

CARDENAS'S FAMILY SAW HIM DIE AT BAY

Shot Four Times, Villa Captain
Fought Before Mother,
Wife, and Daughter.

DRAMATIC FIGHT AT RANCH

Lieut. Patton and Ten Men Killed
Three Bandits—Peons Kept
on Skinning a Beef.

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FIELD HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES PUNITIVE EXPEDITION, NEAR NAMIQUIPA, Mexico, May 16, (by Truck Train to Columbus, N. M., May 22.)—Fifty miles southeast of Namiquipa, present headquarters of the United State expedition, lies the Pueblo of Rubio, and ten miles north of Rubio is the rancho San Miguel.

There are many, countless almost, ranchos San Miguel in Mexico, but at the one to which reference is now made there occurred on the afternoon of Sunday, May 14, a fight that will go down as unique in the records of this expedition. For it was there that Lieutenant George S. Patton of Los Angeles with a scout and nine enlisted men, in three automobiles, encountered and killed three Villistas, including Captain Julio Cardenas, in what army men would call one of the prettiest fights of the campaign.

Three Villistas is not a big bag, even in this campaign where the guerrilla warfare does not make for large casualty totals, but the fact that Patton and his men fought from the automobiles, that is to say, sprang directly from their cars into the fight, put the encounter in a class by itself. Moreover, the novelty and, from the Villista standpoint, the tragedy of the fight were accentuated by the fact that Cardenas's mother, wife, and daughter were in the ranch-house at the time and witnessed the whole affair down to the last dramatic touch when the Americans tied the bodies of Cardenas and his two dead companions across the hot hoods of the three army autos and whirled away with them toward headquarters.

Rubio had long been a Villista stronghold. Near there, only recently, P. H. Holley, an American cattleman, was killed from ambush by Villa adherents, and in the general vicinity of the town the bands of Villistas had been reported from time to time, boldly riding into the San Miguel ranch, then disappearing into the mountains as Villistas have a way of doing.

Refuge for Villistas.

The ranch is part of the vast Zuloaga estate, and a daughter of old Don Carlos Zuloaga married Alberto Madero, a cousin of the late Francisco Madero, in whose behalf Villa fought until Madero became President. Francisco Madero is dead, but his kin must still make some show of gratitude to Villa and his men for their support, which probably accounts for the fact that the scattered Villistas around Rubio had a way of gathering at the San Miguel ranch, although the ranch is looked after by an American, Edgar Lunt, a lean cowman from El Paso, whose brother Heaton Lunt is a scout with this expedition.

Ten days before Patton's exploit, the Villista Cardenas and a few men had fired on a detachment of ours from the ranch and had got away. Came then to headquarters rumors that Cardenas was visiting the ranch with more or less regularity to see his wife. Headquarters was then situated but a comparatively short run by automobile from the ranch, and when Patton, with his handful of enlisted men, left last Sunday morning to get corn at a ranch four miles south of San Miguel he went prepared to flush bandits en route. All during the campaign, practically, he had been acting as one of General Pershing's aides, and now had come his chance for a scrap.

Two of the cars of the party were manned by civilians. Leonard Hudnall of El Paso drove the leading car bearing Patton, Lunt, the cowman; E. L. Holmdahl, a scout, and one enlisted man. Bill Walker of El Paso and Arizona drove the third car. The middle one was driven by and carried enlisted men only.

Twenty-five yards apart the cars sped through Rubio, without incident and streaked away down the sandy road toward the San Miguel. The road rises gradually as it nears the ranch, and, knowing that the cars could be seen approaching, Lieutenant Patton gave orders to speed up. If there were Villistas in the ranch house he wanted to run on them before they could make a break for it. A hundred yards from the house, and the party noticed that a peon who had been working in front of the rectangle of 'dobe ranch buildings dropped his work and ran inside, as if to give the alarm. By the time the cars were abreast of the ranch this man had come out again, and with some show of nonchalance had resumed his labors. That he had given the alarm later incidents showed.

Three Fired on Lieutenant.

The three cars swung by the 'dobe corral in the rear of the ranch; then, at Patton's order, came to an abrupt stop in the road, immediately behind the ranch house. Patton sprang from the car, and, drawing a six-shooter, ran east in the lee of the north wall of the ranch house until he reached the front of the group of buildings. There four Mexicans were skinning a beef, and Patton was on the point of speaking to them when three horsemen, with rifles drawn from saddle boots, rode out through an arched sallyport of 'dobe from the corral formed by the ranch building.

The horsemen opened fire immediately, cutting chunks of 'dobe from the wall over the Lieutenant's head, and narrowly missing the scout Holmdahl and the chauffeur Hudnall, who had come up behind him. Patton raised his six-shooter, which, by the way, is a beautiful weapon, chased and ornamented, and fired. He shot five times.

The leading horseman lurched in his saddle, then, wheeling his mount, rode back through the archway. He was wounded. Patton, his revolver empty, dodged back behind the wall to reload, and as he did so the second horseman, putting spurs to his mount, made a dash for it, riding diagonally across the ranch yard to the left of the Lieutenant and his party, firing over his shoulder as he fled.

"I remembered then," Patton relates, "what an old Texas ranger had told me. That was to kill a fugitive's horse, which was the surest way of stopping him."

