

I

THE AUTHOR LEAVES PARIS  
FOR MEXICO

ON March 4, 1862, one of my brothers, then on his way to the United States, and incidentally the bearer of despatches from Mr. Thomas Corwin, our minister to Mexico, was attacked and, after a sharp fight, murdered by a small band of highwaymen near Perote. I was then in Paris, where I had been left to finish my education under the care of old and dear friends. In consequence of this tragedy it was deemed advisable that I should join my family.

M. Achille Jubinal, my temporary guardian, was a distinguished antiquary and scholar, the founder of a museum in his native town, and the author of works upon ancient arms and tapestries, which are still authorities. He was an *homme de lettres* connected with a leading paper, and a deputy in the Corps Législatif for the department of the Hautes-Pyrénées. He was a self-made man, and thoroughly well made was he—witty, kind, just, and learned in certain lines; and his warm Southern blood colored his personality with a shade of materialism which

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his refined tastes never allowed to sink to the level of coarseness.

He was to me the kindest of guardians and dearest of "chums," and made my Sundays and vacations real holidays. He often took me bric-à-brac-hunting to old shops unknown to all save the Parisian curiosity-seeker, and happy hours were spent on the quays among the old book-stands in that fascinating occupation for which the French bookworm has coined the word *bouquinier*. And then the charming evenings spent at the theaters and ended at Tortoni's with this truest of "boulevardiers," who knew every one and everything, and whose inexhaustible fund of anecdote was enlivened by a spontaneous easy wit and verve that made his companionship a delight.<sup>1</sup>

His wife was the daughter of the Comte Rousselin de St. Albin, a man of considerable influence during the reign of King Louis-Philippe, whose close personal friend he was.

M. de St. Albin's house in the Rue Vieille du Temple, where his family lived when we first knew them, had originally formed part of the famous Temple, which in medieval times was the abode of the Templars. It was an interesting place, full of historic memories. Within these legendary walls

<sup>1</sup> Among my old papers I find the following invitation to go with him to the Odéon to see a piece called "Les Pilules du Diable":

"Je viens rappeler à Sara  
Une date encore lointaine,

Et lui dire que ce sera  
Le jeudi de l'autre semaine  
Que là-bas à l'Odéon,  
Derrière les funambules,  
Sans être M. Purgon,  
Je lui fais prendre 'Les Pilules.'  
"A. J."



PRESIDENT BENITO PABLO JUAREZ.

A Mexican liberal politician, of pure Indian blood, born in 1806. He was president several times. He captured and executed Maximilian, and died in office in 1872.

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he had accumulated countless relics of those among his early associates who were then so fast becoming heroes in the French annals. Being an intimate friend and a connection of the Comte de Barras, the chief executive under the Directory, it was to him that the latter, by will dated February 2, 1827, intrusted not only his secret memoirs,<sup>1</sup> but all his private and official papers. At the death of M. de St. Albin (1847) this important collection passed into the possession of his children.

I well remember, as a little girl, being shown some of the choicest pieces in the series, among which were interesting original portraits. One paper especially made an indelible impression upon my childish mind, and I can now recall the feeling of awe with which I gazed upon the appeal to arms in the name of the Commune, drawn up by Robespierre and his colleagues on the night of the 9th Thermidor, a document which has since been published by M. Duruy in the "Mémoires de Barras." Robespierre had just written the first syllable of his name below those of his colleagues when the Convention was attacked. The blood-stains which bespattered the sheet, and told of the final tragedy of the leader's life, appealed to my youthful imagination, and are still vivid in my memory.

Notwithstanding her father's connections with the Orleanists, Hortense de St. Albin and her brother were closely connected with the new order

<sup>1</sup> See "Mémoires de Barras," Georges Duruy, who married M. vol. i, p. 20 (Paris, 1895-96). Jubinal's daughter, the grand-daughter of Comte de Barras, the only daughter of Comte Rousselin de recently been published by M. St. Albin.

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of things. She had entertained personal relations with the Empress before her elevation to the imperial throne, and the brother, Comte Louis-Philippe de St. Albin, was librarian to her Majesty. These close affiliations with the court did not prevent M. Jubinal, in his political capacity, from gradually sliding into the ranks of the opposition. Later he occasionally was one of the few who voted against the measures of the government in the legislative struggles brought about by the intervention of France in Mexican affairs. Whether this attitude was wholly due to his superior common sense, or whether behind his political convictions there lingered a tinge of chagrin at a disappointed hope of senatorial honors once held out to his ambition by the French emperor, it is difficult to tell. It is probable that the latter motive formed, unknown to him, a foundation upon which his wisdom and political principles rested, and which lent them added solidity.

