

A General to Boot

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"I WISH somebody would tell me what's the matter with Mexico," begged Mr. Stubbs. "You don't see Americans rebelling all the time."

"That's because our Mexican neighbors are a much more spirited people," explained Uncle Henry. "The proud descendants of the Montezumas have developed personal honor to a point where it has the size an' sensitiveness of a home-grown boil. All of 'em wear their pride on the outside, due south from the sacro-iliac, so that a swift kick comes close to bein' a mortal wound."

"It's a peculiar an' particular kind of pride, to be sure. If you venture to call a Mexican a bum for not workin', or bawl him out for livin' on his wife's folks, he takes it as a compliment, an' sends you flowers. He also finds an equal pleasure in bein' reproached for not payin' his debts. But let one of 'em be beaten in an election, an' he knows a fury that is absolutely foreign to the colder-blooded denizens of Nordic climes."

"Take the case of Alfred E. Smith by way of comparison. Why, what Hoover an' the Pennsylvania machine did to poor Al ought to have brought forth impassioned protests from the Humane Society, yet what was the Governor's attitude in the hour of his defeat? Did he make an instant appeal to arms, callin' on General Raskob to seize Wall Street, orderin' General Dave Walsh to fortify Boston an' telegraphin' General Josephus Daniels to attack Jersey City from the south?"

"Not so you could notice it, my dear 'Lonzo. Instead of raisin' the red flag of rebellion, tearin' up the sidewalks of New York for barricades, an' declarin' that he meant to save the country from itself, Al actually sent Hoover a telegram of congratulation."

"Can you imagine a Mexican ever bein' guilty of any such shameful supineness? Not so, Bolivar! Down there, politics operate on a hair trigger, an' a presidential candidate lets out a scream of rage if he even suspects that he's goin' to be beaten at the polls. Not that he's personally ambitious, of course, but only actuated by a patriotic resolve to save the fatherland from the ignominy an' degradation of bein' looted an' exploited by anybody other than himself."

"Gettin' an army together in Mexico presents no very large difficulty, for all a rebel leader's got to do is to float an international loan of thirty-two dollars—sixteen for beans an' sixteen for cigarettes—an' recruits pour in without waitin' to hear what it's about."

"It isn't as if the insurgent rank an' file ran any great risk, for Mexican warfare is always conducted at long range, an' about the worst that can happen to a soldier is chapped lips an' stone bruises. When rebels are captured, all that's required of 'em is to give three cheers for the Government, an' if federal troops are taken, they

Uncle Henry



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"A persistent gentleman who calls regularly"

merely ask the name that they are to *viva* for. Now an' then a man is killed by stray bullets, but regret is soothed by the conviction that a favor has been done."

"Generals offer even less of a problem than private soldiers, for any reputable employment agency stands ready to send 'em down in blocks of a hundred, although refusin' to guarantee that they won't spoil in transit. In Mexico, 'Lonzo, any soldier with a pair of shoes is a general, an' if he's got a brother an' a couple of cousins who are suckers enough to follow him, he doesn't even have to have the shoes."

Stabilizin' Influences

"Until lately, even generals ran no large amount of personal danger, for revolution was frankly regarded as the national game of Mexico, an' the rules were known an' respected. When a rebel leader lost, the laugh was on him, also the drinks, assumin' he could find a saloon-keeper to give him credit. The only punishment was that he had to take his place at the foot of the line, an' wait there until all the generals ahead of him had their fling at rebellion."

"This fellow Calles, however, is makin' a sad mess of things. The fellow doesn't seem to have any sportin' instinct at all, for up to date he's killed about four hundred generals, shootin' 'em first an' givin' 'em a fair an' impartial trial immediately afterward."

"Unless Calles can be induced to play the game accordin' to established rules, I wouldn't be a bit surprised to see revolutions called off owin' to lack of attendance. You can't have a good vigorous rebellion without a bunch of generals, an' it's gettin' so in Mexico that no man's willin' to acknowledge any rank higher than that of a corporal."

"In my opinion, however, killin' isn't the answer. Even if you put every general before a firin' squad, or, what would hurt much worse, put 'em to work, there would still be trouble an' unrest, for Mexico lacks stabilizin' influences. Lots of Americans urge the Strong Man stuff, but no nation ever got fat sittin' on a bayonet. What poor old Mexico needs, if you ask me, is not any more Strong Men, but the introduction of the Installment Plan."

