

"Persons will not be wanting who will ask you why we propose to spend men and money to establish a regular government in Mexico.

"In the present state of the world's civilization, Europe is not indifferent to the prosperity of America; for it is she who nourishes our industry and gives life to our commerce. It is our interest that the republic of the United States shall be powerful and prosperous; but it is not at all to our interest that she should grasp the whole Gulf of Mexico, rule thence the Antilles as well as South America, and be the sole dispenser of the products of the New World. We see to-day, by sad experience, how precarious is the fate of an industry which is forced to seek its raw material in a single market, under all the vicissitudes to which that market is subject.

"If, on the contrary, Mexico preserve its independence, and maintain the integrity of its territory, if a stable government be there established with the aid of France, we shall have restored to the Latin race on the other side of the ocean its force and its prestige; we shall have guaranteed the safety of our own and the Spanish colonies in the Antilles. We shall have established our benign influence in the centre of America; and this influence, while creating immense outlets for our commerce, will procure the raw material which is indispensable to our industry.

"To-day, therefore, our military honor involved, the demands of our policy, the interest of our industry and our commerce, all impose upon us the duty of marching upon Mexico, there boldly planting our flag, and establishing perhaps a monarchy, if not incompatible with the national sentiment of the country, but at least a government which will promise some stability."

Forey's announcement called down from His Majesty a severe reprimand, and the threat of an immediate recall if he undertook to carry out his promises. He had followed his letter of instructions literally, and with strict honesty; but he did not apprehend the double sense of the "principal ideas" which were to be communicated to him, and his action was in part contrary to the Emperor's designs.

The royal rebuke served its purpose, and the obedient soldier at once addressed himself to the accomplishment of the Napoleonic mission. While patriot hearts at the North were sorrowing at the tidings from Chancellorsville, the French and the Mexicans again struggled for the mastery at Puebla. The assault was desperate, the resistance heroic. The Mexicans fought the advance inch by inch; they barricaded the streets, and covered the ground with their dead; they turned their houses into forts, and, defying all calls to surrender, blew them up and perished in the ruins. But Forey halted at no resistance, was dismayed at no carnage or sacrifice; and the reward of his bravery and persistence was the final capture of the gateway to Mexico, the surrender of the only point where a successful defense could be made against "the column of invasion."

Two years to a day from the Emperor's declaration of neutrality, June 10, 1861, his army with the Austrian and Belgian contingents and a motley host of foreign and native volunteers, ruffians, and adventurers, entered the ancient city, with Bazaine, the hero of Gravelotte and the traitor of Metz, at the head, as commander under Forey. The Liberal government had fled, in the presence of a force its armies could not withstand, but always to retain a foothold, in victory or defeat, and at last to light again the fires of patriotism in the ancient land, and mark the first step in the weary marches of the two emperors towards Queretaro and Sedan.

Napoleon believed in the final victory and independence of the South; and it is now known that, from the day France followed England with a neutral declaration, to the day of Lee's surrender, he was ready and anxious to recognize the Confederacy, and only waited for it to show strength enough, or the Union weakness enough, to formally declare his purpose. As Bigelow puts it in his *France and the Confederate Navy*:

"Happily, the Confederate victories and Union defeats did not come; the arm was palsied which was to wield the blade the Emperor had been tempering for it; and

he found it necessary to desert the Confederates, or find himself occupying a hostile attitude towards a nation once more at peace within its own borders, and with a million of veteran soldiers at its disposal. It required no prophet to inform him that to allow such a crisis to mature would bankrupt his government and cost him his crown, and probably his life. His course towards us, from the beginning to the end of this plot, was deliberately and systematically treacherous, and his ministers allowed themselves to be made his pliant instruments."

At this time, however, there were special reasons for his confidence that the Confederate States might become an independent sovereignty, and serve as a neighbor and ally in his scheme of empire. "Stonewall" Jackson had rolled up Hooker's right wing at Chancellorsville, in May, 1863; and that magnificent army, with victory in sight, had been driven across the Rappahannock. On the day Forey entered the City of Mexico in triumph, with forty thousand men in his command, and the government of Juarez had been apparently swept away by the defeats of the Liberals, Lee was massing at Culpepper the mighty column of invasion which should win on Northern soil the independence of the South, in one last great struggle; but the column broke on Round Top and Culps Hill, the Peach Orchard and the Bloody

Angle, and the light of rebellion faded there as the summer sunset fell upon the faces of Pickett's shattered division. But to the Emperor's eyes the flutter of the flags of the "Army of Northern Virginia" on the hill-tops and in the quiet summer fields of Pennsylvania, were sure tokens of conquest and occupation; and he set his face toward the vision of a new empire in the West, the work of his own hands, a shining page in the history of French imperialism.

But each step must be one of diplomacy, of nominal observance of the convention articles, and of His Majesty's own professions to this time. The allies had agreed not to exercise in Mexican affairs any influence to prejudice the right of the Mexican nation to choose and constitute freely the form of its government; and the Emperor, in his instructions to Lorenz and Forey, had said that the end to be attained was not to impose upon the Mexicans a form of distasteful government, but to aid them to establish, in conformity with their wishes, a government with some chance of stability, and which could assure to France the redress of wrongs of which she complained, but by preference a monarchy, if it should

prove to her interest. And that was an easy problem for the mind that organized and carried to success the *coup d'état*, and exploited that facile but unfailing mode of expressing the popular will in France,—the plebiscite,—which declared the special constable in the London Chartist riots of 1848, the Emperor of the French in 1852.