Before I left France I was, at his house, the interested though silent listener to many a violent discussion upon the stirring theme. The critics of the Napoleonic policy loudly denounced the fraudulent transactions connected with the issue of the Jecker bonds. They more than intimated that the great of the land were mixed up in the disgraceful agiotage that had led to these serious difficulties, and that all this brilliant dust of a civilizing expedition to a distant El Dorado was raised about the Emperor by his entourage to conceal from him what was going on nearer home.

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One of their strongest arguments was that the invasion of Mexico by the French army must necessarily give umbrage to the United States, with which traditions of friendship had long existed; and they urged that, whatever the crippled condition of the Union, such a course could not fail eventually to lead to dangerous complications.

One day in March, 1862, before the news of the rupture between the French and their allies had reached Paris, M. Jubinal invited me to accompany him to the Hôtel des Ventes, Rue Drouot, where an important collection of tapestries and other objects of art was on view to be sold. There were comparatively few amateurs in the rooms when we entered. My companion was pointing out to me the beauties of a piece which he particularly coveted when some one came behind us and called him by name. We both turned around and faced a middle-aged man whose dress, manner, and general bearing showed him to be a personage of some importance. M. Jubinal, who evidently knew him well, addressed him as "M. le Duc," and his strong likeness to the Emperor, as well as a few stray words, soon led me to guess, even before my guardian had gone through the form of an introduction, that he was no less a personage than the Duc de Morny.

The Duc de Morny's position during the period that elapsed between the revolution of 1848 and 1865 was one unique in France; and yet it is doubtful whether his fame would have been as world-wide as it has become had it not been for the part he played in the Mexican imbroglio.

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Brought up as a child by a charming woman of graceful intellect and literary pretensions, he had met early in life the Duc d'Orléans, who had led him into the gay Parisian world of which he was the leader. After a brief military career in Africa, he resigned from the army, and divided his interest between politics and speculation. He employed his leisure moments in writing very indifferent plays, which, although published under a *nom de guerre* (St. Remy), he depended upon the servility of the Parisian press to carry through. He was not a deep thinker, nor was his intellectual horizon a broad one; but his views were liberal, his shallow mind was brilliant and versatile, and to the graceful frivolity of a man of the world he united a taste for the serious financial and political problems of his time. He belonged to that set of bright young politicians who, toward the end of the reign of Louis-Philippe, passed, as was cleverly said, "from a jockey club to the Chamber of Deputies," declaring that France was a victim of old-fogyism, and flattering themselves with the thought that they would infuse the vigor of youth into politics. These would-be founders of a new era called themselves "progressive conservatives" (*conservateurs progressistes*).<sup>1</sup>

Just before the revolution of July, which established the republic, he was spoken of for a place in the cabinet as minister of commerce. Gifted with great tact and worldly wisdom, satisfied to wield

<sup>1</sup> Under this title he wrote an article published in the "Revue des Deux Mondes," January, 1, 1848.

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power without taking too large a place on the political stage, the Duc de Morny's popularity and peculiar position enabled him to be the go-between in the compromise that followed. As early as 1849 he was reported to have said to a friend: "Quand le coup se fera je vous en préviens, c'est moi qui le ferai."<sup>1</sup> Another of his mots has often been quoted<sup>2</sup> and is most characteristic of the man: "S'il y a un coup de balai, je tâcherai d'être du côté du manche."

At the time when I met him he was president of the Corps Législatif, where, without the slightest pretension to oratorical talent, he wielded an immense influence. He was what we call a "leader" in every sense of the word—at court, on the Bourse, and in the political as well as in the social world.

On that morning he was with the duchess, bent upon the same errand as ourselves, and seeing us, he had come to ask M. Jubinal to give them his opinion upon the value of a possible purchase. After discussing the subject, which was all-engrossing for the moment, the duchess turned to me and politely drew me into conversation. Her kindly manner set me at ease, and she soon extracted from me the information that I was about to sail for Mexico. At this she became much excited, and exclaiming, "Oh, I must tell M. de Morny!" she immediately moved to where he and M. Jubinal had

<sup>1</sup> "Revue des Deux Mondes," tures de ma Vie," vol. i, p. 245) 1865, vol. lvi, p. 501 et seq. casts a doubt upon the originality

<sup>2</sup> Henri Rochefort ("Les Aven- of his wit.

