

Maximilian in Mexico - Woman's Reminiscences of the French Intervention 1862-1867

Sara Yorke Stevenson

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MAXIMILIAN IN MEXICO

A WOMAN'S REMINISCENCES OF THE FRENCH INTERVENTION 1862-1867

SARA YORKE STEVENSON, Sc. D.

NEW YORK

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THE CENTURY CO.

TO THE MEMORY OF

SEÑOR DON MATIAS ROMERO

MINISTER OF MEXICO TO WASHINGTON

1882-1898.

One of the latest survivors of the drama, some episodes of which are herein related.

His approval of five articles on the French Intervention and the reign of Maximilian, which appeared in the "Century Magazine" in 1897, and his earnest request that they "be published in a more permanent form, led to the presentation of this volume to the public.

With deepest appreciation of the important part played by this Mexican patriot in checking the aggressive policy of Europe upon this continent, the author here inscribes his name.

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PRELUDE

In offering these pages to the public, my aim is not to write a historical sketch of the reign of Maximilian of Austria, nor is it to give a description of the political crisis through which Mexico passed during that period. My only desire is to furnish the reader with a point of view the value of which lies in the fact that it is that of an eyewitness who was somewhat more than an ordinary spectator of a series of occurrences which developed into one of the most dramatic episodes of

modern times.

Historians too often present their personages to the public and to posterity as actors upon a stage,--I was about to say as puppets in a show,--whose acts are quite outside of themselves, and whose voices express emotions not their own. They appear before the footlights of a fulfilled destiny; and their doubts, their weaknesses, are concealed, along with their temptations, beneath the paint and stage drapery lent them by the historian who, knowing beforehand the denouement toward which their efforts tended, unconsciously assumes a like knowledge on their part. They are thus often credited with deep-laid motives and plans which it may perhaps have been impossible for them to entertain at the time.

To those who lived with them when they were MAKING history, these actors are all aglow with life. They are animated by its passions, its impulses. They are urged onward by personal ambition, or held back by selfish considerations. They are not characters in a drama; they are men of the world, whose official acts, like those of the men about us to-day, are influenced by their affections, their family complications, their prejudices, their rivalries, their avarice, their vanity. The circumstances of their private life temporarily excite or depress their energies, and often give them a new and unlooked-for direction; and the success or failure of their undertakings may be recognized as having been the result of their individual limitations, of their personal ignorance of the special conditions with which they were called upon to cope, or of their short-sightedness.

In this lies the importance of private recollections. The gossip of one epoch forms part of the history of the next. It is therefore to be deplored that those whose more or less obscure lives run their course in the shadow of some public career are seldom sufficiently aware of the fact at the time to note accurately their observations and impressions.

These thoughts occurred to me when, at the request of the editor of the "Century," I one night took up my pen, and gathering about me old letters, photographs, and small tokens faded and yellow with age, plunged deep into the recollections of my youthful days, and evoked the ghosts of brilliant friends, many of whom have since passed away, leaving but names written in lines of blood upon a page of history. As they appeared across a chasm of thirty years, the well-remembered faces familiarly smiled, each flinging a memory. They formed a motley company: generals now dead, whose names are revered or execrated by their countrymen; lieutenants and captains who have since made their way in the world, or have died, broken-hearted heroes, before Metz or Sedan; women who seemed obscure, but whose names, in the general convulsion of nations, have risen to newspaper notoriety or to lasting fame; soldiers who have become historians; guerrilleros now pompously called generals; adventurers who have grown into personages; personages who have sunk into adventurers; sovereigns who have become martyrs.

They had all been laid away in my mind, buried in the ashes of the past along with the old life. The drama in which each had played his part had for many years seemed as far off and dim as though read in a book a long time ago; and yet now, how alive it all suddenly became--alive with a life that no pen can picture!

There were their photographs and their invitations, their old notes and bits of doggerel sent to accompany small courtesies--flowers, music, a

Havana dog, or the loan of a horse. It was all vivid and real enough now. Those men were not to me mere historical figures of whom one reads. They fought historic battles, they founded a historic though ephemeral empire; their defeats, their triumphs, their "deals," their blunders, were now matters of history: but for all that, they were of common flesh and blood, and the strange incidents of a strangely picturesque episode in the existence of this continent seemed natural enough if one only knew the men.

Singly or in groups, the procession slowly passed, each one pausing for a brief space in the flood of light cast by an awakening memory. Many wore uniforms--French, Austrian, Belgian, Mexican. Some were dancing gaily, laughing and flirting as they went by. Others looked careworn and absorbed by the preoccupations of a distracted state, and by the growing consciousness of the thankless responsibility which the incapacity of their rulers at home, and the unprincipled deceit of a few official impostors, had placed upon them. But all, whether thoughtful or careless, whether clairvoyant or blind, whether calmly yielding to fate or attempting to breast the storm, were driven along by the irresistible current of events, each drifting toward the darkness of an inevitable doom which, we now know, was inexorably awaiting him as he passed from the ray of light into the gloom in his "dance to death."

