

era in her history; her rulers had won the respect and confidence of a large proportion of their people; the initial problems of government seemed well settled; and something of the grandeur and strength of Hapsburg House was reflected in the reign of Maximilian I. of Mexico.

CHAPTER VI.

Attitude of United States—Non-recognition—Congressional action—Stevens, Sumner, Seward—Diplomacy—Declarations to England, France, Austria, and Mexico—Instructions to Minister to France—Monroe doctrine—Correspondence with French Minister of War—Recall of French troops—Causes—Gen'l Schofield's mission to France—Seward's ultimatum—Activity of Liberals—Order for retreat of French and Austrians—Liberal victories—General Grant's order—Sheridan—Demonstrations on Mexican frontier—Change in diplomatic relations—United States minister to Mexico—Campbell—Instructions—General Sherman's mission—Seward's policy effective.

AT this historic period—in the close of the year 1865—when the empire, whose perpetuity had been guaranteed by France, Austria, and Belgium, reached the zenith of its glory and prosperity, it is important to recall some of the incidents in the action of our government during the intervention and foreign occupation, and note some of the initial causes which at last forced Louis Napoleon to abandon one of his most cherished schemes, deny the prayers of Carlotta, and leave Maximilian to the mercy of a Mexican court-martial.

In May, 1864, when Maximilian ascended the throne, he made known the fact of his accession to all the great powers of the world, who immediately recognized the empire, sent ministers to reside at his court, and received ministers from him to reside at their capitals. The United States took no notice of the communication. But now the situation had wholly changed. Appomattox had been won; slavery was dead; the civil war was ended; the republic was saved; and among the questions of the new peace, scarcely less potent than those of reconstruction, was the standing menace to our liberties by this new empire in the south. What of this Austrian autocrat, with forty thousand veterans from the battle-fields of Europe at his call, destroying the republic, and setting up in its stead, at the bid of a faction, a monarchy, created and maintained by European coalitions? It is possible that during the long civil war the American people had not fully realized the significance of that naked usurpation; but the eyes of their statesmen had been fixed with ceaseless watchfulness on the danger of the intervention.

In the thirty-ninth Congress, persistent efforts were made by Stevens, Schenck, and

other leaders, to induce Congress to appropriate thirty millions of dollars for the cause of the Mexican republic; or, in other words, to authorize the government to endorse certain Juarist bonds to that amount. These bonds were utterly worthless, and the endorser would be called upon to pay them. The scheme never received approval; but its agitation served the purpose for which the friends of the Juarists had introduced it. Congress had called, from time to time, by resolution and inquiry, for some definite explanation from the French government of its purpose in Mexico; and at last, under the leadership of McDougal and Stevens, formally condemned the invasion and the establishment of the empire. But the committee on foreign affairs, with Sumner at its head, and Seward, with his negotiations and protocols and diplomatic definitions, waited and temporized, until Grant questioned their policy, and Sheridan uttered his fiery protests against the seeming indifference and inaction.

To the time of his actual declaration of war upon Mexico, after the conference of the allies at Orizaba, the entire course of Louis Napoleon was one of misrepresentation and deceit

toward the nations interested in the intervention. In the London Treaty his actual purpose was wholly concealed; and when he declared war, he assured our government that he sought only redress for grievances; that France did not intend to occupy or dominate in Mexico; and that the Mexican people should have a free choice of institutions of government. But the master in diplomacy in the cabinet of Lincoln was not deceived. His policy, from necessity, was one of negotiation, of delay, of apparent disregard of public sentiment; but it was victorious. It saved us from war with foreign powers until our own safety was assured and we were ready to challenge the right or power of France or her allies to establish an empire in the Americas.

Certain passages in the diplomatic correspondence between Washington and Paris, to the time of the demand for the withdrawal of the French troops, will present the essential points in a clear light. In various letters to their respective representatives, Mr. Seward, at an early date, declared our attitude toward the intervention, to England, France, Austria, and Mexico, instructing our ministers to England and France to remonstrate against the recep-

tion of the Confederate agents, refusing their proffer of neutrality, and expressing "the desire of the United States that peaceful relations might be restored between France and Mexico upon a basis just to both parties, and favorable to the independence and sovereignty of the Mexican people"; and this was his main contention:

"We have a right to insist that France shall not improve the war she makes to raise up in Mexico an anti-republican or anti-American government, or to maintain such a government there.

