

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

Liberals ultimately get hold of them, their chances of meeting with fair treatment would be indeed precarious.

Maximilian, after all the rumours of his abdication, had moved from Orizaba, and was now at Puebla, the guest of the Bishop, and living in his palace, having openly accepted the assistance of the Church party, and being firmly resolved to show the world that at any rate he would not surrender his Empire without striking a blow for it. There were daily reports of his arrival at Mexico, but he still remained on the road, anxiously awaiting the news of Miramon, who had already departed with some 2000 men towards Queretaro.

There was a considerable delay at Mexico at the present moment, for the troops coming back from Mazatlan, on the Pacific, after travelling by sea as far as Tepic, had the whole breadth of the country to traverse before reaching the capital; and, as a simultaneous evacuation had been decided on, it became necessary for the Marshal to remain in Mexico, General Jeaningros still holding Queretaro, General Douay, Puebla and the surrounding districts, and General Clinchant, Orizaba.

Convoys were constantly leaving for Vera Cruz, the port of embarkation, with the heavy guns and immense *matériel* of the French. Still, with all this constant marching of troops, the road by dili-

gence was extremely unsafe for travellers, who were stopped almost daily, although not often robbed or maltreated. The Liberals seemed certain that at last their day was on the point of arriving, and began to be careless about plundering individuals, being only anxious to see the departure of the French, and find the large cities at their mercy. Coming up from Puebla to Mexico, there were some Austrian officers travelling, who were recognized by one of these guerilla bands. Naturally they expected to be either hanged or made prisoners, at the very least. Not at all; the chief of the party told them that, as all foreigners would be compelled to leave the country very shortly, in the meantime the presence of two or three more of them could not possibly hurt his cause, and ended by allowing them to pursue their journey, absolutely without robbing them.

Mejia was eventually forced to retire from St. Luis Potosi, and fall back on Queretaro, not being sufficiently strong, after being left to his own resources by the departure of the French, to hold the city. He now was waiting for the arrival of Miramon, who had already defeated the Liberals at Cautitlan, and succeeded in clearing the high-road of several bands who infested it, on his march towards the north.

There was one notable exception amongst the

ranks of the dissident party—Porfirio Diaz, one of the best leaders of the Juarez side, and a man who showed an example of humanity and justice to his colleagues. Not long before, he had defeated the Austrians and Imperial troops at Carbonera, subsequently capturing Oajaca; and now we heard that, acting with a true soldier-like spirit, he had erected a monument over the bodies of those who had fallen fighting against him,—publishing, at the same time, an order, in which he put forth the principle that both French and Austrian soldiers only performed their duty in opposing his cause, and that it was an action unworthy of those who professed to support “Liberty,” to dishonour her name by violent reprisals, the shooting of prisoners, or failing in respect to the remains of those killed on the scene of action.

Had the Liberal party been fortunate enough to have had many leaders like Porfirio Diaz, there can be little doubt that their cause would have prospered; but when opposed to this single example of humanity and proper feeling there were men like Bustamante, Corona, Pedro Martinez, Romero (very justly shot by the French), Simon Cravioto, etc. etc., it was not to be wondered at, that all the respectable part of the population drew away, and a revulsion of feeling gradually drove the tide of favour back upon Maximilian.

The position, had the Emperor abdicated, would have been for the French extremely difficult, for they could hardly have treated with these dissident leaders, or even with Juarez himself, who by his silence and inaction had tacitly sanctioned, all along, the excesses perpetrated by his generals.

Mexico ought, by this time, to be well accustomed to a state of anarchy and confusion, but she had never been previously in such a thoroughly unsettled state as in the commencement of 1867.

The Liberals held the greater number of towns and districts, but were already divided amongst themselves, quarrelling over their plunder, and fighting for position and place,—neither by any means decided as to the proper man to name President, caballing first in favour of one general, and then of another.