PART I.

THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE

1861-62

MAXIMILIAN IN MEXICO

I. EL DORADO

During the winter of 1861-62, my last winter in France, one of the principal subjects of conversation in Parisian official circles was our Civil War, and its possible bearing upon the commercial and colonial interests of Europe, or rather the possible advantage that Europe, and especially France, might hope to derive from it.

A glance at M. de Lamartine's famous article written in January, 1864, and reprinted a year or two later in his "Entretiens Litteraires," will help us to understand how far Frenchmen were from appreciating not only our point of view, but the true place assigned by fate to the United States in contemporary history. Nothing could so plainly reveal the failure of the French to understand the natural drift of events on this side of the Atlantic, and account for the extraordinary, though shortlived, success of Napoleon's wild Mexican scheme. In this article, written with a servile pen, the poet-statesman attacked the character of the people of the United States, and brought out Napoleon's motives in his attempt to obtain, not for France alone, but for Europe at large, a foothold upon the American continent. With a vividness likely to impress his readers with the greatness of the conception as a theory, he showed how the establishment of a European monarchy in Mexico must insure to European nations a share in the commerce of the New World. The new continent, America, is the property of Europe, he urged. The Old World should not recognize the right of the United States to control its wealth and power.

An article by Michel Chevalier, published with the same purpose in view, threatened Mexico with annexation by the United States unless the existing government of the country underwent reorganization.

Both authors were frequent visitors at my guardian's house in Paris, which accounts for the impression made upon my youthful mind by their written utterances at that time. M. Chevalier was a distinguished political economist. He had visited Mexico, and knew the value of its mining and agricultural wealth without sufficiently recognizing the actual conditions to be dealt with, and he fully indorsed the imperial conception. "The success of the expedition is infallible," he said. He explained the resistance of the Mexicans by their hatred of the Spaniards, and demonstrated to his own satisfaction that the burden of the venture must fall upon France, who should reap the glory of its success.

Modern civilization, he urged, includes a distinct branch--the Latin--in which Catholicism shines. Of this France is the soul as well as the arm. "Without her, without her energy and her initiative the group of the Latin races must be reduced to a subordinate rank in the world, and would have been eclipsed long ago." In comparing upon a map of the world the space occupied by the Catholic nations two centuries ago with the present area under their control, "one is dismayed at all that they have lost and are losing" every day. "The Catholic nations seem threatened to be swallowed up by an ever-rising flood."*

* "Revue des Deux Mondes," of April, 1862, p. 916. It is interesting to find him quoting Humboldt's prophecy that "the time will come, be it a century sooner or later, when the production of silver will have no other limit than that imposed upon it by its ever-increasing depreciation as a value." (April, 1862, p. 894).

When the Mexican empire was planned our Civil War had been raging for nearly two years. From the standpoint of the French rulers, the moment seemed auspicious for France to interfere in American affairs. The establishment of a great Latin empire, founded under French protection and developed in the interest of France, which must necessarily derive the principal benefit of the stupendous wealth which Mexico held ready to pour into the lap of French capitalists,--of an empire which in the West might put a limit to the supremacy of the United States, as well as counterbalance the British supremacy in the East, thus opposing a formidable check to the encroachments of the Anglo-Saxon race in the interest of the Latin nations,--such was Napoleon's plan, and I have been told by one who was close to the imperial family at that time that the Emperor himself fondly regarded it as "the conception of his reign."

Napoleon III labored under the disadvantage of reigning beneath the shadow of a great personality which, consciously or unconsciously, he ever strove to emulate. But however clever he may be, the man who, anxious to appear or even to be great, forces fate and creates impossible situations that he may act a leading part before the world, is only a schemer. This is the key to the character of Napoleon III and to his failures. He looked far away and dreamed of universal achievements, when at home, at his very door, were the threatening issues he should have mastered. The story is told of him that one evening, at the Tuileries, when the imperial party were playing games, chance brought to the Emperor the question, "What is your favorite occupation?" to which he answered: "To seek the solution of unsolvable

problems." It is also related that in his younger days a favorite axiom of his was: "Follow the ideas of your time, they carry you along; struggle against them, they overcome you; precede them, they support you." True enough; but only upon condition that you will not mistake the shrill chorus of a few interested courtiers and speculators for the voice of your time, nor imagine that you precede your generation because you stand alone. He dreamed of far-away glory, and his flatterers told him his dreams were prophetic. He saw across the seas the mirage of a great Latin empire in the West, and beheld the Muse of history inscribing his name beside that of his great kinsman as the restorer of the political and commercial equilibrium of the world, as well as the benefactor who had thrown El Dorado open to civilization. With the faith of ignorance, he proposed to share with an Austrian archduke these imaginary possessions, and to lay for him, as was popularly said in 1862-63, "a bed of roses in a gold-mine." Unmindful of warnings, he pushed onward for two years, apparently incapable of grasping the fact that the mirage was receding before him; and finally found his fool's errand saved from ridicule only by the holocaust of many lives, and raised to dignity only by the tragedy of Queretaro.