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wandered, saying, "Just think! this young girl is going to Mexico on the *Louisiane* alone, under the care of strangers." A gleam of interest brightened the great man's dull eye as for a moment it rested upon me. He asked me a few questions; but as the duchess rather commanded my attention, he soon turned to M. Jubinal, and I overheard my guardian telling him of the tragic events which had caused my rather sudden departure, at the same time expressing some anxiety with regard to my own safety. "Oh," said the duke, "by the time she arrives there we will have changed all that. Lorencez is there now; our army will then be in the city of Mexico; the roads will be quite safe. Have no fear."

A mild, half-playful argument followed, in the course of which my guardian, I thought, was not quite as uncompromising in his criticism as he was when surrounded by those who shared his own opinions. But the duke was very affable, and the duchess was in truth charming, with her Northern beauty, her delicate, high-bred features, and her wealth of blond hair. No wonder if he could not be stern.

It was the first time that I had met the man whose influence then ruled over the destinies of France and Mexico, and the incident naturally impressed itself upon my memory. Upon my arrival in Mexico, where I found men puzzling over the extraordinary lack of concert between the allied invaders, which baffled their understanding, I remembered those words of the Duc de Morny,

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uttered even before a suitable pretext had been furnished General de Lorencez for breaking through the preliminary treaty of La Soledad, and, of course, before the news of the final rupture between France, England, and Spain could possibly have reached Europe. M. de Lorencez, it is now known, had gone to Mexico with *orders* to march without delay upon the capital.

The Gare d'Orléans presented a scene of more than usual animation when, on the morning of the thirteenth day of April, 1862, our fiacre landed us at its entrance, en route for St. Nazaire. The Compagnie Transatlantique, formed by the house of Péreire, was giving a grand inaugural banquet to celebrate the opening of the new line of steamers that was to carry passengers direct from France to Mexico. The *Louisiane* was to sail on her first trip on the following day. A special train was on the track awaiting the distinguished guests of the company, and it is safe to say that two thirds of the celebrities of the day in the world of finance, of politics, and of journalism were gathering upon the platform.

M. Jubinal, himself an invited guest, had decided to take me with him, as he was anxious to see me safely on board. The presence of a young girl at the station naturally excited some curiosity among the small clusters of men who here and there stood by the carriage doors chatting with one another, ready to take their places; and as we passed by, my companion was the object of inquiring looks from those with whom he was on familiar terms.

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But this curiosity invariably gave way to evidences of more earnest interest when they were told that I was to sail for Vera Cruz on the following day.

Our companions in the railway-carriage were journalists whom M. Jubinal knew, and a deputy whose name now escapes my memory. Each one had much advice to bestow and many wise opinions to express, the remembrance of which afforded me endless amusement after I had reached my destination, so far were they from meeting the requirements of the case. And all, whatever their personal views with regard to the intervention, confidently expressed the conviction that upon reaching the capital I should find the French flag flying over the citadel.

During the ride down to St. Nazaire the conversation ran wholly upon the subject of Mexico, and of the magnificent opportunities to French commerce and speculation opened up by the expedition. Of these our present errand was an earnest. In listening to them, one might have thought that Napoleon had found Aladdin's lamp, and had deposited it for permanent use at the Paris Bourse. Mining companies, colonization companies, railroad companies, telegraph companies, etc.,—all the activities that go to constitute the nineteenth-century civilization,—were in a few short years to develop the mining and agricultural resources of the country. A new outlet would open to French industry, and the glory of French arms would check the greed of the Anglo-Saxon, that arrogant merchant race who would monopolize the trade of the world.



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GENERAL PRIM.

Spanish soldier and statesman, born in 1814. He commanded the Spanish expeditionary army in Mexico. After his return to Spain he was assassinated in 1870.

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The thought was brilliant, grand, generous, noble, worthy of a Napoleonic mind. There were millions in it!

Later, upon reaching Vera Cruz, I remembered that nothing had been said of the yellow fever and the rainy season, or of the magnitude of the sparsely populated country which it was necessary to clear of predatory bands who then virtually held it, or of the expense in men and millions which must be incurred to maintain order while all these great schemes were being carried out. My eloquent fellow-travelers unhesitatingly asserted that Mexico yearned for all this prosperity; it was extending its arms to France; the French army would receive one long ovation in its triumphant march to the capital amid vivas and showers of roses. All who *knew* said so. How lucky was mademoiselle to be going there at this auspicious moment, to witness such great and stirring events!

M. Jubinal looked somewhat incredulous, but the atmosphere created just then by the occasion was certainly against him. Here was a large company of French capitalists, backed by one of the most substantial houses in France, opening direct communication between that country and Mexico, when hitherto most of the traffic had been conducted through an English medium. To my youthful mind it *did* seem then as though M. Jubinal had the worst of the argument.

