

Obregon, the Handy Man

By MARK S. WATSON.

A PARTY of Americans set out last October, after the recognition of Venustiano Carranza as the First Chief of Mexico, to observe what manner of leader the United States had aided with the stamp of its approval. The Primo Jefe and his party were due to reach Northern Coahuila in the early stages of a swing around Northern Mexico, and in one of these dirty little Mexican towns, still a little bit undecided whether it was Villista or Carranzista or Huertista or Maderista, plans were being made for the reception of the de facto head of government.

Present and prospective officeholders were busily engaged in stirring up whatever enthusiasm could be rallied for Carranza. They were erecting gaudy archways liberally inscribed with laudations of the First Chief, to whom the eulogies ascribed the most inspiring virtues. The newspapers were filled with the glories of Carranza. Dodgers advertised special events in honor of Carranza. Everywhere was the name of Carranza, and nowhere was mentioned the name of any other in his party.

The train came. Recollection is that it was four days late, which is not bad for a Mexican railway. Off stepped General Carranza and his military and civil aids, and up the street they moved in a tumult of ragged soldiers and more ragged civilians, dejected horses and burros, frantic, yelping dogs and heavy clouds of dust. The curious thing is that within a few minutes every native in that town appeared to have seen all that he wanted of First Chief Carranza and was trailing admiringly after a member of his party who had not even been mentioned in any of the circus advertising.

This popular idol was much younger than Carranza, much smaller of stature and girth. Also, he had lost most of his right arm. His name was Alvaro Obregon, commander of the northern forces of the Constitutional government.

The more seen of Obregon, the more strongly came at that time the realization that Obregon would be a man to watch carefully in the future. As he walked, a little pompously, about the streets crowds gathered to watch him, sometimes a bold one daring to speak to him and receiving a smiling greeting from the sturdy soldier. When the crowd was sufficiently large Obregon would be asked to speak, and he usually did, almost always in an easy, chatty style, interspersing his remarks with an occasional jest which set his hearers off in roars of delight.

It was noticed, too, that Carranza spoke little. He is not an orator and he knows it, and leaves his speechmaking to those better qualified for this duty—in which, it might be mentioned, Carranza is almost unique among Mexicans.

People who never liked Carranza and could see no good in him have been predicting for months that Obregon is the next in line and that he is only waiting his time to seize the power. Maybe it is so, but any one who knows Mexico knows that admirable opportunities have been given to Obregon already, and have been declined, for no obvious reason except that of loyalty to his chief. "Making Obregon unique among Mexicans?" suggests a friend, but that is not fair to the better class Mexican.

Alvaro Obregon has a great deal to commend him, although it is difficult to convince Mexico City of any truth in that assertion. The capital saw Obregon in the terrible days of "pacification," more accurately described as the days of savage punishment of the city which had already suffered sufficiently at the hands of the rebels whom Obregon and his fellow commanders drove out of the ancient capital. "Pacification," it developed, meant the most outrageous punishment of political foes, and incidentally entailed being suffering by the innocent. The "pacifiers" were at times quite impartial in the selection of victims for their murdering and robbing and raping. Residents who had seen Don Porfirio in his palmy days, and had seen the weakly Madero driven to his death by Huerta, and had seen what followed the Decena Trágica, who had gone through the forays of Villa and Zapata—even these lifted their hands and swore that Obregon allowed worse behavior by his troops than had any of the others. Mexico City has reason to recall that period with sorrow.

None of that disproves Obregon's claim on the affections of the north, which has suffered so impartially from all the revolutions that it feels no worse toward Obregon than toward any one else. The admiration of the northern Mexicans for Obregon is a natural hero worship for a man who has leaped into public attention in a time even shorter than is the Mexican hero's average.

Alvaro Obregon was born thirty-eight years ago in the State of Sonora, the Maya country, where he inherited a profitable farm, married and started to rear a family. That wife died, leaving two children, the elder of whom a boy, is in school in New York. Only within recent weeks Obregon remarried, choosing this time a Sonora beauty, Senorita Marie Tapia, educated in San Francisco. Previous to 1910 Obregon had followed the family tendency and was cheerfully raising—in addition to his family—paying crops of garbanzas, when with 1910 came the Madero revolution, since which event Obregon has been raising trouble of many varieties.