All this we now know, but in 1861-62 the Napoleonic star shone brilliantly with the full luster cast upon it by the Crimean war and the result of the Italian campaign. It is true that occasionally some strong discordant note issuing from the popular depths would strike the ear and for the time mar the paeans of applause which always greet successful power. For instance, at the Odeon one night, during the war with Austria, I was present when the Empress Eugenie entered. The Odeon is in the Latin Quarter, and medical and law students filled the upper tiers of the house. As the sovereign took her seat in a box a mighty chorus suddenly arose, and hundreds of voices sang, "Corbleu, madame, que faites vous ici?" quoting the then popular song, "Le Sire de Franboisy."

The incident, so insulting to the poor woman, gave rise to some disturbance; and although the boys were quieted, the Empress soon left the theater, choking with mortification. M. Rochefort, who refers to this incident in his memoirs, adds that as the imperial party came out, another insult of a still more shocking character was thrown at the Empress. This, of course, I did not witness.

Such occurrences were usually treated by the press and the government sympathizers as emanating from youthful hot-brains, or from the lower ranks of the people, and therefore as unworthy of attention. But those hot-brains represented the coming thinkers of France, and the "common" people represented its strength. On the whole, however, in 1862 the more powerful element had rallied to and upheld the government. The court and the army were so loud in their admiration of the profound policy of the Emperor that those who heeded the croakings of the few clear-sighted men composing the opposition were in the background.

It so happened that my lines had been cast among these, and it is interesting now, in looking back upon the expressions of opinion of those who most strenuously opposed French interference in American affairs, to see how little even these men, wise as they were in their generation, appreciated the true conditions prevailing in Mexico. None seriously doubted the possibility of occupying the country and of maintaining a French protectorate. The only point discussed was, Was it worth while? And to this question Jules Favre, Thiers, Picard, Berryer, Glais-Bizoin, Pelletan, and a few others emphatically said, "No!"

II. THE NEW "NAPOLEONIC IDEA"

The "Napoleonic idea," however, had not burst forth fully equipped in all its details from the Caesarean brain in 1862. It would be unfair not to allow it worthy antecedents and a place in the historic sequence. As far back as 1821, when the principle of constitutional monarchy was accepted by the Mexicans under the influence of General Iturbide, a convention known as the "plan of Iguala" had been drawn by Generals Iturbide and Santa Anna, and accepted by the new viceroy, O'Donoju, in which it was agreed that the crown of Mexico should be offered first to Ferdinand VII, and, in case of his refusal, to the Archduke Charles of Austria, or to the Infante of Spain, Don Carlos Luis, or to Don Francisco Paulo.

The Mexican embassy sent to Spain to offer the throne of Mexico to Ferdinand was ill received. The king had no thought of purchasing a crown which he regarded as his own by the recognition of the constitutional principle which he had so long fought; and the Cortes scorned to authorize any of the Spanish princes to accept the advances of the Mexicans. The result of Spain's unbending policy was a rupture which involved the loss of its richest colony.

In 1854 General Santa Anna,* then dictator or president for life, had given full powers to Senor Gutierrez de Estrada to treat with the courts of Paris, London, Vienna, and Madrid for the establishment of a monarchy in Mexico under the scepter of a European prince; and Senor de Estrada, with the consent of the French government, had offered the throne of his country to the Duc de Montpensier, who wisely, as it proved, had declined it.

* Santa Anna raised the flag of revolt against his benefactor in 1823. Iturbide abdicated, was given a pension of twenty-five thousand dollars, and, at his own suggestion, was escorted to the sea-coast, a voluntary exile, by a guard of honor. From this time Santa Anna had a hand in all the revolutions that followed. He himself subsequently fell before an insurrection of the Liberal party led by the old Indian governor of Guerrero, General Alvarez.

The Crimean war and the downfall of General Santa Anna checked the progress of these negotiations, which were resumed as soon as, peace having been restored, the European powers could turn their attention to their commercial interests in America, which Senor de Estrada represented to them as gravely compromised by the encroachments of the United States in Mexico, and to the grievances urged by their subjects against the Mexican government.*

* Compare Abbe Domenech, "Histoire du Mexique," vol. ii, p. 360.

In 1859 General Miramon* confirmed the powers given by General Santa Anna to the Mexican representative; and then it was that, for the first time, the Emperor commended to his attention the Archduke Maximilian.

* General Miramon was barely twenty-six when he rose to the first rank in Mexican politics. Of Bearnese extraction, his father's family passed over to Spain in the eighteenth century. His grandfather had gone to Mexico as aide de-camp to one of the viceroys. Miguel Miramon had served in the war against the United States. He was a brilliant officer, bold, vigorous, original. During his term of office he had on his side the

clergy, the army, the capital.

