

Maximilian in Mexico

about his banner, through the influence of the clergy, triumphed over his indecision. Señor Lares had promised him the immediate control of four million dollars and of an army ready to take the field. Now here were old, experienced leaders to take command.

He hesitated no longer. Breaking with all declared principles of policy, he threw himself into the arms of the clerical party, and pledging himself to reinstate the clergy and to return to the church its confiscated property, prepared to play his last hand without the French.

The marshal was anxiously awaiting the promised documents which were to announce the final terms of abdication. Instead of these, Colonel Kodolitch was sent by the Emperor to arrange the preliminary details for the return of the Austro-Belgian troops. The letter announcing his arrival (October 31) was, moreover, sufficiently ambiguous in its wording to leave Maximilian a loophole by which to escape from his former declared intention. The negotiations were now opened anew. A meeting of the council of state was called at Jalapilla, to which the marshal was summoned, "to consider the establishment of a stable government to protect the interests that might be compromised," etc. The French government had, however, already come to an understanding with the United States, and the French agents in Mexico deemed it best that the marshal should not be present.

After a three days' session, the meeting at Orizaba resulted in a plan of action calculated to bring

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about a complete rupture between Maximilian and his former allies.

On December 1 Maximilian issued his official manifesto, in which he announced his intention to call together a national congress, and his determination, upon the representations of his council and his ministers, to remain at the head of affairs.

When Cortez, after landing upon the coast of Mexico, decided to burn his ships, he did not more thoroughly cut off his retreat than did Maximilian when, throwing himself into the hands of the reactionaries, he wrote his final letter to Marshal Bazaine, and published his manifesto. All personal relations now virtually ceased between the Emperor and the marshal. Official communications were carried on through the president of the council of state.

On the very day when the imperial proclamation was issued, General Sherman and Messrs. Lewis, Plumb, and Campbell arrived in the port of Vera Cruz, on board of the *Susquehanna*. The event caused genuine surprise.

A few days before their arrival, the marshal had received from the Marquis de Montholon a notice of their departure on a mission having for its object the reinstatement of the government of Juarez without conflict with the French, the abdication of Maximilian being then regarded as a fact.

General Magruder, who met the American envoys in Havana, reported to them that at the date of his departure from Mexico, on November 1,

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Maximilian was on the eve of retiring; that he had been detained at Orizaba only by the arrival of Generals Miramon and Marquez; and that the common understanding was that the government had been handed over to Marshal Bazaine.

The American consul, Mr. Otterburg, called upon the commander-in-chief, and told him that his government was acting in concert with the Tuileries to restore the republic, and that General Porfirio Diaz was the leader into whose hands the care of the capital should be transferred in order to avoid possible bloodshed. He therefore urged upon the marshal the expediency of inviting General Diaz to advance near to the city. According to M. de Kératry, Mr. Otterburg even informed him that arrangements had been made with the bankers of the capital to assure one month's pay to the troops of the Liberal leader. This episode plainly illustrates the lack of concert and of mutual understanding so characteristic of every attempt made at this time by the French leaders at home and abroad to steer out of the cruel position in which the national honor had been placed.

The unlooked-for result of his negotiations was a severe blow to General Castelnau. He had not once been summoned to the Emperor's presence, and the principal object of his mission had utterly failed. The gravity of the situation, as well as its annoyances, weighed upon him, and he was ill and depressed.

A last attempt was made by the French representatives, on December 8, to demonstrate to

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Maximilian, in a joint note, the impossibility of sustaining himself without the French army. General Castelnau announced to him that the return of the troops would take place during the first months of 1867. A few days later (December 13) the effect of this communication was heightened by a despatch from Napoleon III, then at Compiègne, peremptorily ordering the return of the foreign legion.

By the treaty of Miramar, the services of the legion were insured to Maximilian for six years; but what did Napoleon then care for treaties!

General Castelnau made one more personal effort to save the situation. Accompanied by M. Dano¹ and the Comte de St. Sauveur, he started on December 20 for Puebla, where Maximilian was the guest of the archbishop of the diocese.

According to a note received by me from one of the travelers, they were at first sanguine of success, so impossible did it seem that the Emperor would seriously persevere in his resolve. But although they remained several days, and did their utmost to win over the Emperor's Mexican advisers, nothing came of this supreme attempt.² They were reluctantly admitted to an audience by Maximilian. In

¹ A strong feeling existed his weight was cast in the scales against M. Dano, the French minister, who was openly accused of selfishness in his policy. He had married a young Mexican woman, whose rich dowry was derived from the mines of Real del Monte, and it was urged by the Imperialists that

on the side of the Juarists, with a view to safeguarding his Mexican interests.

