

“Maximilian persisted in a useless attempt to shed Mexican blood after the French forces withdrew,” was Minister Lerdo’s answer to our minister’s request that the emperor and his supporters might be treated as prisoners of war; and the real necessity which led to the execution, is reflected in the words of Juarez in his final answer to the earnest and tearful appeal of the Princess Salm-Salm: *“I am grieved, Madam, to see you thus on your knees before me; but if all the kings and queens in Europe were in your place, I could not spare that life. It is not I who take it: it is the people and the law; and if I should not do its will, the people would take it and mine also.”*

## CHAPTER IX.

Mexican vengeance—Decree of execution—June 19, 1867—Preparations for death—Maximilian’s letters—Appeal to Juarez—Messages to Emperor of Austria—Archduchess Sophia—Farewell to Carlotta—To the “Hill of the Bells”—Address to the Mexican people—Miramon’s plea—Mejia’s stoicism—Execution of the sentence—Austria’s request for Maximilian’s remains—Final consent of the Mexican government—Burial in Vienna—Paris in 1867—Louis Napoleon’s triumphs—Memories of Maximilian and his fate—Judgment of history.

THE dream of empire was over; the protests of the nations, the prayers of friends for mercy, had failed; and the spirit of cruelty, the lust for blood that had sent to shameful deaths some of the noblest men in Mexican history, now demanded Maximilian’s life as the price of its satisfaction. In the morning of the 19th of June, the tolling bells announced the coming execution of the Republican decree. Maximilian, and Miramon and Mejia, who were to die with him, were permitted to spend a part of their last night together, under guard, in a spacious room once used as a hos-



pital by the French garrison. The faithful priest, Father Soria, volunteered to minister to them in their extremity, and the hours passed in preparations for the morrow.

Maximilian wrote several letters, to his legal advisers, to Juarez, to his brother the Emperor of Austria, to his mother the Archduchess Sophia, and to his wife. It was in his letter to Juarez that he left to history the surest witness of his real nobility of character.

"About to suffer death for having wished to prove whether new political institutions could succeed in putting an end to the bloody civil war which has devastated this unfortunate country for so many years, I shall lose my life with pleasure, if that sacrifice can contribute to its peace and prosperity. Fully persuaded that nothing solid can be founded on a soil drenched in blood and shaken by revolutions, I conjure you in the most solemn manner, and with the true sincerity of the moments in which I find myself, that my blood may be the last to be shed; that the same perseverance which I was pleased to recognize and esteem in the midst of prosperity—that with which you have defended the cause which has just triumphed—may consecrate that blood to the most noble task of reconciling the minds of the people, and in founding in a stable and durable manner the peace and tranquillity of this unhappy country."

In his letter to the Emperor Francis Joseph, he entreated him to provide generously for those

who had been faithful to him, and who had lost their fortunes in his cause. To his mother he sent tender and loving words of consolation, and the assurance of his readiness to die for the honor of his name and station. This was his message to Carlotta:

"MY BELOVED CARLOTTA: If God permit that your health be restored, and you should read these few lines, you will learn the cruelty with which fate has stricken me since your departure for Europe. You took with you, not only my heart, but my good fortune. Why did I not give heed to your voice? So many untoward events! Alas! so many sudden blows have shattered all my hopes; so that death is but a happy deliverance, not an agony to me. I shall die gloriously like a soldier, like a monarch, vanquished but not dishonored. If your sufferings are too great, and God shall call you soon to join me, I shall bless His divine hand which has weighed so heavily upon us. Adieu, adieu.

"Your poor

"MAXIMILIAN."

He gave the letters to the priest, and also handed him his will, in which remembrances were given to many of the foreign officers and to all his servants, and legacies were left to the families of Miramon and Mejia. At four o'clock the last sacraments were administered and a mass was celebrated. At six o'clock the com-



mander of the guard entered the room, and announced the order of the government to carry out the sentence of the court-martial. Maximilian simply said, "I am ready"; and, calling to his two friends, they went out of the convent together. At the door he paused a moment and said to Ortega, "Ah! what a glorious day; it is such as I desired for my death."

The "Hill of the Bells," memorable as the scene of the last battle and surrender, was chosen for the execution. Three carriages were provided for the condemned, and Maximilian entered the first one accompanied by Father Soria; and the solemn procession, guarded by an escort of four thousand soldiers, with a squadron of lancers at the head, passed on through the streets crowded with people who had assembled to pay their last tribute of respect and loyalty. On arriving at the hill, Maximilian alighted, and, followed by Miramon and Mejia, walked quickly to the open end of the square of troops, where three crosses had been placed to mark their positions.

He looked earnestly about him, and, at a wave of his hand, silence fell on all; and in a steady, clear voice he said:



JUAREZ



"Mexicans : Men of my rank and origin are destined to become the benefactors of the people, or their martyrs. Called by a part of you to the throne, I have lived and cared only for the welfare of the country. I did not come to you through ambition, but I came filled with the best wishes for the future of my adopted country, for the future of the brave men to whom, in my hour of death, I render thanks for their sacrifices.

