

of our government, the appointment of a minister accredited to the Mexican republic, with Sherman at Vera Cruz, and Sheridan and his army on the Rio Grande, brought to bear the pressure our authorities resolved to evince, without the necessity of actual interference by force of arms. American diplomacy, read in the light of the history of our army and navy, at the close of the civil war commanded profound respect, even in the mind of as good a hater of the liberty of the people as Louis Napoleon.

CHAPTER VII.

The crisis—Napoleon's envoy—Guaranties broken—France to withdraw—Carlotta's ambition—Her mission to Europe—Appeal to Napoleon—Its refusal—At Miramar—Visit to Rome—Interviews with the Pope—Failure of her mission—Insanity—Maximilian's efforts to save the empire—National army—Coalition with Church party—Former relations—Overtures of Clerical leaders—News of Carlotta's fate—Maximilian's illness—At Orizaba—Arrival of Miramon and Marquez—Their characteristics—Abdication—Vacillation—Council opinions—Resolution to remain—Congress of Notables—Imperial proclamation—Gift of the Bishops—Popular support—Government and Church party.

WHEN Napoleon could no longer evade the issues so pointedly defined at Washington, and emphasized by the military demonstrations, and, through his special envoy, Saillard, he notified Maximilian of his purpose to withdraw the French troops, it was Carlotta who first realized the peril of the empire, and its inability to stand alone.

Early in January, 1866, she returned from her visit to the distant provinces, bearing their pledges of loyalty and good-will. She had scarcely reached the capital when she received

the sorrowful tidings of the death of her father, King Leopold, whom she loved almost to adoration. In all her lifetime she had leaned upon him for counsel, for confidence, for guidance in all her emergencies ; and now, in the hour of her supreme need, he had fallen. But the grief of the daughter, the sorrow for her irreparable loss, must yield to the necessities of rule, to the questions of state that demanded instant attention.

The "guaranties of peace," so readily promised in the secret treaty at Paris in 1863, had proved worthless in the march of events, when France was arming for intervention or defense in the coming struggle between Austria and Prussia ; Sheridan and his veterans on the Rio Grande were impatient for the signal to cross the frontier ; the imperial treasury was empty ; no further loans could be made in the European exchanges ; and conspiracy and revolution, with Bazaine as the central figure, were ripening even in the cabinet and council. The emperor was unequal to the situation. He was better fitted for a scholarly life than the rugged discipline of the camp and battle-field, or the perils of political agitation ; for the triumphs of peace than the storms of war.

He was vacillating when decision alone could serve, and led hither and thither by the last plausible scheme of his councillors of state, or the device of some trusted but visionary friend.

The confidence of the emperor, the adulation of courtiers, the specious suggestions of the politicians, the protestations of the Church party leaders, the threats of the revolutionists, did not mislead the empress in her judgment or her resolution. It was her dream, her ambition, her life, to wear a crown : and the loss of it was intolerable. She had a soldier's heart, and a statesman's head ; and with the courage of the one, and the wisdom of the other, she faced the situation. No man at the imperial court—courtier, soldier, politician, statesman—had the qualities to serve in this emergency. There was but one solution of the problem, and that was to secure money and men to maintain the government. There was but one tribunal to which an appeal could be made,—the honor of Napoleon, and, in the last event, to the pride of Hapsburg House and the sympathy of the Pope. Were not his sovereign promise, the near reality of his vision of union of the Latin races, the peril of the life and fortune of his royal brother, and the

restoration to the Church of its former splendor and power in its ancient see, still infallible means to win the hearts of their majesties and His Holiness to the support, the final triumph, of the "empire of the west"? Were not all these motives more potent, in this crisis, than in the halcyon days of the temptation to kingly renown at Miramar? Almonte, the most trusted man in the outset of the intervention, it is true had failed in this very errand; but could denial be made in the winning presence of Carlotta?

It was at last decided that she should undertake the great mission alone; and in July, 1866, she set out on her journey, having chosen as her companions the minister of state, two chamberlains of the royal household, a lady of honor, and her physician. The emperor accompanied the party from the capital down to Rio Frio, and there said farewell to the empress, who asked the prayers of her friends while absent, closing her request with the prophetic words, "I shall need them."

On her arrival in France she hastened to Paris and sought an audience with Napoleon. He had been duly apprised of her coming, but many vexatious and intentional delays were

interposed, and it was not until August 24th that this brave but despairing woman forced an opportunity for a final discussion of the situation. She had already presented the memorial of Maximilian for the continuance of the guaranties solemnly pledged in the treaty of Paris; and now she urged, in person, the demands of honor and justice, that more men and more money should be furnished, and the mighty machinery of state be put in motion to save the empire from ruin. Prayers, appeals, tears, were alike useless. France could make but one answer. Napoleon dare not recall or modify his pledge to withdraw his troops at a certain date; war with the United States, in a critical period of affairs at home, was the certain outcome of an affirmative, and he declined the empress's request.

The story of that last interview has not been written. It is hidden in the secrets of state at London, Paris, and Vienna; in the silence of the burial crypt at Farnborough; in the night of madness that still enshrouds the mind of Carlotta; and in the sorrowful memories of Sedan that embitter the life of the Empress of France. To the world "the desperate adventurer of Cologne," as Von Moltke calls

Louis Napoleon, was a cold, hard, unimpassioned man ; but in truth he was sympathetic, and even his soul must have been awakened by the entreaties of Carlotta, who had listened to his voice, who had trusted his good faith, and now, with his very promises to her husband in her hands, battled for his honor and his life, and to all arguments, to all reasons of state, could at last plead nothing but his danger and her own heart's anguish. To have seen such distress, to have known that he had been in great part its cause, must have stirred even the spirit that was unmoved amid the carnage on the night of the *coup d'état*, in the blasting artillery fire at Magenta, and the charges of the victorious Prussians that changed the history of France.

