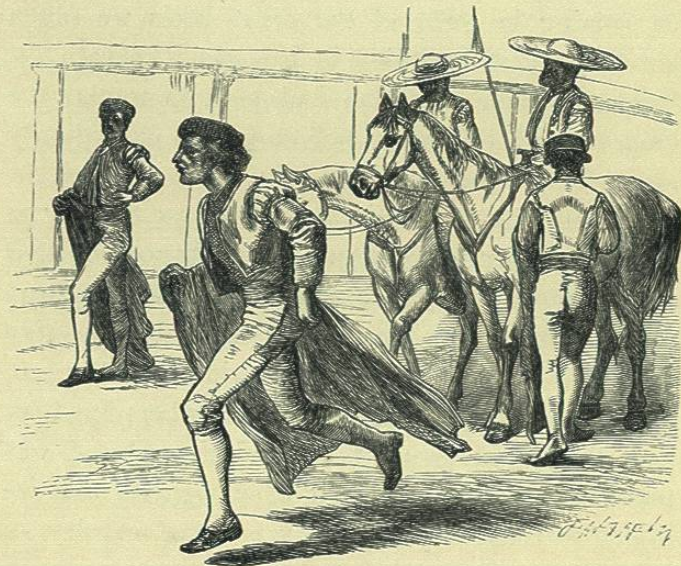
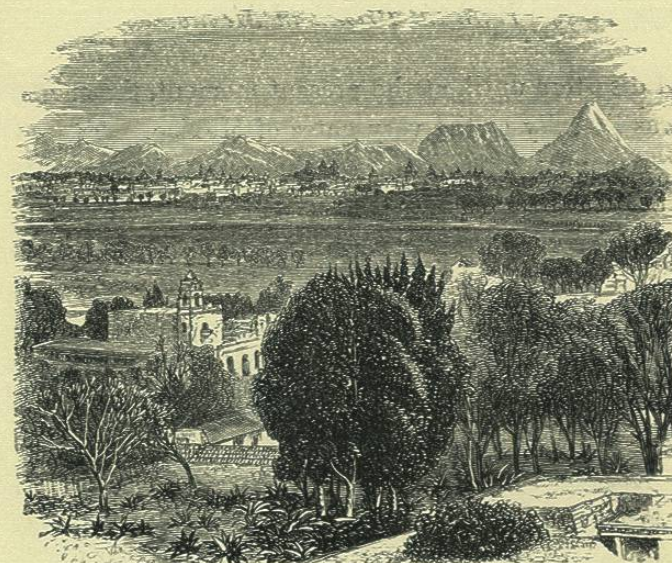


At Tlalnepantla we received the order to halt for a day, and on the 22nd marched into Mexico, our work in the north of the country being over. General Jeaningros remained in command at Queretaro, and after a short delay Colonel Guilhem's force evacuated St. Luis Potosi, soon followed by Mejia. This was the French position until just before the departure of the troops from Mexico. Then the garrison of Queretaro retired on the capital, leaving Miramon to watch over the protection of the Imperial cause; Maximilian himself soon after taking the field, and assuming supreme command of all his forces.



THE QUADRILLA AT A MEXICAN BULL-FIGHT.



MEXICO; FROM PHOTOGRAPH BY C. AUBERT.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN DUBIIS.

DURING the month of December, reports were current that Maximilian, still at Orizaba, would very shortly abdicate; and certainly, judging from the outward appearance of events, it seemed to be the only prudent course left for him to adopt.

Looking back, the retrospect of 1866 was the reverse of cheering. Not a single step had been made in advance; on the contrary, there was a steady loss of territory, power, and prestige to be recorded, commencing from the date of the loss of Matamoros, and continuing in an unbroken series

of disasters until, at the present moment, the enemy was literally at the very gates of Mexico.

Amongst other causes, the unsettling reports published in the newspapers, and the thousand and one false rumours constantly flying from mouth to mouth, through town and city, spreading far and wide over the country, were an immense discouragement to the *mochos*, who never knew what really to believe, and ended by giving credence invariably to the worst.