It were also unfair not to admit that the varying success of the conflict between the two factions struggling for supremacy in Mexico was likely to deceive the European powers, and made it easy for men whose personal interests were at stake to misrepresent the respective strength of the contending parties and the condition of the country. But no leader of men has, in the eyes of history, a right to be deceived either by men or by appearances; and granting that Napoleon might at first have been misled, he had timely warning, and the opportunity to withdraw, as did the Spaniards and the English, without shame, if without glory.

After Mexico, led by the patriots Hidalgo and Morelos, had thrown off the Spanish yoke, it became for forty years the scene of a series of struggles between contending factions which reduced the country to a state of anarchy. Once rid of their Spanish viceroys, the Mexicans found themselves little better off than they had been under their rule. For centuries the Mexican church had played upon the piety of the devout for the furtherance of its own temporal interests, until one third of the whole wealth of the nation had found its way into its hands. It was against the clergy, and against the retrogressive policy for which it stood, that in 1856 a wide-spread revolutionary movement was successfully organized, as a result of which, in 1857, a liberal constitution was drawn up and accepted by the people.

The clerical or reactionary party, although it counted among its adherents many of the best old Spanish families composing Mexico's aristocracy, would probably soon have ceased to be a serious practical obstacle in the way of reform had it not been for the wealth of a corrupt clergy, by means of which its armies were kept in the field. Be this as it may, the reign of constitutional order represented by President Comonfort in 1856 was shortlived, General Comonfort abdicated in 1858. Benito Juarez, by virtue of his rank of president of the Supreme Court, then became constitutional president ad interim.

By a pronunciamiento General Zuloaga, with the help of the army, took possession of the government and of the capital, while Juarez maintained his rights at Queretaro. War raged between the two parties, with rapidly varying success. A letter dated November 19, 1860, written by my brother, a young American engineer who had gone to Mexico to take part in the construction of the first piece of railroad built between Vera Cruz and Mexico, gives a concise and picturesque account of the situation:

Things look dark--so dark, in fact, that for the present I do not think it advisable to risk any more money here. There is a fair prospect of the decree of Juarez being annulled. If so, our bonds go overboard. There is a prospect of Juarez signing a treaty. If so, our bonds go up 15 or 20. It is rouge et noire--a throw of the dice. The Liberals have been beaten at Queretaro, where Miramon took from them twenty-one pieces of artillery and many prisoners, among them an American officer of artillery, whom he shot the next day, AS USUAL. Oajaca has fallen into the hands of the clergy. The Liberals under Carbajal attacked Tulancingo, and were disgracefully beaten by a lot of ragged Indians. They are losing ground everywhere; and if the United States does not take hold of this unhappy country it will certainly go to the dogs. There is a possibility of compromise between Juarez and Miramon, the effect of which is this: the constitution of '57 to be revised; the sale of clergy property to their profit; the revocation of Juarez's decree of July about the confiscation of clergy property to the profit of the

state; religious liberty, civil marriage, etc.

A gloomy picture, and true enough, save in one respect. The Liberals might be beaten everywhere, but they were not losing ground; on the contrary, their cause rested upon too solid a foundation of right and progress, and the last brilliant exploits of General Miramon were insufficient to galvanize the reactionary party into a living force.

On December 22, 1860, Miramon was finally defeated at Calpulalpan by General Ortega, and shortly after left the country. On December 28 the reforms prepared in Vera Cruz by Juarez, proclaiming the principles of religious toleration, and decreeing the confiscation of clergy property, the abolition of all 13 religious orders, and the institution of civil marriage, etc., were promulgated in the capital by General Ortega; and on January 11, 1861, Juarez* himself took possession of the city of Mexico. The Liberals were triumphant, and the civil war was virtually at an end.

* Benito Pablo Juarez was of Indian birth, and as a boy began life as a mozo, or servant, in a wealthy family. His ability was such as to draw upon him the attention of his employer, who had him educated. He soon rose to greatness as a lawyer, and then as a member of the National Congress, governor of Oajaca, secretary to the executive, and president of the republic.

The defeated army, as was invariably the case in Mexico, dissolved and disappeared, leaving only a residuum of small bands of guerrillas. These preyed impartially upon the people and upon travelers of both parties. Leonardo Marquez almost alone remained in the field and seriously continued the conflict. The principal leaders fled abroad, especially to Paris, where they made friends, and planned a revenge upon the victorious oppressors of the church, whose outrages upon God and man were vividly colored by religious and party hatred. Among these were men of refinement and good address, scions of old Spanish families, who, like M. Gutierrez de Estrada, found ready sympathy among the Emperor's entourage. As a rule, none but "hopelessly defeated parties seek the help of foreign invasion of their own land"; but the Empress Eugenie, who, a Spaniard herself, was a devout churchwoman, lent a willing ear to the stories of the refugees, impressively told in her own native tongue. To reinstate the church, and to oppose the strong Catholicism of a Latin monarchy to the Protestant influence of the Northern republic, seemed to her the most attractive aspect of the projected scheme.