When Madero won, Obregon, then a captain, returned to his garbanzas and stayed there until the Orozco rebellion broke out. The opportunity for fighting rebels instead of weeds appealed to the rustic, and off to the wars he went again, helped toward the victory and then, Cincinnati-like, returned to his farm. The third call came with the slaying of Madero. In twenty-four hours Obregon was recruiting a force of his own, constantly growing by desertions from the Huertistas, and in the year and a half which followed the Huerta coup Obregon and his little army were engaged constantly in fighting through Sonora and Sinaloa, in the siege of Guaymas, the west coast port, on to Mazatlan, to Tepic, to the port of Manzanillo, to the lovely city of Guadalajara, and

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FOLKS WE MEET IN CARTOONS



FROM A CHAT WITH MARS

MARS tossed aside the volume of Bertha M. Clay that he had been reading, and took a melancholy pull at his battered corncob. "There's nothing in this war-god business, my boy. I wouldn't advise any young man to go into it. It goes against my nature to have to sit around in a bum suit of second-hand lodge regalia and make faces for the benefit of a lot of confounded cartoonists. In reality the one thing I like best to do is to get on my dressing-gown and slippers, fire up the old jimmy pipe, and have a quiet cup of tea here with my canary, my cat and my little dog of war." He sighed. "You see that photograph of Peace over there? Well, I've been following that girl for years, but she doesn't seem to give me much encouragement. I'm afraid it's not to be. Europe? Goodness gracious, no! I don't work over there. How long do you think I'd last with nothing to fight with except a tin breastplate and that silly sword. No, I stick around here, and help supervise the United States navy."

ARE WOMEN PEOPLE?

By Alice Duer Miller

FABLE OF THE BIRD AND THE SAGES.

Some Eastern prophets, elderly and sage.

Were walking in a wood one summer day.

When suddenly they came upon a cage Holding a long-winged bird of plumage gay;

And, as this seemed to them a curious thing,

They sat down to discuss it in a ring.

They made their discourse under headings three:

First, was the cage its natural habitat?

Next, could it fly, if they should set it free?

Last, would it change, then, to a mole or cat?

Each had a theory, evolved or heard, On the essential nature of a bird.

The argument continued many years.

Until one day a youth came strolling by.

To whom they told their questions and their fears.

"Easy to answer them," he made reply.

"Easy!" cried they. "How can you take it thus?"

How can you answer what is hid from us?"

"Like this," said he, "and all your wisdom's store

Would never find so clear an answer, friends."

And, stepping to the cage's gilded door,

He opened it. And there the story ends.

The moral is: To know if birds will fly,

The surest method is to let them try.

Notable Advance in 650 Years.

Speaking of the education of women,

the author of "Les Quatre Age de l'Homme," written about 1265, says:

"Girls should not be taught to read and write, unless it is for the purpose of making them nuns, for many evils have arisen from women's knowing such things."

An Hypothesis Contrary to Fact.

Soon after the suffrage was given to the women of California, a small group

of anti-suffragists circulated a petition

against it, but could not obtain the necessary signatures for resubmission.

The card they got out at the time said: "A majority of men and a majority of women are opposed to woman suffrage. If this be true it will surely be repealed."

But it was not true.

DO YOU KNOW—

That the population of the suffrage state of Colorado is not much larger than that of Maine; but that in 1912 266,871 votes were cast in Colorado and only 126,636 in Maine?

That the population of the suffrage state of Kansas is not much larger than that of Oklahoma; but that in 1914 the vote cast for Governor in Kansas was 530,206 and in Oklahoma only 253,682?

That the population of the suffrage state of Washington is not much larger than that of Connecticut; but that in 1914 the vote cast in Washington was 245,279 and in Connecticut it was only 181,108?

That, since women are in the minority in the suffrage states, this seems to show not only that women will vote

when allowed to, but that where women are allowed to vote more men vote?

Love Sonnets of an Anti-Suffragist.

IV. TO HIS LOVE REPROACHING HER WITH AN UNKINDNESS.

O, Mabel, you have wounded me beyond

All words—have dimmed our love's initial splendor;

I, who had thought you faithful, reverent, fond,

Am filled with doubts of your complete surrender.

Last evening when the argent car of night

Went up the sky with many a starry minion,

You, without asking me if you were right,

Expressed a clear, impersonal opinion. A judgment, a belief, an abstract thought;

And though I frowned and held myself aloof,

And murmured sternly: "Nothing of the sort,"

You did not seem to notice the reproof.

O, Mabel, cease to think, or how can we Be certain we shall never disagree?

"Colorado Is Great for the Children."

Under this misleading heading a soulless corporation is trying to deceive the public into the belief that happy and healthy children exist in a state where their mothers vote.

The Golden Egg

COURTESY OF "THE NEW REPUBLIC."