At one time, the Emperor was immediately to take the field and lead a crusade against the enemies of his Government and the public order; a few days later, he had dismantled his palace, and was on the point of leaving for Miramar, placing the government in the hands of Marshal Bazaine; and then the French had concluded a treaty with the United States, Juarez was to be recognized, and a large slice of territory sacrificed to appease the disciples of the Monroe doctrine. In short, no report, however far-fetched, ridiculous, or improbable, failed in unsettling the minds of the Mexicans, and spreading a fatal uncertainty and want of confidence through the ranks of the Imperialists, —so weakening little by little, and sapping at the very foundations of the already tottering fabric of the Empire.

{ Take a map of Mexico, and judge for yourself

of the actual position of affairs with which the year 1867 was inaugurated. All the north is in the power of the Liberal party. In Tamaulipas, one of the richest and most fertile districts in the country, it is long since the Imperialists have held an acre of ground. Matamoros and Tampico, two of the principal seaports on the Gulf, with their custom-houses and the revenues derived therefrom, are lost. In Sonora and Sinaloa, the leader of the dissidents, Corona, occupies Guaymas and Mazatlan, taking barbarous reprisals on all who have opposed him, either by word, deed, or even neutrality. Guadalajara and Guanajuato have been captured by the enemy,—Mejia only holding St. Luis Potosi from day to day, being eventually obliged to evacuate it. Porfirio Diaz reigns in the State of Oajaca, having defeated the Austrian and Mexican troops sent against him. Yucatan, although loyal, is constantly disturbed by guerillas and uprisings; and finally, there are bands at large in the very Valley of Mexico itself, and the road between the capital and Vera Cruz is infested with highway robbers.

Beyond a doubt matters looked very black and gloomy, for there was no longer any question as to the expeditionary force leaving the country to its fate within two or three months' time, and the hearts of the "*mochos*" must have smote them,

oh! } that, when they had all the advantages of the French *appui*, instead of putting their shoulders to the wheel, they had been loth to make even the smallest sacrifices towards the support of order. Acting like children, they imagined that as their property was for the moment protected by foreign bayonets, so they would always be defended against the guerillas, who now were at their very doors. Safe for the time being, too indolent to adopt measures calculated to produce them an ultimate benefit, when reports arrived that the Liberals had occupied such or such a town, raising forced loans, confiscating property, etc. etc., although probably for the moment they had their misgivings,—yet in a short time all foreshadowings of disagreeable events were put on one side as annoying, the future danger was disregarded in face of the present safety, and procrastinating until the moment for self-preservation was too late, they now had no resource left to them when the storm broke over their heads but that of mutual recrimination and discontent.

It was at this crisis that the Emperor called a meeting of his Council at Orizaba, in order to decide whether, for the good of the country, it would not be advisable that he should abdicate, placing the power in the hands of the people, from whom he had received his crown.

The Council—influenced by their own dangerous

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position, and backed up by the Church party, who were beginning to see that unless they could succeed in propping up the tottering foundations of the Empire, their rights, property, and privileges must inevitably go by the board—opened their eyes at last to the absolute necessity of immediate action.

They declared it necessary for the preservation of order that the present Government should be sustained, offering to Maximilian the services of Miramon and Marquez, the two champions of the Church party, who, good soldiers and brave men, though not over-scrupulous as to the means they employed, undertook to raise troops and lead them against the enemy, provided they were given full powers, and not rendered accountable to any authority for illegal acts.

The decision of the Council was upheld by all those who were compromised by their adhesion to the Imperial cause, for, judging from precedents, they had little hope of forbearance to expect at the hands of the Liberals, who at the very least would be sure to confiscate their lands and property, and very possibly might gratify the passions of their followers by hanging or shooting the most prominent and richest of their opponents, as they had already done in Sinaloa, and in the north.

Finally, Maximilian agreed to a compromise, and matters stood as follows :—

The services of Marquez and Miramon were ac-

cepted, full powers being delivered to them to raise troops by whatever means they chose to adopt, every assistance in the way of supplies of arms and money were to be furnished them from all available resources, and authority was given them to raise forced loans whenever and wherever they pleased, in order to defray the expenses of their armies. In the meantime a "Junta" was to be called of all the notables available, and by the decision of this conference, it was finally to be settled whether the Emperor remained in power or another form of government should be adopted. On their side, Marquez and Miramon engaged to march at once with all the men they could collect, and, in conjunction with Mejia, endeavour to strike an effective blow, and recapture the towns and territory lost to the Empire by the French evacuation.

