



CARLOTTA

MAXIMILIAN AND CARLOTTA:

A STORY OF IMPERIALISM.

"I have carved you an empire out of a block of silver."

NAPOLEON TO MAXIMILIAN, Paris, 1863.

"You have placed me between dishonor and death, and my choice is made."

MAXIMILIAN TO BAZAINE, Mexico, 1866.

CHAPTER I.

The London meeting—The three powers—The envoys: Russell, Isturiz, Flahault—European sentiment—The Queen's proclamation—Neutrality—The Czar's message—Prussia—Austria—Louis Napoleon—"Vagaries of inheritance"—Italy—Rome—Spanish ambition—Causes of the intervention—Convention articles.

THERE was a notable meeting held in London on the last day of October, eighteen hundred and sixty-one. Three men, masters in the arts of diplomacy and statesmanship, met there, at the instance of three of the great powers of Europe, and entered into an agreement under the law of nations, which was formally ratified

some days later, and became known to history as the Mexican Convention. England, Spain, and France were the high contracting parties to the compact,—a just and lawful one as written upon the face of the convention articles, but in truth one of the acts in the historic drama of French imperialism, and charged in its tragic end with disappointment and chagrin to the courts of Rome, Madrid, and St. James, and with humiliation and sorrow to the courts of Brussels, the Tuileries, and Vienna.

The English envoy was Her Majesty's then Secretary for Foreign Affairs, afterwards Prime Minister and Earl,—Lord Russell,—a stalwart figure in the ranks of Whigs, or Liberals, for sixty years; with Grey or Althorpe, Peel or Palmerston, Melbourne or Lyndhurst, Bright or Forster, Beaconsfield or Gladstone, as friend or foe in the battles of reform.

In one of the most critical periods through which the British monarchy has passed—the agitation of 1831 and '32—the man of the crisis, the man who lifted the great middle classes of his countrymen toward the light of true civil liberty; who broke the bonds of custom and precedent, and ridiculed the ancient forms of the aristocracy; who, in all his early and middle

life, was the advocate and champion of real reforms; and who, within his party lines, by education and experience, should have been the friend of America, and her government of the people, was Russell.

And still, he gave greater cause of offence, in the civil war, than the worst of her Tory enemies. It was he who declared, in the House of Commons, in May, 1861, that after consulting the law-officers of the Crown the Government were of the opinion that the Southern Confederacy must be recognized as a belligerent power. It was his hand that penned the arrogant demand for the surrender of Mason and Slidell; and it was his voice, in the great debate on the confirmation of the Washington Treaty, that charged us at the bar of the House of Lords with the presentation of "audacious," "mendacious," "disgraceful," and "impudent" claims for the depredations of the *Alabama* and other rebel cruisers. The trembling figure of the irate statesman recalls Sydney Smith's famous criticism: "There is not a better man in England than Lord John Russell; but his worst feature is that he is utterly ignorant of all moral fear: there is nothing he would not undertake. I believe

he would perform the operation for the stone, build St. Peter's, or assume (with or without ten minutes' notice) the command of the Channel fleet, and no one would discover by his manner that the patient had died, the church tumbled down, and the Channel fleet been knocked to atoms."

The Queen of Spain named as her commissioner at that meeting her ambassador at the English Court, the loyal Isturiz, trained in statecraft and intrigue, and swift to serve alike the command of his royal mistress and the ambition of his fair and famous countrywoman, the Empress of the French, whose voice was then potent in affairs of state, as she halted for a time in the rôles of politician and diplomatist, between her two great characters of the woman of fashion and the devotee—the one the fruitage of opportunity and desire, the other of sorrows that move all hearts to tears.

Louis Napoleon chose for his representative the veteran diplomat and soldier, Flahault. He was a Frenchman of the French; at fifteen a volunteer in Italy with the First Consul, and an officer of brilliant record in that campaign; at twenty-eight, a general of division in the

battle of the nations at Leipsic; in "the hundred days," a peer of France, and true to the fortunes of his great chief; a son of imperialism as aid-de-camp or ambassador, as senator, or chancellor of the legion of honor; in war, in peace, and in exile, under the First and Second Empire, under the sun of Austerlitz or Waterloo, of Solferino or Sedan.

These were the men of distinction and of aristocratic traditions who met in London to arrange the terms of intervention in the affairs of our sister republic at the South—a matter of deeper moment at that time than the act of any power of Europe from the day of Sumter to the day of Appomattox. To them, the whirl of cotton looms in the mills of Lancashire, the glory of sovereignty, the charm of adventure in a conquered land, and the restoration of an ancient colony to the imperial domain, were more welcome than the bugle calls to rallying battalions, or the echoing footsteps of the hosts hastening to the rescue of the Union in the morning of her great struggle for national existence.

When the alliance was made, all Europe was at peace. The call to arms in '61 opened a new and serious problem in statesmanship

to the imperial cabinets; and it is only as history defines the attitude of the great powers toward our government, that one can command a true knowledge of the Franco-Mexican intervention.