The decision fell with terrible force ; and the first thought of Carlotta was to fly from the scene of her defeat, to recover herself, to gain new courage, to devise new plans, to arm for a new struggle, to invite, nay, compel the assistance once so freely tendered and now so utterly denied. What place so dear to her, what vision of peace so sweet, as the home of her former happiness—Miramar? Once there, her mind turned from the scenes

hallowed by so many tender memories, to her husband in that distant land,—a trembling figure amid the shadows of conspiracy and revolution ; and her final resolution was soon taken. King Leopold was dead, and Belgium was powerless to answer her appeal ; Austria looked coldly on the necessities of the prince who had renounced his right to her succession, and France had cancelled the solemn obligations of her treaty. There was still one hope of high promise to her soul. She would go to Rome, claim the good offices of the “visible chief of the Church,” the servant of the servants of God, and appeal to his humanity, to his sense of duty. She could not be made to realize how impotent were his temporal powers, and how impossible of performance were the deeds she would commit to his hands. Says a critic of the time, of her errand :

“As a king the Pope was a nonentity to all but the people of the Roman States ; his opinion on temporal affairs, beyond that narrow circle, was worth nothing. His advice, even, was of no account among his brother sovereigns. As a man, he could but sympathize with the woes of an innocent woman ; as an old man he could but address words of paternal love and pity to the comparative child that bent sorrowfully, and yet not altogether hopelessly, before him. As a priest, he could but ad-

minister to her those consolations of religion which the humblest village pastor would have afforded, but which, coming from the lips of the head of the Church, would have more than usual influence and authority in leading her thoughts to that other world, the least of whose joys are worth more than the whole dominion and lordship of this."

In the study of the situation at Miramar, the critical review of the causes of failure at Paris, of the dispatches and suggestions from Mexico and from various sources in Europe, of the questions of state relations with the powers, and in the analysis of the factors that made for and against the success of her errand, no mind was more alert in its search, more capable of true discrimination, more fertile in resource, and seemingly more unerring in decision, than Carlotta's. And yet, behind the calmness of her demeanor, the wisdom of her judgments, there lay her terrible anxiety, the intolerable thought of the loss of her crown; and these gave color to all her actions, and led to an implicit faith in the triumph of her cause at Rome.

The journey was undertaken in October. In all the large towns the empress was greeted with salutes of artillery, the ringing of bells,

songs and cheers, and other tokens of enthusiasm and sympathy. Most welcome to her were these voices of the people, as they seemed prophecies of good fortune. As the special train assigned to the empress and her suite stopped at one of the stations, she frightened her companions by saying quietly, but with great emphasis: "I will not go to Rome. I am afraid they will poison me there. I will go back to Miramar." She at once began to talk again in her usual manner and tone; and, while every word and gesture was noted with deep anxiety, no other sign that her burden had been too sorrowful to bear, was then given. At the Papal court she was received with great ceremony and honor. Many persons of different nationalities tendered assurances of their respect and sympathy, and she won their admiration by her queenly dignity and grace, and the ease and accuracy with which she addressed them in their several languages.

In the evening of the fourth day after her arrival, she suddenly informed one of her most trusted friends, with caution as to secrecy, that Napoleon had hired three of her suite, including her physician, to poison her, and a moment later she charged the friend herself with being

one of the parties to the scheme. She ordered that none of the suspected persons should be admitted to her presence, and prayed their arrest of the Mexican minister and Cardinal Antonelli. In a final audience at the Vatican, she entreated protection from her enemies, of the Pope, and insisted that there only was she safe from the designs of the poisoners. The delusion had taken complete possession of her mind, increased each day in its intensity, and, with many pitiable symptoms, culminated in a refusal to taste any food or drink unless purchased by herself in the streets, or prepared in her presence by a trusted attendant. The most skilful medical treatment, the most devoted service, failed in their merciful and hopeful purposes, and in the last days of October the empress was taken in charge by her mother and other members of her family, and returned again to Miramar, and afterward, in the trust of improvement, to the home and scenes of her youth, where, in the shadow of her infirmity, she still waits for the emperor's coming, and in some fleeting vision of the past may say :

“ Bitter and sweet beyond comparison
The memories of Love's harvest-field I keep ;

God gave us certain sunny hours to reap,
And this at parting when the day was done :—
The moon cast both our shadows into one,
Orion lay aslant along the steep ;
All night, you said, with folded hands I sleep
At times like these, when days are halcyon.
Then at that word—I knew not how or why—
There came as from some dreamland leagues away,
Dim presage of a not far distant day,
When 'neath the same stars I should see you lie,
That smiling face turned silent to the sky,
And those fair fingers clasped as cold as clay.”

ROSSETTI.

All that love, ambition, and the imperial qualities of true womanhood could do to save the empire had been done ; and the mission of the empress was over.

On her departure from Mexico, Maximilian was left to face the embarrassments and perils that menaced his government alone. It was a task for statesmanship, for the mastery of conflicting forces in the end, but for the time being, one of negotiation, of expedients, until the welcome tidings of relief should come. When Baron Saillard, Napoleon's special envoy, made known to Maximilian, in March, 1866, his purpose to withdraw the French troops, Bazaine hastened to issue the orders for evacuation ; in the distant provinces the