On the Imperial side, Maximilian, by his last proclamation, since accepting the propositions of his Council and the services of the Church party, although still reserving to himself the reins of government, professedly became a simple Mexican citizen, awaiting the suffrages of the Junta to decide whether he should be re-elected as Emperor, and what course was to be followed.

The French were fully occupied by all the arrangements for the rapidly approaching embarkation of their troops, keeping entirely aloof from all

the plans adopted by the Emperor and his Council, only endeavouring to establish neutrality with the Liberals, but still compelled, from time to time, to chastise over-confident bands. Their presence could have hardly done any good to the Imperialists, beyond the fact that the towns still occupied by their troops were safe for the time being; on the contrary, the intense jealousy of foreign interference probably prevented many from joining the ranks of the Church party, who waited until the last Frenchman had turned his back on the capital, before declaring themselves.

The many rumours, besides, of an understanding entered into between the United States and Juarez operated in the most favourable manner possible. Those who, formerly averse to the French, had been, at the best, neutral observers of politics, foresaw in this policy an interference far more likely to prove fatal to Mexico than any other, and declared themselves forthwith supporters of the fortunes of the Empire and the Council.

Common danger made common friends, and alliances arose, even amongst those who a few weeks previously had been the most bitterly opposed to each other; the necessity for action became evident, and for the first time since the establishment of the Empire, honest and substantial support was given to the Government, for every one acknowledged that

the only chances for the protection of property, justice, and order, lay in the ultimate success of Maximilian.

So matters stood in the country when I left it. Since then the Emperor has gone towards the north, and now commands his army in Queretaro, having already defeated the Liberals in two engagements. Marquez holds the Valley of Mexico, and Porfirio Diaz is stationary, not acting on the offensive. In fact, it would appear that there must be an understanding between this powerful chief and the Empire, and the probabilities are that in the event of Escobedo's army being defeated, he will declare for Maximilian. If matters are otherwise, it is difficult to account for his inaction, for he certainly is strong enough to act against Puebla, or even Mexico itself. With Miramon, Marquez, Mejia, and Porfirio Diaz, the Emperor would certainly have all in his favour, the only respectable general remaining to the Liberals being Escobedo, whose influence at the present moment is decidedly on the wane. The battle to be fought is then as follows:—on the one side the dissidents, divided amongst themselves, greedy for plunder and dead to all sense of shame; on the other, Maximilian, the greater share of public favour, the money of the Church and able men at the head of his troops. The chances seem certainly in favour of the latter, and in that case

Mexico may after all become a tolerably quiet and comparatively safe country; should the Liberals gain the day, on the contrary, commerce must come to a standstill, and the way will be paved for the United States to push a little further to the south and delight the followers of Monroe.

On the 2nd of January, bidding adieu to the many kind friends I left behind in Mexico, I started for Puebla in the diligence, having previously sent on my heavy baggage, by the Austrian convoy, with De Montholon. A diligence in Europe is bad enough, but for actual and complete discomfort I can recommend the Mexican conveyances to any one curious in experiences of torture. Drawn by half-a-dozen mules, you dash along at a break-neck pace, and, the roads being in an awful state, every now and then you are sent flying up to the roof, knocking the top of your head almost in, and then being banged down again upon the seat with sufficient force to almost dislocate every joint in your body. After twenty hours of this amusement we reached Puebla, halting at Rio Frio for breakfast, and not having seen a single guerilla on the road, there being patrols of the French almost the whole way from the capital. Here I found General Douay and the head-quarters of his Division, and passed a few days with all my old friends before starting for Vera Cruz to meet De Montholon, with

whom I was going to make a journey to the United States. The time was fully occupied with a series of farewell dinners, and a ride up to Guadalupe to take a last look at the great snow-mountains and the pyramids of Cholula; at two o'clock on the morning of the 6th, I again mounted in the diligence, bid adieu to all my comrades who came to see me off, and after a long tedious day's journey—the only relief to which was the magnificent view descending the Combres—arrived late in the evening at Orizaba, lucky enough not to be stopped on the road by either guerillas or accident.



WATCHMAN OF THE CITY (SERENO).