Between the French and Liberals it now seemed to have been tacitly agreed that the departure of the expeditionary corps should be carried on without obstruction from the latter, and hostilities had almost entirely ceased. Occasionally, indeed, there were skirmishes with the guerillas, who neither possessed nor made common cause with either side, simply robbing and plundering whatever they came across; but these were affairs of very minor importance, and one had become of late so habituated to them that they attracted very little notice.

After the decision of Orizaba, the Austrians were called upon to elect whether they would accept service as Mexican troops, or return to Europe; very few, except in the cavalry, adopting the former course. The truth was, the infantry had been most unfortunate in their encounters with the enemy, being almost invariably unsuccessful, and they ended by losing all heart for the cause of the Empire; whilst the cavalry, on the contrary, had defeated the Liberals whenever they came across them.

In order, perhaps, to realize the position more thoroughly, it is necessary to recollect that the Church party, exasperated by the unfair treatment of Juarez, had in the very first instance invited Maximilian to the rescue of Mexico, imagining that the action of his Government would, in consequence, be so favourable towards them as to lead to the Church not only receiving back her confiscated property and abrogated privileges, but possibly to her being rewarded by additional extension of power and increase of influence. Maximilian did not satisfy them by sufficient concessions. He wished, on the contrary, to bring the clerical power under the influence of the civil law, as well as under the orders of Rome, and so keep a certain hold upon so powerful a party. This by no means contented their expectations, and, little by little, a breach formed, ending in a complete rupture, forcing

the Emperor to look for support to those of the Liberal party, who although not openly his enemies, were many of them secretly anxious for his downfall, and the re-establishment of a form of government under which more licence and peculation would be possible.

To give you some idea of the train of events leading to this result, I will relate you a couple of facts.

On the arrival of the Emperor in the country, the Church party demanded immediate restitution of all their confiscated estates. Upon this, Maximilian ordered a commission to be formed to inquire into the extent, value, localities, etc. etc., of such property, and the amount of indemnification that ought to be paid to the present occupiers, who had purchased their titles, the greater part of them with hard cash, from the Republican Government.

This did not at all suit their views, and not being able to persuade the Emperor to make the unconditional restitution they had relied upon obtaining, the clericals refused to administer the offices of the Church to those holding any of their former property, and even to some of the officers of State.

Again, wishing to establish a control over the country, Maximilian ordered civil registers to be kept of all marriages and deaths. This exasperated the clergy to such a point that it was made a *sine*

quá non before administering the last sacraments to those about to die, that they should first sign a paper expressing their disapproval of any such measures, and belief that they were contrary to the laws of religion!

Now they found themselves on the point of falling from the frying-pan into the fire,—from the hands of an Emperor inclined to conciliate them, and who only desired to establish some sort of order and morality among their ranks, into the power of the Liberals, who decidedly would make the very fact of their having invited Maximilian into the country an excuse for ill-treatment, and the legal plunder of what property still remained to them. Foreseeing all this, they made the first overtures of conciliation, and offers of substantial aid to the Imperial Government,—the Bishops, as a commencement, and guarantee of their good faith, giving thirty millions of piastres towards the establishment of the army.

It was thus by a curious combination of circumstances that the Emperor again found himself trusting for support to this still powerful party. From this moment the aspect of matters underwent a violent change, for all of a sudden his army sprang into new life, money was plentiful, and the two most able generals in Mexico declared for his side.

The intense jealousy arising from the occupation

of the country by foreign troops being removed, the contest now remains one of Mexican against Mexican, and there can be no possible reason why the Imperialist party should not prevail, if for once in their lives people will pull together and strive to push their boat through the dangerous rapids and currents they are now struggling amidst.



GUARD PALATINE OF MAXIMILIAN.



HILL AND FORT OF GUADALUPE, NEAR PUEBLA.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DILIGENCE.

THERE was not much more to be seen by remaining any longer in Mexico, for, as the days of the French occupation drew to a close, an air of uncertainty and distrust seemed to overshadow the whole city. The opera troupe moved off, bag and baggage, to the Havana; even some of the principal houses of commerce began to wind up their affairs, whilst all people of French nationality, and those who had been in any way compromised by their relations with the army, made their preparations for a start, on the very natural presumption that should the