The struggle that had been carried on for so many years in Mexico with varying vicissitudes was not purely one of partizan interest based upon a different view of political government: it was the struggle of the spirit of the nineteenth century against the survival of Spanish medievalism; it was the contest of American republicanism against the old order of things, religious and social as well as political; of progressive liberalism against conservatism and reaction.

The French intervention as planned by Napoleon III was, therefore, a glaring paradox, and betrays his absolute ignorance of the conditions with which he was undertaking to cope. As a matter of fact, the party upon whose support he relied for the purpose of developing the natural resources of Mexico, and of bringing that country into line with European intellectual and industrial progress, was pledged by all its traditions to moral and political retrogression.

The enterprise, undertaken under these conditions, bore in itself such elements of failure that nothing save the force of arms and a vast expenditure of life and money could, even for a time, make it a success. Unless the French assumed direct and absolute control of Mexican affairs irrespective of party--and this contingency was specifically set aside by the most solemn declarations--they must sooner or later come into direct antagonism with allies who were pledged to the most benighted form of clericalism, and into real, though perhaps unconscious, sympathy with their opponents who stood arrayed upon the side of progress.

It was not long before the pretensions of the church and party complications caused a breach between the Corps Expeditionnaire and its original supporters, which placed the French in the unlooked-for, and by them much deprecated, attitude of invaders and conquerors of the land, equally hated by ally and foe. And yet at the outset one aspect of the situation was favorable to the success of the French undertaking.

The sweeping reforms carried out by Juarez during his brief undisturbed occupation of the country had greatly smoothed the way for the French in their self-imposed task of Mexican regeneration. The new laws had already been enforced regulating the relations of church and state. The confiscation of clergy property, the breaking up of the powerful religious orders, and religious tolerance, all had been proclaimed, as well as the freedom of the press.

Spanish influence, which in these struggles had been exercised strongly against reform, had been abruptly brought to an end by the summary dismissal of Senor Pacheco, the Spanish minister, and the Archbishop of Mexico had been exiled.

III. M. DE SALIGNY AND M. JECKER

One of the first problems, and quite the most important, to be faced by President Juarez, upon his establishment in the capital, had been the raising of funds with which to carry on the expense of the Liberal government. As a measure the throwing upon the market of the nationalized church property recommended itself. There was, however, but little confidence, and still less ready money, in the country after many years of civil strife. So much real estate suddenly thrown upon the market depreciated property. The easy terms of sale--a third cash, the balance to be paid in pagares--tempted speculators and gave rise to many fraudulent transactions, and the measure brought little relief to the government.

Although in March, 1861, President Juarez had signed a convention adjusting anew the pecuniary claims of the French residents, on July 17 Congress found itself compelled to suspend payment on all agreements hitherto entered into with foreign powers. The very next day the representatives of France and Great Britain entered a formal protest on behalf of their governments. On July 25, having obtained no satisfaction, they suspended all diplomatic relations with the Mexican government.

Feeling ran high between Mexicans and foreigners. The speculators in Mexican bonds, as well as more innocent sufferers, were loud in their denunciations. The Swiss banker Jecker,* who had cleverly managed to enlist the interest of powerful supporters at the court of Napoleon III, and who had become naturalized in order to add weight to his claim to

French support, spared no pains in exciting the resentment of the French with regard to this violation of its pledges by the Mexican government.**

* The French claims against the Mexican government amounted to 50,000,000 francs. Jecker's interests suffered most by the decree of President Juarez of July 17, 1861. Under Miramon he had negotiated, on behalf of the clerical party, the new issue of six-per-cent. bonds of 75,000,000 francs, destined to take up the old discredited government bonds, twenty-five per cent. being paid in silver by the holders, and the interest being guaranteed partly by the state, and partly by the house of Jecker. The latter was to receive a commission of five per cent. upon the transaction--3,750,000 francs. The profit to the government should have been 15,000,000 francs, had not a clause been inserted enabling Jecker to deduct his commission in advance, as well as half of the interest for five years,--11,250,000 francs,--which, as we have seen, was guaranteed by the state; so that, as a matter of fact, the government received only 3,570,000 francs. When, in May, 1860, and without the slightest warning, the house of Jecker failed, the interests of a large number of Frenchmen whose funds were intrusted to it were jeopardized; and as their only hope rested upon the profit to be derived from the issue of the bonds referred to, the decree of January 1, 1861, annulling the contract under which they had been issued, not only ruined the house of Jecker beyond recovery, but deprived its creditors of all remaining hope. Jecker then went to France. There he skilfully managed to win over to his cause some personages influential at the court of France. The Duc de Morny, whose speculative spirit was easily seduced by the golden visions of large financial enterprises in a land the wealth of which was alluringly held up to his cupidity, took him under his powerful protection. There is little doubt that this was an important factor in the Mexican imbroglio. It is interesting to know that a just Nemesis overtook Jecker, whose unworthy intrigues had brought about such incalculable mischief. He was shot by order of the Commune in 1871. See Prince Bibesco, "Au Mexique: Combats et Retraite des Six Mille" (Paris, 1887), p. 42.