WE are hearing much to-day of the rapacity of labor. Solemn editorials declaim against the greed of grimy workers, who already earn their big two dollars a day and yet covet more. Labor is admonished not to turn our present prosperity into adversity, not to kill the ancient goose that lays the golden egg. But, unfortunately, labor is a little hard of hearing. It has to get up very early in the morning and is too dulled after its day of work to give proper consideration to these pleas for justice and moderation. It cares very little about the ancient goose and very much about the golden egg. Labor believes that it must pursue its own interest or forfeit that interest. It knows no other way of securing fair wages than to get all it can.

How much labor can get, how much it has already obtained, it is difficult to say. It has been calculated that during the past year money wages advanced from 5 to 15 per cent, and that the wage increases that went into effect on May 1, 1916, benefited some 800,000 employes to the extent of \$75,000,000 a year. Week by week this raising of wages spreads throughout the country. By strikes and the silent competition of higher wages elsewhere pressure is brought to bear upon employes in industries hitherto unaffected. All the advantages are with the worker. Business is flourishing, the scale of prices high, employment steady, while the war has brought to an end the importation of foreign laborers, upon whom employers depended to keep down wages. The surplus labor supply is gone, and even the semi-unemployables are at work. Never in our history has the demand for labor more completely overbalanced the supply.

It is a bad time to preach contentment or even moderation to the wage earner. He reads about enormous war profits, flush times, easy money. He knows that he must pay more for his meat and groceries, and he wants more money, as much more as he can get. He has just passed through a period in which his real earnings have declined, for in the last decade prices have advanced faster than money wages. The worker had more dollars in his pay envelope, but could buy less with them. Now he has a chance to redress the balance. Doubtless his increased wages will raise prices still further, but at least part of this increase, perhaps the greater part, will be paid by others than wage earners. Wage labor demands its share in the universal prosperity. It demands higher wages, shorter hours, better labor conditions, a large share in the control of industrial government.

To many good citizens this will seem a grasping policy. It is. Yet under our present industrial system no alternative is offered. That system is based upon the idea that each individual and group will secure by all peaceful means whatever it possibly can. Except where the public interest is adversely affected any one may demand anything for his labor or wares, in reason or out of reason. The United States Steel Corporation may raise its price one or three hundred per cent; the munition manufacturers may quintuple their charges; and the farmer is entitled to charge whatever the customer will pay. The process undoubtedly bears heavily on individuals and on certain economic groups. Thus, when the value of money falls, as it has fallen lately, the increase in prices, profits and wages lays a heavy burden upon the people with fixed incomes. Indeed, every change in the relative bargaining power of the various groups creates the necessity for painful readjustments. Yet no one demands that capitalists shall accept less than current interest rates or merchants less than current prices, and the government is not asked to intervene unless the change in conditions is one which undermines the health, safety or prosperity of the nation as a whole.

The present rise in wages has no such tendency. It is not excessive, or even adequate. In part it is a belated effort to overtake the rise in prices, to restore, in other words, a former wage. Beyond this, doubtless, it represents an advance. But even if wages increased more rapidly than they are now increasing, it would be a long time before they brought a reasonably equitable distribution of income within sight. A very large proportion of American wage earners still receive much less than a living wage, interpreting that phrase in the strictest sense. An increase in wages is therefore in the interest not of the workers alone but of the community.

How long the present upward tendency in wages will continue and how long thereafter the higher wage level can be maintained will depend upon the length and course of the war and upon the economic conditions which peace will bring. Much of the enlarged demand for labor is in industries which will decline or even disappear upon the conclusion of peace. This will mean disruption, unemployment and a painful adjustment to new conditions. But it is scarcely probable that it will involve a final end of our present industrial intensity. What is more likely is a mere change in the direction of our productive energies, perhaps a slackening but not a complete stopping.

For the wage earner, however, the all-decisive factor is the supply of labor. You cannot maintain your standard of living if an unlimited number of less exigent men are competing for your job. The experience of the last two years has again proved to the wage earner what he abundantly knew before: that a restriction of his numbers means on the whole an increase in his wage, while an indefinite increase means a reduction. If after the war immigrants pour in at the rate of a million a year, it will be difficult to keep real wages up to their present level, for even though money wages do not fall prices will rise. If, however, immigration is restricted, either by economic improvement in Europe or by legislation in this country, the wage earner will be better able to maintain or increase his present wage, shorten his hours—which is a more durable gain than an increase in wages—and perfect an industrial organization which will permanently assure him a more decent standard of living and a better ability to resist exploitation.