With this axiom in mind Patton sent a bullet from his pistol crashing through the hip of the fleeing Villista's horse.

The horse, hip broken, stumbled, fell, and rolled over on his rider. The Mexican struggled to his feet, game, facing the Americans. Lieutenant Patton fired, and so did Holmdahl, the scout; Hudnall, the chauffeur, and the two enlisted men. It was like a firing squad. The Mexican sank down in the sand without a word, dead.

Number two of the Mexicans had meantime made his way afoot southeast from the ranch house, and was seen running along a stone wall 150 yards away. At this range five enlisted men, who had been posted at the head of a lane bordered by a barbed wire fence, opened on him, as did Lieutenant Patton, now using his rifle, and the scout. The runner fell face forward in the sand.

Death of Cardenas.

This accounted for two of the trio, but for the moment the third horseman, the one who, wounded, had ridden back into the house, was not to be found. A moment later there was a shout. Two enlisted men, crawling forward in the protection of a ridge to where lay the second man killed, reported that a third man was making his way along a stone wall which stretched away from the ranch to the north. This was Cardenas. With a shattered arm, but still clinging to his rifle and pistol, he was making a slow and painful progress behind the barrier of rocks. Three enlisted men sprinted to head him off and Cardenas, his arm dangling, bareheaded, and bleeding in the noon-day sun, stood at bay.

As Patton put it to me, Cardenas had nerve even if he was a Mexican. With that broken arm he crouched behind the

wall, the target of the enlisted men, firing shot for shot as they closed in on him. He kept firing until he was too weak to raise his gun, then he sank down by the wall mortally wounded. By raising an arm an enlisted man signaled to Patton that he had got his man. About the same time Cardenas raised his unbroken arm in token of surrender.

Holmdahl, the scout, approached the wounded man to disarm him. But Cardenas was still game. When the scout was within twenty feet of where he lay, Cardenas rested his pistol over his broken arm and fired. He had concluded not to surrender after all, but to die fighting the "gringos." He had his wish. There was nothing for the scout to do but shoot, and shoot he did. At less than twenty paces he put a bullet through Cardenas's brain.

The fight was over. In the ranch yard lay three dead men. Not an American was wounded. The first man killed proved to be a Villista private, whose identification was of no consequence; the second was one Isador Lopez, an officer, and the third, as I have said, Cardenas, called by some a Captain, by others a General. Examination of his body showed he had suffered four wounds through the body, these before the final "tira gracia" (mercy shot) killed him instantly. His cartridge belts indicated that he had fired thirty-five futile shots.

Peons as Shield in Search.

As yet the ranch house had not been searched. How many Villistas were there Lieutenant Patton did not know. He got a long ladder and with four enlisted men scaled the flat 'dobe roof. No one was there. But from that vantage point he saw a strange and curious sight. The four Mexicans who were skinning a beef when the army cars first came up were still engaged in that occupation. With rare cool-headedness they had reasoned that if they kept busy with heads bent they would not be shot at. And so they had worked on during all the shooting. If any of them had broken and run he would have been killed. That none of them was shot at by the enlisted men speaks well for the discipline maintained by the expedition.

These four level-headed Mexicans Lieutenant Patton now rounded up and used as a buffer in the search of the ranch buildings. He made them go before him and his men through every door (as a precaution, and in this way wound in and out through the labyrinth of 'dobe chambers that made up the rectangle. In one room he confronted three women with lips set and arms folded. They were the mother and the wife and the daughter of Cardenas, but they said never a word. They merely looked at Patton and his men and expressed neither horror, hate, nor grief. One of them had a baby in her arms. As if oblivious of the presence of the Americans, she kept walking back and forth, crooning to the child.

Three rooms Patton and his men found locked. The doors were of heavy wood, and, with a view to speed, the Lieutenant smashed the locks with shots from his pistol. He entered them cautiously, only to find two miserable old women. Wrinkled, disheveled, and terror stricken, unlike the Cardenas women, they crouched in the corner, trembling at what they thought was the end. When no shots came, one of them spoke. She called on God the Father and Christ the Son and the saints to have mercy on her and hers and to visit the wrath of God on "los Americanos." She was still muttering as Patton and his men backed out of the room.

In the corral the party found Cardenas's horse and his silver-mounted saddle. Holmdahl had already taken from the body the rifle and a superb pistol. It now remained to remove the bodies, in order that their identification might be made certain at headquarters. The expedition had compiled a list of men who have campaigned with Villa, and Cardenas is on that list.

It was nearly sundown when the bodies reached headquarters in one of the strangest processions that ever went into a military camp. Half an hour later, when the sky was red, they were buried. Papers which might be of use to the expedition had been removed. There was one paper which I saw and which has, I think, no military value. It came from the man Lopez and it was red from his wounds. It was an unfinished letter to his sweetheart.

Lieutenant Patton is 30 years old and

a native of California. He was graduated from West Point in 1909 and is rated one of the best all-round athletes in the army. He was a member of the 1912 Olympic teams. He designed the new sabre now used by the army, and has been instructor in both riding and swordsmanship at Fort Riley, Kansas. For a time he was stationed at Washington as aid to General Wood. Though attached to the Eighth Cavalry, he has been with this expedition as aid to General Pershing. In 1911 he married Beatrice Ayer of Boston, Mass.