** See "Revue des Deux Mondes," January, 1862, p. 766: "L'intervention des puissances avait pour avoue d'exiger une protection plus efficace pour les personnes et les proprietes de leurs sujets ainsi que l'execution des obligations contractees envers elles par la republique du Mexique."

Had France been sincere, the expedition might have seized a Mexican port as a security for the payment of such obligations, instead of spending ten times the amount of its claims in attempting to interfere with the political affairs of the country under the flimsy pretext of seeking to enforce payment thereof.

M. de Gabriac had been replaced by M. de Saligny, a creature of the Duc de Morny, whose personal interest in the Jecker bonds was freely discussed. The new minister arrived in June, 1861. His orders were to enforce recognition of the validity of the Jecker bonds. Juarez and his minister, Senor Lerdo de Tejada, peremptorily declined to "acknowledge a contract entered upon with an illegal government." There was no redress, if redress there must be, save in assuming a belligerent attitude. M. de Saligny avowedly did his utmost to aggravate the situation. Later, during the brief period of 1863-64, when the intervention seemed to hold out false promises of success, he boasted to a friend of mine that his great merit "was to have understood the wishes of the Emperor, and to

have precipitated events so as to make the intervention a necessity."

This he accomplished, thanks to an incident insignificant in itself, but which he duly magnified into an unbearable insult to the French nation. On the night of August 14, 1861, a torch-light procession to celebrate the news of a victory of the government troops under General Ortega over Marquez halted before the French legation, and some voices shouted: "Down with the French! Down with the French minister!" M. de Saligny added that a shot had been fired at him from one of the neighboring azoteas, and he produced a flattened bullet in evidence. Although an investigation was immediately instituted, the result of which was to show the lack of substance of the minister's charges, the French government, then anxiously hoping for such an opportunity, supported its agent. The incident was magnified by the French papers into an "attaque a main armee contre Saligny," and at the instigation of France a triple alliance was concluded with England and Spain. On October 31, 1861, a convention was signed in London, whereby the contracting parties pledged themselves to enforce the execution of former treaties with Mexico, and to protect the interests of their citizens.* To this, as a pure matter of form, the United States was invited to subscribe. Our government, of course, declined the invitation to take advantage of the disturbed condition of the Mexican republic to enforce its claim. Mr. Seward was not then in a position to show more fully his disapproval of the action of the allied powers.

* For the correspondence upon the whole subject and the terms of the London convention, see Abbe Domenech's "Histoire du Mexique," vol. ii, p. 375 et seq.

It soon became evident that, in entering upon this treaty, the three allies had not the same end in view. As early as May 31, 1862, the French papers blamed the government for its lack of foresight in entering into a cooperation with powers whose ultimate objects so widely differed from its own.*

* See "Revue des Deux Mondes," 1862, vol. iii, p. 743.

This mistake became apparent when, on January 9, 1862, the French, under Admiral Jurien de la Graviere, and the English, under Admiral Milnes, arrived at Vera Cruz and found the Spanish division, under General Prim and Admiral Tubalco, already landed.* The conduct of their joint mission must now be determined. Already diplomacy had been brought into play by Napoleon III to induce his allies to acquiesce in his views and to consider the elevation of Maximilian to the throne of Mexico. Spain had willingly listened to the idea of establishing a monarchy, but on the condition that the monarch should belong or be closely allied to the house of Bourbon; and it stood firm upon this condition.

* The haste of Spain was regarded as an attempt to take a selfish advantage of the situation, and gave rise to some correspondence. See Domenech, loc. cit., pp. 384, 392.

IV. THE ALLIES IN MEXICO

The sound common sense of John Bull, his clearer appreciation of foreign possibilities, or perhaps the superior intelligence and honesty of his agent in Mexico, shine out brilliantly in a letter of Lord John Russell, written to the representative of England at the court of Vienna,

previous to the armed demonstration made by the triple alliance.* The letter was in truth prophetic, and showed a statesmanlike grasp of the situation. He pointed out that the project of placing the Archduke Maximilian upon the throne of Mexico had been conceived by Mexican refugees in Paris; that such people were notorious for overrating the strength of their partizans in their native land, and for the extravagance of their hopes of success; that her Majesty's government would grant no support to such a project; that a long time would be necessary to consolidate a throne in Mexico, as well as to make the sovereign independent of foreign support; and that, should this foreign support be withdrawn, the sovereign might easily be expelled by the Mexican republicans. The Spanish general Prim, when later, upon the spot, he was able to appreciate the difficulties of the situation and had decided to withdraw, wrote to the Emperor a strong letter in which his views to the same effect were powerfully expressed.**

* See "La Verite sur l'Expedition du Mexique, d'apres les Documents Inedits de Ernest Louet, Payeur-en-Chef du Corps Expeditionnaire," edited by Paul Gaulot. Part I, "Reve d'Empire" p. 37, 4th ed. (Paris, Ollendorff, 1890).