England and France withheld all assurances of sympathy or friendship for the Northern States. In the proclamation of May 13, 1861, the Queen declared the United Kingdom at peace with all sovereigns, powers, and states; her regret that hostilities had commenced between the United States of America and certain States styling themselves the Confederate States; her royal determination to maintain a strict and impartial neutrality in the contest between the contending parties; and her will warning all her loving subjects from enlisting in the land or naval service of the Federals or Confederates, supplying munitions of war, equipping vessels for privateering purposes, engaging in transport service, or doing any other act calculated to afford assistance to either belligerent.

Neutrality is a pleasing and gracious word; but it stands to-day among the unsettled definitions of the publicists; and, in the presence of the civil war, its interpretation was of

vital consequence in our relations to foreign powers. In the Queen's proclamation it was the challenge, not of the English people, but of the ministry and aristocracy, who were in haste to greet both North and South as simple belligerents, and tender to each the same diplomatic consideration.

The sounds of war had not been heard in the homes of England for many years; but the sacrifices at Delhi, Lucknow, and Cawnpore, on the plateau of Inkerman, in the valley at Balaclava, in the trenches before Sebastopol, and in the hospitals at Scutari, had not been forgotten by her people. England was wedded to the arts of peace, and her commercial supremacy at home and abroad was of more importance in the ministerial mind than the survival of republicanism in its last foothold on the globe; and, so believing, the mother-country turned aside from the warnings and appeals of Bright and Cobden, Motley and Forster and Lyons, and followed the lead of the conservatives in Parliament, to the neutral declaration under the articles of the Congress of Paris, to which the United States refused assent in 1856. The royal proclamation at once imposed upon this

Government the tremendous task of effectively blockading its entire sea-coast from the Potomac to the Rio Grande. Cotton was king with the Palmerston Ministry, and neutrality its watchword.

At this distance, however, from those days of alarm and bitterness, it is possible to look at their history in a quiet spirit, and to judge men and their opinions in a clearer light. Says one of the English historians :

“It is certain that the proclamation was made from no unfriendly motive. If such a proclamation had not been issued, the English government could not have undertaken to recognize the blockade of the Southern ports. International law upon the subject is quite clear. A state cannot blockade its own ports. It can only blockade the ports of an enemy. It can, indeed, order a closure of its own ports ; and a closure of the ports would not have been so effective, for the purposes of the Federal government, as a blockade. It would have been a matter of municipal law only. An offender against the ordinance of closure could be only dealt with lawfully in American waters : an offender against the decree of blockade could be pursued into the open sea. In any case, Mr. Lincoln’s government chose the blockade ; and as the proclamation of a blockade compelled the Federal government to treat privateers as belligerents, it could not but compel foreign states to admit the belligerent rights of the Southern confedera-

tion. In England, the friends of the North,—or some of them, at least,—were anxious that the recognition should take place as quickly as possible, that effect should be given to the President’s proclamation. The English government had trouble enough afterwards to resist the importunity of those at home and abroad who thought they ought to break the blockade in the interests of European trade. They could have no excuse for recognizing it, if they did not also recognize that there was a war going on which warranted it. Therefore, whether the recognition of the Southern Confederates as belligerents was wise or unwise, timely or premature, it was not done in any spirit of unfriendliness to the North, or at the spiriting of any Southern partisans.”

But in his *Twenty Years of Congress*, Mr. Blaine challenges this liberal interpretation of English sentiment and action, and defines what he believes to have been the real attitude of the English government and people toward us in the civil war, with the written and unwritten history of the time at his command. This is his judgment as an historian :

“In the House of Commons the government of the United States had sympathizing friends, eloquent defenders, though few in number. Bright, Forster, Cobden, and men of that class, spoke brave words in defence of the cause for which brave deeds were done by their kindred on this side of the Atlantic—a kindred always more eager to cherish gratitude than to nurture revenge.

"But from the government of England, terming itself Liberal, with Lord Palmerston at its head, Earl Russell as Foreign Secretary, Mr. Gladstone as Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Duke of Argyll as Lord Privy Seal, and Earl Granville as Lord President of the Council, not one friendly word was sent across the Atlantic.

"The conduct of the Tories was not, however, a surprise to the American people. When the first shadow of real danger to the Union appeared in 1860-1, there was instinctive gladness among loyal Americans that a Liberal Ministry was in power in England, composed of men who would in no event permit their government to be used in aid of a rebellion whose first object was the destruction of a kindred nation, and whose subsequent policy looked to the perpetuation of human slavery. But the hope proved to be only the delusion of a day. Americans found the Palmerston Ministry in a hostile mood and ready to embarrass the Government of the Union by every course that might be taken with safety to the interests of England; and they at once recognized a vast increase of the force against which they must contend.