It was straightway determined in the councils of the French leaders, that the true way for the Mexicans "to freely choose their form of government" was through representatives selected by the French authorities; and, in obedience to the Emperor's direction, the choice was made in the following manner: On the 16th of June, 1863, General Forey, after consultation with the French minister resident in Mexico, called together some of the most eminent citizens, and deliberated with them in regard to the state of the country. It was agreed that they should nominate two hundred and fifteen men of distinction from the various states, constituting, with themselves, an Assembly of Notables, to whom should be intrusted the duty of determining upon the form of government to be adopted. The supreme executive power was temporarily vested

in three citizens,—Almonte, who had secretly arranged with Napoleon as to his tactics in establishing a monarchy; Salas, and Orma-
chea. This Franco-Mexican regency issued a manifesto to the nation, of which these are the significant declarations :

“A disciplined and courageous army, a great and civilized power, have undertaken to save us from the unfathomable abyss of evils to which, as blindly as impiously, a misled minority of our countrymen have brought us. They labor for our national restoration, not by the terror of arms, nor by anti-social principles. . . .

“Driving from the capital the power which the pretended constitution of 1857 systematized in evil, by evil, and for evil, the representatives of the Emperor have made no delay in establishing the provisional Mexican government, which will govern until the nation, more amply represented, shall fix freely and definitely the form of government which Mexicans ought to have permanently. . . .

“The Catholic religion is re-established and free. The Church will exercise its authority without having an enemy in the government, and the State will concert with it the manner of resolving the grave questions which are pendent.

“We have still to get rid of the so-called constitutional government, which is only able and only knows to do evil, which courts no good in its career of innovations and destruction. Whilst it exists, we Mexicans shall

have no peace, nor our fortunes security, nor commerce increase. The Franco-Mexican army will, as the first act they perform, pursue it until it surrenders or is driven from the national territory; and in proportion as the towns shake off their intolerable yoke, they will begin to feel the repose and prosperity which the people already liberated enjoy.

“Good and dignified relations will be opened again with injured governments and with the Sovereign Pontiff; every effort will be made to ratify the obligations of Mexico with friendly powers; and, with the protection of France and the other nations that shall support the new government, we shall be respected abroad, and the honor and credit of the nation will be repaired.”

To this call the delegates responded; and in their meeting at the capital they declared themselves the Assembly of Notables, and agreed, under French auspices and dictation, upon certain matters of state, of vital significance to their countrymen. This was their action, as set forth in the official decree; and it is a final answer to all questions as to the underlying purposes of Napoleon :

“The provisional supreme executive power of the nation, to the inhabitants thereof: Know ye, that the Assembly of Notables has thought fit to decree as follows :

“1. The Mexican nation adopts as its form of gov-
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ernment a limited hereditary monarchy, with a Catholic prince.

"2. The sovereign shall take the title of Emperor of Mexico.

"3. The imperial crown of Mexico is offered to his imperial and royal highness the Prince Ferdinand Maximilian, Archduke of Austria, for himself and his descendants.

"4. If, under circumstances which cannot be foreseen, the Archduke of Austria, Ferdinand Maximilian, should not take possession of the throne which is offered to him, the Mexican nation relies on the good-will of His Majesty Napoleon III., Emperor of the French, to indicate for it another Catholic prince."

It is in this analysis and summary of causes that led to the London convention and its dissolution at the Orizaba conference; of the relations of Mexico to the powers she so openly defied; of the motives that led Louis Napoleon to enforce the claims of France alone; of the history of the invasion to the surrender of the capital; and of the origin and action of the Assembly of Notables, that one may see in a true light the Mexicans' choice of a sovereign of the new empire; judge the real causes of their action; and gain acquaintance with the problems of Church and State, of diplomacy and politics, that awaited the coming of Maximilian and Carlotta.

CHAPTER IV.

Choice of a ruler—Estrada and the Clerical leaders—The Archduke—Birth—Education—Student—Naval commander—Viceroy—Marriage—Carlotta—Ancestry—Personal qualities—Miramar—Invitation to Mexican throne—The deputation—Estrada's plea—Maximilian's reply—Popular vote—Guaranties—Motives—Ambition—Von Gagern's warning—Carlotta's decision—Acts of adhesion—Treaty of Miramar—Second deputation—Acceptance of the throne—Departure from Miramar—Visit to Rome—Arrival at Vera Cruz—Proclamation—Journey to the capital—Reception—Vision of imperialism—Chapultepec.

NAPOLEON received the nomination of the Assembly of Notables "as a symptom of favorable augury," and hailed with satisfaction the result of the intrigue and diplomatic negotiations at London, Mexico, Paris, Brussels, Rome, and Vienna. Forey and Bazaine and their victorious legions had opened the way to the accomplishment of the original scheme. The crowning act must be brilliant and dramatic; and the new empire must rise from the ruins of the old civilization, and challenge the world with its lustre and promise, to rank with that other empire of which the first Napoleon