"You can talk all you please about a nation's peace bein' dependent upon good government an' just laws, but it's the bunk. What puts a people to work, an' keeps 'em at it, is ownin' somethin' that's not entirely paid for. If the United States really had the interests of Mexico at heart, instead of sendin' down machine guns we'd lend 'em money enough for every peon to make the first payment on a talking-machine, a flivver and a radio set. That's what would make for permanent peace."

"Look at all of the injustices that curse American life! Terrible inequalities, 'Lonzo! Simply terrible! One man lolls along in a luxurious limousine while another is compelled to put up with an open car. One man lives in lordly luxury an' another is forced to rest content with mere comfort. One man is able to get London an' Paris on his radio, an' another, every whit as worthy, is only able to get Topeka or Los Angeles."

"We can't walk on the grass in our public parks, we can't spit on the sidewalk or in the street cars, we get arrested if we disregard traffic signals, we can't park within half a mile of where we want to stop, an' we have no protection at all against art theaters, autobiographies, newspaper columnists an' theme songs. As for marriage, it's

only in certain progressive communities that a man is allowed to trade in an old wife for a new model."

"Yet you don't see anybody rebelling, do you? Even Democrats have ceased to do more than beg the favor of a local anesthetic. No, we submit because we've got to keep busy earnin' the money to meet our installments on the first of every month."

"The real stabilizer in the United States is not the army, not the police, but the persistent gentleman who calls so regularly for our payments on the house, the car, the radio, the vacuum cleaner an' the furniture. Everybody owns somethin' in the United States, an' that's what makes it so hard for the radicals who urge us to copy Russia."

A Yankee Trick

"There's a revolution that seems to be successful," asserted Mr. Stubbs. "Don't you think we ought to recognize Russia?"

"But how can we?" protested Uncle Henry. "Even people who've spent their entire lives in the country are unable to make a positive identification. The changes have been so many an' so violent that there's absolutely nothin' left to go by. All the strawberry marks, moles an' wens have been wiped out by the various upheavals, an' Russia never did afford any such clues as dry-cleanin' tags, laundry marks an' distinctive underwear."

"We've got much the same sort of problem right here in the United States. Both Texas and Virginia are clamorin' for recognition, but since the late election nobody can be found that's willin' to swear to 'em. Senator Swanson, born an' bred in the Old Dominion, confesses that he don't know Virginia any more, an' Al Smith insists that New Hampshire has put on a slouch hat an' a goatee an' is impersonatin' Texas."

"That certainly was queer about Virginia and Texas," said Mr. Stubbs. "I can't understand it."

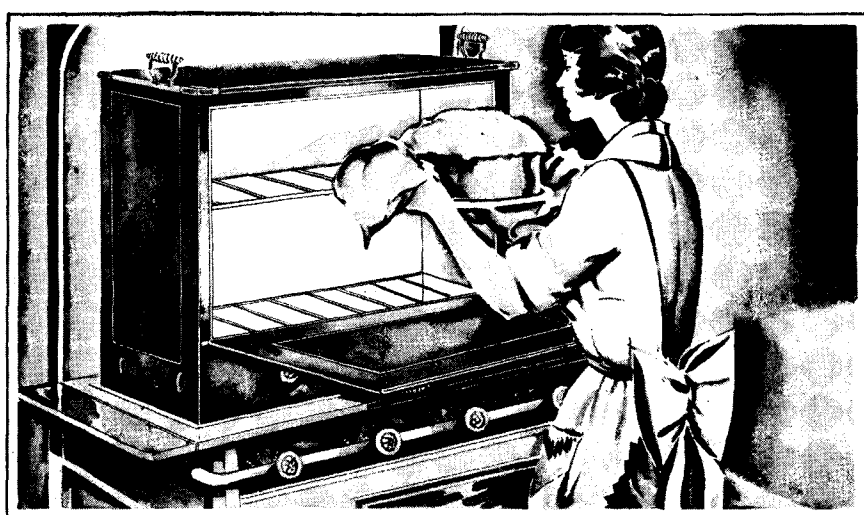
"It's perfectly simple," said Uncle Henry. "The people in those parts have been votin' by sight for the last fifty years, an' some Yankee hound simply reversed the eagle and the rooster on the ballot."

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THE Senate Committee on Inter-oceanic Canals recently reported out a joint resolution authorizing an investigation and survey for another Isthmian canal. Which recalls the exclamation of Henry Blakeley, then freight traffic manager of the Northern Pacific Railroad, at a railroad rate conference held four years ago in Salt Lake City:

"The Panama Canal—we would all be better off today if somebody filled it up!"