** Ibid, p. 47.

This letter was dated "Orizaba, March 17, 1862." It is sufficiently remarkable to be given here:

"Sire: Your Imperial Majesty has deigned to write me an autograph letter which, because of the kindly expressions it contains, will become a title of honor for my posterity. . . .

"On the ground of just claims there can be no differences between the commissioners of the allied powers, and still less between the chiefs of your Majesty's forces and those of his Catholic Majesty. But the arrival at Vera Cruz of General Almonte, of the former minister Haro, of Father Miranda, and of other Mexican exiles who set forward the idea of a monarchy in favor of Prince Maximilian of Austria,—a project which, according to them, is to be backed and supported by the forces of your Imperial Majesty,—tends to create a difficult situation for all concerned, especially for the general-in-chief of the Spanish army, who, under instructions from his government based upon the convention of London, and almost the same as those given by your Majesty's government to your worthy and noble Vice-Admiral La Graviere, would find himself in the painful position of being unable to contribute to the realization of the views of your Imperial Majesty, should these look to raising a throne in this country for the purpose of placing upon it an Austrian archduke.

"Moreover, it is, sire, my profound conviction that in this country monarchical ideas find few supporters. This is logical, as this land has never known the monarchy in the persons of the Spanish sovereigns, but only in those of viceroys who governed each according to his bad or good judgment and his own lights, and all following the customs and manner of governing proper to a period which is already remote.

"Then, also, monarchy has not left here the immense interests of an ancient nobility, as was the case in Europe when, under the impulse of revolutionary storms, thrones at times were pulled down. Neither has it left high moral interests behind it, nor, indeed, anything that might induce the present generation to wish for the reestablishment of a

regime which it has not known and which no one has taught it to long for or revere.

"The neighborhood of the United States, and the severe strictures of those republicans against monarchical institutions, have greatly contributed to create here a positive hatred against these. Despite disorder and constant agitation, the establishment of the republic, which took place more than forty years ago, has created habits, customs, and even a certain republican expression of thought which it cannot be easy to destroy.

"For these and other reasons which cannot escape your Imperial Majesty's high penetration, you will understand that the immense preponderance of opinion in this country is not and cannot be monarchical. If logic were not sufficient to demonstrate this, it would receive proof from the fact that, in the two months since the allied flags wave over Vera Cruz, and now that we occupy the important points of Cordoba, Orizaba, and Tohuacan, in which no other Mexican authority remains save that of the municipality, neither the conservatives nor the partizans of monarchy have made the slightest demonstration which might lead the allies to "believe" that such partisans exist.

"Be it far from me, sire, to even suppose that the might of your Imperial Majesty is not sufficient to raise in Mexico a throne for the house of Austria, Your Majesty directs the destinies of a great nation, rich in brave and intelligent men, rich in resources, and ready to manifest its enthusiasm whenever called upon to carry out your Imperial Majesty's views. It will be easy for your Majesty to conduct Prince Maximilian to the capital and to have him crowned a king; but that king will meet in the country with no other support than that of the conservative leaders, who never thought of establishing a monarchy when they were in power, and only think of it now that they are defeated, dispersed, and in exile. A few rich men will also admit a foreign monarch, if supported by your Majesty's soldiers; but that monarch will find no one to support him should your help fail him, and he would fall from the throne raised by your Majesty, as other powerful men must fall on the day when your Majesty's imperial cloak will cease to cover and protect them. I know that your Imperial Majesty, guided by your high sentiment of justice, will not force upon this nation so radical a change in its institutions if the nation does not demand it. But the leaders of the conservative party just landed at Vera Cruz say that it will be sufficient to consult the upper classes, and this excites apprehensions and inspires a dread lest violence may be done to the national will.

"The English contingent, which was to come to Orizaba, and had already prepared its means of transportation, reembarked as soon as it was known that a number of French troops larger than that stipulated in the treaty were coming. Your Majesty will appreciate the importance of their retreat.

"I beg your Imperial Majesty one thousand times pardon for having dared to submit to your attention so long a letter. But I thought that the truest way worthily to respond to the kindness of your Majesty toward me was to tell the truth, and all the truth, as I see it, upon the political conditions here. In so doing I feel that I not only fulfil a duty, but that I obey the great, noble, and respectful attachment which I feel for the person of your Imperial Majesty.

"Comte de Reus,
"General Prim."

Such warnings, however, were lost amid the glittering possibilities of so glorious an achievement. Napoleon, following his own thought, had already approached the Austrian archduke and his imperial brother with regard to the former's candidacy, and had trusted to chance as to the complications that might arise with his allies. It was not long before these became clearly defined.