Upon leaving my brilliant companions to find my way to the steamer, however, the scene changed as suddenly as though a wizard's wand had wrought



its magic. The weather seemed threatening; a dull gray sky hung low over the bay, and the chopping, white-capped waves reflected the leaden color of the clouds.

There were only forty passengers on board, and, comparatively speaking, little of the animation that usually precedes the outgoing of an ocean steamer. I found without difficulty the French banker and his Mexican wife who had kindly consented to chaperon me during my lonely journey; and I soon discovered that she and I were the only women passengers on board.

Our fellow-travelers were uninteresting—mostly commercial agents or small tradesmen representing the old-established petty commerce with Mexico. The new order of things was suggested, somewhat ominously, only by the presence of two young surgeons on their way to increase the effective force of the military hospital in Vera Cruz.

Evidently the predicted exodus to El Dorado had not yet begun. Where was the advance-guard of the great army of emigrant capitalists now about to start, and of which I had just heard so much?

This was the first serious disillusion of my life, and it left a deep and permanent impression upon my mind. What was the relation between the great banquet of Péreire & Co., this train full of statesmen, literati, and other distinguished men, this blast of the press heralding a great and joyful event in the commercial life of the French nation, —and this old patched-up ship, with its scant load of commonplace and evidently old Franco-Mexican

tradesmen, lying in lonely dullness against the gray sky on that gloomy evening?

Those men were rejoicing over us while we lay here at anchor. They were drinking to phantoms evoked by their own imagination, and their glowing speeches would to-morrow stir the fancy of thousands of readers who, seeing through their eyes, would view the dark hulk of our old ship framed in a glittering golden cloud. Where I now stood, almost alone in the gloom, the vivid imagination of those men yonder in the banquet-hall at that very hour perceived the mirage of the speculative fever crowding the decks of the Péreire steamers with imaginary colonists eager to convert their savings into mining stocks and Mexican railroad bonds, and rushing to the land of Montezuma to sow and reap a rich harvest for France.

How many wretches were induced to risk their money upon such representations?<sup>1</sup> Oh, the dreariness, the loneliness, of that first night at anchor in the Bay of Biscay! The misgivings that filled my heart! Who was right? What should I find over there? Surely these statesmen, capitalists, journalists, legislators, should know what they were doing.

And yet, beyond the line of the western horizon, which only a few hours before they had peopled with glittering visions, there slowly rose in the darkness the phantom of an arrested coach, of

<sup>1</sup> "L'Opinion Nationale," August 30, 1866, stated that 300,000 worth no more than the paper bondholders invested in Mexican they were printed on.

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panic-stricken travelers, of fierce murderers assaulting a young man, of a dead body on the roadside; and this empty ship seemed more real at that moment than all that I had yet heard or read.

After stopping to coal at Fort-de-France, in the beautiful island of Martinique, and a few days later stopping at Santiago de Cuba, we finally, on May 2, caught sight of a dark, broadening line upon the horizon, behind which soon loomed up in solitary dignity the snow-capped peak of Orizaba; and passing the Cangrejos and the island of Sacrificios, we anchored off the fort of San Juan de Ulloa, where we awaited a clean bill of health from the quarantine officers who came on board.

The first impression made upon the mind by Vera Cruz is depressing. In May the heat is intense. The town is situated in a low, swampy district, and was then unprovided with the slightest artificial contrivance for the betterment of its naturally unhygienic conditions. There was no systematic drainage, and the entire refuse matter of an ignorant and indolent population might have been left to fester under the rays of a tropical sun during the dry season, had it not been for the zopilotes, or turkey-buzzards, which, protected by law, had multiplied to such an extent as to form a tolerably efficient body of scavengers. The steeples and flat roofs of the low town were literally black with them. Their dense black swarms, resting like a pall upon it, in striking contrast with its white walls, gave the city, as one approached it from the sea, an appearance of mourning. On our journey

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we had anchored at Santiago de Cuba, where small-pox was raging, and now the health-officers hesitated about letting us enter this plague-stricken place.

As time wore on, the excitement of our safe arrival gradually died out. We gazed across the water at the inhospitable gates to this promised land, where so many strangers pausing like ourselves had recently found a grave. It seemed as though we were awaiting admittance to a funeral; and when the tolling of some church or convent bell, frightening the carrion-eating birds, caused a general flutter, the sight was strangely suggestive of the pestilential death ever lurking below, ready to feed upon the foreign visitor. One could scarcely help thinking of the dead and the dying, and wondering, with a shudder, what might not be the ignoble cravings of the gruesome flock.