² Father Fischer, it is said, was offered thirty thousand dollars to urge Maximilian to abdicate (D'Héricault, p. 39).

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the course of this interview he recognized the fact that he probably *must* leave Mexico, but declared himself the best judge of the proper time for him to lay down his crown, and claimed the right to turn over the reins of government to the administration that must succeed the empire.

Little show of good feeling existed now between Napoleon's special envoy and the quartier-général. Indeed, the lack of harmony was spreading to officers of lesser rank. Severe criticism was indulged in on both sides. Never was the cynical old French saying so fully borne out by fact: "Quand il n'y a pas de foin au râtelier, les chevaux se battent." There was no success or even honorable failure possible; and the racked brains of the leaders found relief in unjust blame of one another, and in mutual accusations, which served only to lower the plane to which the great impending disaster must fall in the eyes of posterity.

The alluring mirage of a neo-Latin empire had completely vanished from the Western horizon. Where it had stood, the dissatisfied French army, under inharmonious leaders, now saw only a heavy bank of clouds and every sign of the approaching storm.

It will be remembered¹ that as a result of the new agreement with France, signed by Maximilian July 30, 1866, mixed regiments had been formed with the debris of the disbanded auxiliary corps and with liberated French soldiers. It had originally been intended to form with the Cazadores de Mejico an

¹ See above, p. 201.



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effective force of fifteen thousand men, to which it was planned to add ten regiments of cavalry. The first of these was commanded by Colonel Lopez. In December, 1866, three companies of gendarmes, numbering in all some twelve hundred men, were organized under Colonel Tindal. A regiment of red hussars, composed of the debris of the disbanded Austrian hussars and uhlans, about seven hundred men, was placed under the command of Captain Khevenhüller;¹ and this, with the Austrian regiment of Colonel Hammerstein,² completed the new organization. A large number of Frenchmen, the best of whom had been detached from the military service with the official sanction of their government, had thus entered the imperial army and received from the Mexican government their equipment and the advertised premium offered. They had formed the framework and backbone of the new regiments, for the equipment of which Maximilian had strained every nerve, going so far as to sacrifice even his own silver plate.

In the beginning of January, 1867, the marshal, under orders received from Paris, issued a circular withdrawing the consent of the French government to these enlistments, and offering to all such enlisted soldiers and officers the means of return-

¹ Now Prince Khevenhüller. as Peralvillo to the north, facing

² Colonel Hammerstein was Guadalupe. In his defense of killed in the trenches during the latter position he was supported by General O'Horan, who was at a later date taken and put to death by order of President Juarez.

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ing to France. A few days later, on the 11th, this offer was extended to all French subjects, and even to the Austro-Belgian auxiliaries should they wish to avail themselves of it.

In his circular the marshal recalled the law which deprives any Frenchman serving under a foreign flag of his rights as a French citizen. This placed in the position of deserters French soldiers and officers who in good faith had accepted service in the new Mexican army. It practically forced them to break their oath of allegiance to Maximilian, and to despoil the treasury of the premium received and already spent, or to become outlaws in the eyes of their own country. The false position in which these men were placed was, a few weeks later, cruelly emphasized when General Escobedo, after his victory over Miramon at San Jacinto, took advantage of the legal quibble thus offered him, and caused French prisoners to be shot as declared outlaws under Marshal Bazaine's circular. Notwithstanding all this, out of the remainder of the Cazadores a battalion was formed, and eventually placed under the command of Prince Salm-Salm, and later under that of the Austrian commander Pitner. These did magnificent service at Querétaro.¹

After the departure of the French army, an effective force of some five hundred men was organized of French deserters and such Frenchmen as, for some cause or other, had remained in Mexico. This formed a contre-guérilla, which,

¹ See below, p. 216.

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under the orders of Commandant Chenet, eventually did good service in the defense of Mexico. But the marshal's circular, by removing the better element among the officers of the newly enrolled corps, ruthlessly broke up the organization of the little army of twenty thousand men so laboriously collected by Maximilian, and became the latter's bitterest and perhaps best-founded grievance against his former allies.

Urged by General Castelnau, the marshal was steadily concentrating his troops. The foreign representatives were fast leaving the country. Unmistakable symptoms of a final collapse were everywhere visible, and all who had been in any way conspicuous in their sympathy with the intervention or the empire were anxiously preparing for the catastrophe.