Of course Mr. Blakeley was not seriously proposing that we should fill up the Panama Canal. He was merely stating the attitude of some of the railroads and the citizens on their lines toward the canal. It was the attitude that James J. Hill expressed years ago, at a public meeting in Spokane, when he said:

"I look forward to the time when we shall grow pond lilies in that canal."

Not even the wisest foresaw the sweeping changes in commerce and industry which would be brought about by the digging of the canal. Few realized that so little a thing as the changing of a freight rate on a single commodity might, by disturbing delicate adjustments, spread out and out and affect more people directly and indirectly than any other similar economic factor.

The canal was built by the American people, at a cost of \$500,000,000, in order to shorten ocean routes. It reduces the distance from New York to San Francisco by water from 13,135 miles to 5,262 miles; from Baltimore to Valparaiso from 8,454 to 4,560 miles. From Liverpool to Honolulu from 13,679 to 9,276 miles.

Some Americans who joined enthusiastically in building the canal now want to fill it up. To a majority it gives an added commercial advantage. For all it aids the national defense; it aids the coast-to-coast trade; it aids international trade.

Since 1920 the commercial traffic passing through the canal has grown rapidly. Of the 26,000,000 tons of cargo that

went through in 1926, 16,000,000 were international and 10,000,000 intercoastal. (In 1927 the international was 17,000,000; the intercoastal 10,500,000.) Excluding 4,000,000 tons of oil shipments, 6,000,000 tons of ordinary commodities might have been carried by the railroads if there had been no canal. Three and a half millions of these moved west from the Atlantic Coast to Pacific Coast ports and two and a half million tons moved in the opposite direction.

A Selfish Viewpoint

Canal operation has helped some of our people and hindered others. The manufacturer, the wholesaler, the farmer, the railroad man, the consumer—each has reached a different conclusion with regard to the value of the canal—a conclusion based on his own interest.

The railroads have made vigorous efforts to recover the canal traffic wholly or in part. Compare canal figures with the tonnage of transcontinental railroads that reach the Pacific Coast—the Northern Pacific, the Great Northern,

the St. Paul, the Union Pacific, the Santa Fé, the Southern Pacific, and several smaller systems.

In his testimony before a House Committee of Congress in 1924, Mr. J. F. Shaughnessy, chairman of the Nevada Public Service Commission, said:

"Compared with this relatively small tonnage (6,000,000 tons), the all-rail tonnage handled by the transcontinental lines reaching the Pacific Coast exceeded 248,000,000 tons for 1923. This was an increase of 25,600,000 tons over the previous year. Moreover, for the same period, one system, the Southern Pacific, increased its 1923 tonnage over 1922 by approximately 7,000,000 tons, or 1,000,000 tons in excess of the total canal traffic.

"The railroad traffic managers contend that they are entitled to what they term a fair share of this canal traffic, and that if permitted to establish long and short haul rates their share will approximate 3,000,000 tons per annum."

That would increase their traffic a little more than one per cent.

The railroads in 1926 applied to the Interstate Commerce Commission for

Shall we fill up the Canal?

By Merle Thorpe

Editor, Nation's Business

One man's meat is another's poison, and so James J. Hill, famous railroad builder, looked forward cheerfully to the time when pond lilies would crowd ships out of the Panama Canal. Freight rates and sectional competition are making others repeat his pious hope. Here is the surprising story

authority to fix rates to the Coast lower than rates to intermediate points; that is, they wished to carry freight from Chicago to Seattle at a lower rate than they would charge from Chicago to Spokane. The commission said no.

The commission reported, after extensive hearings, that all Middle West interests, with the exception of iron and steel industries affiliated with the United States Steel Corporation, had reached a new acute competition with Eastern manufacturers, because business which they formerly enjoyed on the Pacific Coast now moved largely from the East through the canal. The commission found also that the Pacific Coast was divided in its views as to the proposed application.

Manufacturers of commodities other than lumber opposed a lower rate on transcontinental shipments because it would open up a new competitive field. Manufacturers of paper articles said that the movement by water of many of the items was not in sufficient volume to justify the proposed rate reductions. Jobbers and distributors at Coast ports said they would benefit by having the large producing districts of the Middle West made available to them as additional sources of supply.

Meeting the New Competition

So likewise, the fruit, lumber and flour-mill shippers supported the new rate policy on the ground that it would result in an increase in westbound traffic and thus afford a better car supply for their shipments to Eastern markets, and this might lead to reductions in their rates.

Decided opposition was found, according to the commission, in the intermountain country, with the exception of lumber, fruit, mining and flour-mill industries. They said a reduction in the rates charged for commodities moving through to the Pacific Coast at rates less than the rates charged to intermediate territory would impose an undue burden (Continued on page 67)