ground to rest his guitar upon the other.

Throughout, not once did their eyes fix upon a single one of us. They were neither embarrassed nor afraid, yet it was as if in the sockets each eye were turned backward, staring inward. And this contradicted curiously their hardy, gathering vigor as they played on.

The circle of scouts, Mormons, plainmen and soldiers grew enthusiastic. Jupiter hung close in the velvet sky, big as the silver ball atop its jet of water in a shooting gallery. We were taking part in a social function. Degrees of rank were overlooked. All joined in the reminiscent talk of primitive songs that we had heard on Pacific islands, in Asiatic forests.

Hail to the Chief. Rumpelstiltskin laid aside his cornet, stepping forward to chirge vocally. He began in a hoarse falsetto, but as the others joined in all deepened into a wild and tender sadness.

Then the climax came. The song was the general's favorite, "Adelita." He had asked for it. It is the Mexican soldiers' love song: Adelita is the name of my sweetheart, in all the world she is the one fair flower; Some day I will work harder To pluck this fair rose from its bower. If Adelita should fly with another I would follow her all the world over.

The song died; long applause, and then the brother in chaps, the violinist, stepped forward. He raised his hand, saluted the general, saying: "I will play to him who has just come among us."

And boldly he ordered the other three: "The salute to the new life." It was a pompous, mock military piece, banal, pathetically ambitious. But they put into it the fervor of a symphony orchestra playing Beethoven.

It was what one used to hear blared out in Bowery dance halls, but you knew that those four timid patriots, who thus aesthetically accepted the new order, held in their own show piece, which each in his separate madhub had lovingly practiced hour after hour. Perhaps had first blared it out before Villa himself. Finished, they left us instantly, vanishing toward their cart in the darkness, when we soon heard creaking across the river.



Ira A. Kip, Jr., of South Orange, who will be one of New Jersey's "Big Four" at the Republican National Convention.

Announcement by ex-Governor Franklin Murphy of New Jersey that because of his candidacy for the United States Senate he would not seek election as one of the four delegates-at-large to the Republican National Convention would ordinarily have resulted in the appearance of several candidates for the honor. It is generally conceded that three of the "Big Four" will be State Chairman Newton A. K. Bugbee, of Trenton; ex-Sheriff David Baird, of Camden, and Hamilton F. Kean, of Elizabeth, a brother of the late Senator John Kean, Jr. The fourth place will, of course, go to Essex County, and the fact that there has been no general scramble for the honor is because the name of Ira A. Kip, Jr., of South Orange, has been mentioned, and it is known that when Mr. Kip gets into anything—be it

golf, a contest at a horse show or politics—he goes in to win, and invariably succeeds. Mr. Kip has been one of the silent powers in Essex County and New Jersey politics for several years. His only active participation has been in his home village, where party lines are not drawn and where he has served as village president. But he has been recognized in the party councils for his sagacity and sound judgment, both of men and policies, and because of his keenness in the management and executive direction of campaigns. Several times in the old convention days he could have had a nomination for Congress for the asking, or rather for the acquiescence in the desires of the men who were in control, but he invariably declined, although the nomination in his district on the Republican ticket was equivalent to election. But Mr. Kip was bound

Ira A. Kip, Jr., Gets in the "Big Four Class."

by family ties, his growing children, his social activities, and except for consenting to serve his fellow citizens in his home town, he steadily declined political honors. Mr. Kip was for many years the Stock Exchange member of the firm of Flower & Co., of which ex-Governor Roswell P. Flower, of New York, was the head in his lifetime. Mrs. Kip was Miss Katharine Flower, the daughter of John D. Flower, and a niece of the Governor. Before entering that firm Mr. Kip was an East India merchant and broker, the first in Ira A. Kip & Co. being probably the best known in its line in New York. Mr. Kip's father, who is still hale and hearty at an advanced age, was the senior member of this firm. To the surprise of many of his friends,

competed, and it was a foregone conclusion when he made an entry that the prize in that class was as good as awarded. He was the whip on many occasions on the coach Good Times, which ran from the Waldorf-Astoria to the Ardsley Club, and he tooled a coach as expertly in a small ring as on the road. Mr. Kip's favorite organization is the Essex County Country Club, in Hutton Park, West Orange, of which he has been a governor for many years and where he served six years as president. He is a frequent entertainer at the club and a regular devotee of the sporty golf course and the squash court. As president of South Orange village Mr. Kip was instrumental in securing a sewer system in which a half dozen neighboring municipalities joined, and while two of the other towns in the Orange group are now concerned over the necessity of inaugurating a sewer system which will cost them a million each to supersede their present scheme, South Orange is enjoying a permanent method of disposal which cost a comparatively small sum. Water supply and other improvements which the village enjoys were pushed forward by Mr. Kip, and during his term he gave the mosquito extermination project a decided impetus throughout the state by inviting the officials of a score of towns and cities to be his guests at a dinner at which he had experts on the extermination of the then prevalent Jersey pest tell how the annoying insect and breeder of malaria could be eliminated. Mr. Kip believes in "getting together," and his idea of success for the Republican party may be guessed from what he did for the cause of mosquito extermination.

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