"The United States lament the war which has arisen between the republic of Mexico and France. Since it has unhappily occurred, however, they can act in regard to it only on the principles which have always governed their conduct in similar cases.

"When France made war against Mexico, we asked explanations of her objects and purposes; and she answered that it was a war for the redress of grievances; that she did not intend permanently to occupy or dominate in Mexico; and that she would leave to the people of Mexico a free choice of institutions of government. Under these circumstances the United States adopted, and they have since maintained, entire neutrality between the belligerents, in harmony with the traditional policy in regard to foreign wars."

When the professed election by the Mexican people, upon the decree of the Assembly of

Notables, in 1863, was pending, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs intimated to our minister in Paris that "an early acknowledgment of the proposed empire by the United States would be convenient to France, by relieving her, sooner than might be possible under such circumstances, from her troublesome complications in Mexico." To this suggestion Mr. Seward replied :

"Happily, the French government has not been left uninformed, that, in the opinion of the United States, the permanent establishment of a foreign and monarchical government will be found neither easy nor desirable.

The United States continue to regard Mexico as the theatre of a war which has not yet ended in the subversion of the government long existing there, with which the United States remain in the relation of peace and sincere friendship ; and that for this reason the United States are not at liberty to consider the question of recognizing a government which, in the further chances of war, may come into its place."

And the one great fundamental idea and purpose underlying all diplomatic courses was concisely stated in Mr. Seward's letter to our minister to France, in April, 1864 :

"I remain now firm as heretofore in the opinion that the destinies of the American continent are not to be

permanently controlled by any political arrangement that can be made in the capitals of Europe."

As a matter of fact our government never made any official declaration to invite *public* attention to the relations with Mexico, until after the close of the civil war ; and it was not until the 6th of December, 1865, that it defined its exact policy and position to the French minister in the following communication :

"Republican and domestic institutions on this continent are deemed most congenial with and most beneficial to the United States. Where the people of any country, like Brazil now, or Mexico in 1822, have voluntarily established and acquiesced in monarchical institutions of their own choice, free from all foreign control or intervention, the United States do not refuse to maintain relations with such governments, or seek through propagandism, by force or intrigue, to overthrow those institutions. On the contrary, where a nation has established institutions republican and domestic, similar to our own, the United States assert in their behalf that no foreign nation can rightfully intervene by force to subvert republican institutions and establish those of an antagonistical character."

This was a definition of the Monroe doctrine which brooked no qualification. The temporizing policy of the government, its delicate negotiations upon questions of inter-

national law, its discussion of precedent and principles, its conservative modes of expression and action, were all found compatible with justice and honor, when the hour came for the formal demand upon Louis Napoleon to withdraw his troops from Mexico, and write "Failure" across what he himself had named "The brightest page in the history of my reign."

The problems of state, south of the Rio Grande, of necessity awaited the solution of the critical question which those apt scholars, Grant and Sherman, were striving to work out within our own borders. The march to Mexico could wait for the "March to the Sea." Already the voices of the storm that should burst at Sadowa were heard in the courts of Berlin and Vienna, and the man of destiny must arm for this golden opportunity "to rectify the frontiers of France," and French honor must be vindicated, French patriotism must have satisfaction, and the imperial traditions must ripen into fruitage across the Rhine. The empire must recall its veterans from Mexico, reorganize its army, and husband its resources for the coming struggle.

These were the causes at home, say the advocates of intervention, that made the evacuation of Mexico imperative, according to the secret treaty between Napoleon and Maximilian, and consistent with the dignity and honor of France. Grant all this to the claims of the French, and still history, in its impartial survey of the facts, follows the logic of events, and finds the key to Napoleon's abandonment of Maximilian, not in the councils or necessities of state at Paris, so much as in the emphatic demands at Washington.

Finally, in the autumn of 1865, owing in great measure to the vigorous presentation of the views of the government by General Schofield, who had been sent to France by the state department on a special diplomatic mission, "resulting in the preservation of peace rather than in a conflict of arms," Louis Napoleon was led to suggest a willingness to retire from Mexico, but that it would be inconvenient to do so without first receiving from the United States an assurance of a friendly or a tolerant disposition toward the power which had assumed to itself an imperial form in that country and had received swift recognition from its royal sympathizers. The only

answer made to this overture was this,—that while friendship with France had always been deemed important and peculiarly agreeable by the American people, they could enter into no stipulations contrary to their traditional policy of neutrality or non-intervention as to the new government of Mexico.