"The only friends of the United States in England at that trying period were to be found among the middle classes, as they were termed, and among the laboring men. The nobility and gentry, the bankers, the great merchants, the ship-builders, were in the main hostile to the Union,—wishing and waiting for the success of the Confederacy. The honorable exceptions to this general statement were so few in number that they could exert little influence on public opinion, and still less on the course of the Ministry. The philanthropy, the foresight, the insight of the realm were found among the humbler classes. In all parts of

the kingdom the laboring men were on the side of the Union. Though they suffered from a cotton-famine, they knew by intuition that the founding of a slave empire in America would degrade labor everywhere; they knew that the triumph of the Union signified the equality of human rights and would add to the dignity and reward of labor. It would have been well for England's fame and for her prosperity if the statesmen at Westminster had shared the wisdom and nobler instincts of the operatives of Lancashire."

In sharp contrast to the attitude of the English government came the message of the Czar. The Prime Minister, at his command, said to the authorities at Washington, at the opening of hostilities:

"This Union is not simply, in our eyes, an element essential to the universal political equilibrium: it constitutes besides a nation to which . . . all Russia has pledged the most friendly interests; for the two countries placed at the extremities of the two worlds, both in the ascending period of their development, appear called to a natural community of interests and of sympathies, of which they have already given mutual proof to each other."

And the Russian ironclads at anchor in New York harbor, in the crucial days of '63, gave notice to all the world, that the message was not one of purely diplomatic courtesy.

Peace reigned at Berlin as it did in London,

when the triple alliance was made, but even then the profound yearning which the German had carried in his heart through so many years, the yearning to be once more a united and great people, was opening toward reality; and the "Iron Chancellor," the most commanding personality of Europe,—was, in secret, forging the massive thunderbolts of war which crushed the pride and dominion of Hapsburg House in the carnage of Sadowa. How human liberty could exist apart from kingly domination and license, or how it fared in this quarter of the world, were idle questions in the mind of that leader of bold spirit and intense vision, and of a will to fashion a nation to his liking,—the Prime Minister of Prussia. It was his task to make the Confederation of 1815 make way for the Confederation of 1866, and that in turn for the Empire of 1871; and neither the people who were on the march toward such a destiny, nor their hero who crushed treaties and laughed at diplomacy and smiled at defeat, could halt, in '61, to ask or discover what interest they had in our national existence.

Austria was on the border-land between ten years of absolutism and her new constitutional

regime; and it was of too much importance to her to silence the clamors of political agitation at home, and to hold in check the hatred of her battling nationalities, which made her the point of danger in the European equilibrium, to question what the end might be in the contest between the North and South. The Emperor expressed the hope that the rebellion would not succeed; but, at that time, the "man of destiny," who should make amends to Austria for the sacrifice of Lombardy to her ancient enemy, and offer the golden prize of an empire beyond the seas, to the sorrow of Hapsburg House, had made no sign.

France, in the person of her emperor, followed England's lead. The great Napoleon's nephew and step-grandson; the studious youth at Augsburg; the cadet of artillery in the Swiss camp; the volunteer in Italy against the papal rule; the exile under Louis Philippe; the political and economic essayist; the ridiculous figure, hailed with shouts of laughter in the attempts at Strasburg and Boulogne; the prisoner at Ham; the constable in the Chartist riots; the member from Paris in the republican assembly, which said: "Let him come, and then it will be seen that there is nothing in him"; the president who

swore to be true to the one indivisible democratic republic; "the statutory heir of the first French Emperor," as Kinglake names him, had ascended the throne through the storm of revolution; had been confirmed in his imperial dignity by the popular voice declared in the plebiscite; and within four years of his accession the Congress of Paris had made him the arbiter of Europe.

To humble Russia, to defeat and plunder Austria, to invade England, to crush Prussia, to establish a new empire in some foreign land, to extend his protectorate as Father of the Church, to rectify her frontiers and make France invincible, were some of the problems—the vagaries of inheritance, as Carlyle calls them—that the traditions of the First Empire and the belief in his own destiny had set for Louis Napoleon.

Already, as his first step to supremacy, had he challenged the power of the Czar in the East; and, with England and Sardinia and Turkey as allies, had won a sorry satisfaction at the Alma and before Sebastopol, for the horrors at Moscow and the Beresina. Already he had electrified the patriot souls of Italy with his stirring message, that she should be

free from the Ticino to the Adriatic. The campaign across the Alps had been made; Magenta and Solferino had been won; the Austrians were driven into the Quadrilateral; a French fleet appeared before Venice; and all Europe anxiously awaited the next development in this strange war of liberation. But His Majesty, while dazzling the eyes of Cavour and his compatriots with the vision of unity, had in secret cried truce to the enemy, and consummated the treaty which brave old Kosuth, in his *Memories of My Exile*, brands "the catastrophe of Villa Franca," and capped the insult to his ally, Victor Emanuel, in his dispatch: "Peace is concluded between the Emperor of Austria and me." Lombardy to be handed over to Sardinia, and then to Italy, was the present, and Nice and Savoy to France was the ultimate price. But the real purpose of Napoleon was thus satisfied: he had shown himself on the field to be no *dilettante* soldier; his ambition and love for military glory were served; and, like his great prototype, with his dream of Oriental empire, the time was at hand for him to enter upon another purpose of his reign, and undertake some brilliant scheme of foreign conquest and achievement.