The first meeting of the allies had taken place on January 10 at La Tejeria, a short distance from Vera Cruz. A proclamation to the Mexican people was issued at the instigation of General Prim. In this extraordinary document the representatives of the three great powers who had sent a combined fleet and army to obtain satisfaction for outrages committed against their flags and the life and property of their subjects, claimed to have come as friends to the support of the Mexican government.*

* See the official correspondence published by Domenech, loc. cit., vol. iii, p. 8, etc.

On the 14th the fourth conference was held. The plenipotentiaries drew up a collective note in the same tone as that of the proclamation. This was taken to the Mexican government by three commissioners. The answer to this communication was a demand for the withdrawal of the expedition. These steps had not been taken without arousing serious differences of opinion among the representatives of the powers. Moreover, the financial claims advanced by each were of such magnitude that their joint

enforcement was impossible.

M. de Saligny, faithful to his premeditated plan of forcing and precipitating the catastrophe, had drawn up an ultimatum to be presented to the Mexican government, so preposterous in its pretensions that the allies could not countenance it. It could no longer be doubted that the French and the Spaniards were each playing their own game. Only the great tact and dignity of the French Commander-in-chief, Admiral Jurien de la Graviere, then prevented an open rupture.*

* Louet, loc. cit., vol. i, p. 41.

The situation had already become strained. It was soon obvious that General Prim--whether, as was alleged by the French, from personal motives,* or from a clearer insight into the true condition of the country--would side with Sir Charles Wyke, the English representative, and would help him to overrule the French leaders in their aggressive policy. He requested a conference with Senor Doblado, minister of foreign affairs, who with great shrewdness accepted the invitation. By prolonging the negotiations, the Mexican government gave a chance to the unfavorable conditions under which the expedition labored to do their very worst. Every day lost was a gain to the Mexicans. The rainy season was approaching, sickness was already decimating this army of unacclimated foreigners, and the lack of harmony between the allies was fast reaching the point of dissension. This situation was seriously aggravated by the landing in Vera Cruz (January 27) of a number of the most conspicuous among the exiles of the clerical party--General Miramon, Father Miranda, etc. These, regardless of the serious complications which their premature arrival must create for their

supporters, placed themselves directly under the protection of the French.

* General Prim's wife was a rich Mexican, niece of Juarez's minister of finance, and the French minister saw in this circumstance cause to doubt the general's motives. He even accused him publicly of coveting for himself the throne of Mexico. However this may be, it seems to be a fact that when in Havana, on his way to Vera Cruz, General Prim, upon being approached by the clerical leaders, had declined in no compromising tones to recognize them, and had shown himself inclined to deal with the Liberals openly. See correspondence published by Domenech, loc. cit., vol. ii, p. 407, etc.

The force of circumstances in compelling the French to enter into negotiations with a government which they refused to recognize had already placed them in a more than awkward position. By this new complication they found themselves in the ambiguous attitude of treating with this government while shielding with their flag the outlawed representatives of a defeated rival party who had fought it as illegitimate. Not only did this exasperate the Liberals and arouse the bitterest antagonism in the country, but it gave rise to serious difficulties between the French and the English. Among the returned exiles was General Miramon, who, disregarding the inviolability of the British legation, had, while president, unlawfully taken possession of certain moneys belonging to the British government.* Sir Charles Wyke immediately requested his arrest. An angry discussion followed, the outcome of which was that Miramon, instead of being arrested on land under the shadow of the French flag, was prevented from landing and sent back to Havana.**

* This outrage was one of the main reasons for England's active cooperation in the attack upon Mexico. As far as I can ascertain the facts, \$600,000 had been sent to the British legation to pay the interest upon the English bonds. At this time the foreign agents in Mexico were accused of taking advantage of their privilege to handle gold and silver without paying the circulation duty of two per cent. and the export duty of six per cent., thus illegally realizing a considerable profit. The Mexican government was much incensed thereby, and an ugly feeling was aroused. President Miramon, in need of funds, declared that the amount then deposited at the British legation was a commercial value liable to duties imposed by law. After some controversy upon the subject he ordered General Marquez to call upon the British government and to demand the surrender of the \$600,000, to be used in the defense of the capital, at the same time declaring his willingness to recognize the debt. The minister refused. General Marquez seized the treasure, and had it taken to the palace by his soldiers. The British envoy there upon lowered his flag and retired Jalapa.

** Bibesco, loc. cit., p. 64.

On February 19 the preliminary treaty of La Soledad was signed by the allies and by Senor Doblado for the Mexican government, and on February 23 it was ratified by President Juarez. By its terms the allies were allowed, pending the negotiations having for object the adjustment of their claims, to take up their quarters beyond the limits of the unhealthy district, and to occupy the road of Mexico as far as Tehuacan and Orizaba. On the other hand, "the allies pledged themselves, should the negotiations not result in a final understanding, to vacate the territory occupied by them, and to return on the road to Vera Cruz

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