And the pith of the whole matter is given in the dispatch of Mr. Seward to the French minister, February 12, 1866 :

“The United States have not seen any satisfactory evidence that the people of Mexico have spoken, and have called into being, or accepted, the so-called empire, which it is insisted has been set up in their capital. The withdrawal of the French forces is deemed necessary to allow such a proceeding to be taken by Mexico. Of course the Emperor of France is entitled to determine the aspect in which the Mexican situation ought to be regarded by him. Nevertheless, the view which I have thus presented is the one which this nation has accepted. It therefore recognizes, and must continue to recognize in Mexico, only the ancient republic ; and it can in no case consent to involve itself, either directly or indirectly, in relation with or recognition of the institution of the Prince Maximilian in Mexico. Under these circumstances it has happened, either rightfully or wrongfully, that the presence of European armies in Mexico, maintaining a European prince with imperial attributes, without her consent and against her will, is deemed a source of appre-

hension and danger, not alone to the United States, but also to all the independent and sovereign republican States founded on the American continent and its adjacent islands.

“The United States rest content with submitting to France the exigencies of an embarrassing situation in Mexico, and expressing the hope that France may find some manner which shall at once be consistent with her interest and honor, and with the principles and interest of the United States, to relieve that situation without injurious delay.”

This was diplomacy, with a million of veterans from the fields of the civil war behind it, and there could well be but one answer.

But the Emperor even then undertook to temporize, and postpone the departure of the first detachment of French in November, 1866, until the next spring ; but a peremptory demand restored the agreement for evacuation. It was in these memorable words of a soldier, rather than of a diplomat, that Mr. Seward delivered the ultimatum :

“The Emperor’s decision to modify the existing arrangement without any understanding with the United States, so as to leave the whole French army in Mexico for the present, instead of withdrawing one detachment in November current, as promised, is now found in every way inconvenient and exceptionable. We cannot acquiesce, first, because the term ‘next spring,’ as appointed

for the entire evacuation, is indefinite and vague ; and, second, because we have no authority for stating to Congress and to the American people that we have now a better guarantee for the withdrawal of the whole expeditionary force in the spring than we have heretofore had for the withdrawal of a part in November ; third, in full reliance upon at least a literal performance of the Emperor's existing agreement, we have taken measures, while facilitating the anticipated French evacuation, to co-operate with the republican government of Mexico for promoting the pacification of that country, and for the early and complete restoration of the proper constitutional authority of that government. The President sincerely hopes and expects that the evacuation of Mexico will be carried into effect with such conformity to the existing agreement as the inopportune complication which calls for this dispatch shall allow. Instructions will be issued to the United States military forces of observation to await in every case special directions from the President. This will be done with a confident expectation that the telegraph or the mail may seasonably bring us a satisfactory resolution from the Emperor in reply to this note."

But there were other potent forces to compel the withdrawal of the French troops. Juarez knew the temper of his countrymen, and environed though he was, virtually imprisoned in one small town upon the sea-shore, at one time when the foreign domination seemed complete, his influence reached the most re-

mote districts of the interior ; and although the armies of the Imperialists nominally held the country from sea to sea, at many points detachments of the Liberals kept their organization, and inspired by the new promises of liberty he set forth, in which he scarcely veiled the hope of armed assistance from the United States, they maintained themselves with a tenacity of purpose that made total defeat impossible. Beaten in one quarter, they appeared in another, claiming the excuse of necessity for acts of rapine and cruelty in the satisfaction of personal enmities, and the barbarous deeds, which make the history of that time a continual record of horrors. Had example been necessary, they would have found it in the merciless execution of the imperial decree ; but, in truth, it was a time when all rules of civilized warfare were set aside, when patriot and traitor, soldier and bandit, became indistinguishable at many points in the struggle for the mastery.

The beginning of the end, from a military point of view, came in July, 1865, with the defeat of the Austrian troops at Monterey, and the capture of the seaport town of Matamoras by the Liberals, and shortly afterwards the