"Mexicans : May my blood be the last shed for the welfare of this country. But if it be necessary that others shall shed theirs, then may it flow for the benefit of the nation, and not in consequence of treason.

"Long live independence ! Long live Mexico !"

Miramón's appeal was to his old comrades in arms :

"Soldiers of Mexico, my countrymen, I find myself here sentenced to die as a traitor. When my life does not belong to me, when in a few brief moments I will be no more, I proclaim before you and the whole world, that I have never been a traitor to my country. I have fought for her, and to-day I fall with honor. I have children ; and I implore you not to suffer this stain to be affixed to my memory, much less to them. Viva Mexico ! Viva the emperor !"

Mejía, with the stoicism of his race, said nothing. The firing party detailed for the execution, consisting of three officers and three platoons of seven men each, came into position



at a few paces' distance. Maximilian stepped forward and gave a gold piece to each soldier, saying: "Boys, aim well; aim at my heart," and to the officer who prayed his forgiveness: "Courage, my son; no forgiveness is necessary; you must obey your orders." Returning, he exchanged places with Miramon, and said: "General, sovereigns always admire the brave, and on the point of death I wish to give you the place of honor"; and to Mejia: "General, he who has not been rewarded on earth, will certainly be in heaven." The final moment had come; and each man stood quietly, with uncovered eyes, to meet his fate. An instant's silence, the ringing orders, the sharp report of the rifles, and his faithful companions sealed their devotion to Maximilian with their lives; and he, with the sorrowful cry, "Oh, man!" yielded up his own to Napoleon's greed of conquest and power, and the dazzling visions of imperial dignity and renown.

It was only after many cruel delays, and at last in answer to the urgent request of the Emperor Francis Joseph, that the government consented that the body of Maximilian might be conveyed to Europe; and in November, 1867, the solemn salutes of artillery, and the

sad monotonous of bells in the old Spanish city which had once given him royal welcome, voiced the farewell of Mexico to the young ruler she had sacrificed; and in the *Novara*, which bore him and Carlotta on their errand of empire, his remains were returned amid sorrowful greetings at Havana, Trieste, and Vienna, to find a resting-place in the imperial mausoleum which guards the ashes of the princes of the house of Austria.

"Home there came a stately fleet, with the prince in winding-sheet:  
And they laid him in the vaults beside his many mighty peers;  
Yet if he could but have said where he wished to lay his head,  
'T would have been within that valley where he passed such joyous years,

Miramar."

France had seen no such pageant in all her history as the exposition of her arts and industries which Napoleon had planned and carried to a complete success in the brilliant summer days of 1867. Paris was a city of splendor and revelry. The rulers of the earth, the Czar of Russia, the Emperor of Austria, the kings of Prussia, Greece, Belgium, and Sweden,



the Prince of Wales, the Viceroy of Egypt, the Sultan of Turkey, and others of less renown, with their dazzling retinues, had gathered there to do honor to the man they had at no distant day ridiculed and despised, and to lend additional lustre to the new page in his singular history. They saluted him, so silent, so stolid of demeanor, for the triumphs he had so quickly won,—the throne of France, and equality among the crowned heads; and was it not he who had carried to fruition the Napoleonic traditions, and out of the haze of romance in his early life had he not evoked a stalwart semblance of magnificence and power?

It was while the festivities were at their height that the first whispers of the tragedy on the "Hill of the Bells" were heard in the secret councils, and then amid the throngs at the Tuileries. To many of the royal visitors the victim was related; and, in their sorrow for his fate, they could but feel that their host, who had induced him to accept the throne on the guaranties now just broken, was in a great measure responsible for the cruel sacrifice.

Who can question that deep regret stirred

Napoleon's soul, in his hours of repose and meditation, as he thought of the brave man done to death, and his loving wife in her hopeless madness at Miramar? The rifle-shots on that summer morning were the distant signals of the coming storms that should engulf the Second Empire and its creator; and in his life at the council board, in the stormy contests for supremacy with the Empress, in the tender thoughts of the prince and his future, in the complex web of politics and diplomacy, in the moments of heroic battle with disease, who can doubt there came bitter memories of Maximilian in his farewell to life? and voices heard only of him, told again the sad story, until the smoke of battle shrouded his trembling figure on the way to the Prussian headquarters, and his strange history closed in the pathetic inquiry of his faithful friend and physician, Conneau, in the final hour at Chiselhurst—"Were you at Sedan?"

To those who read history in the cold light of exact criticism, who with narrow vision measure men and events only as they serve to illustrate one philosophic theory or another, the Franco-Mexican intervention will ever be merely one of the episodes in the mock royal-



ism of the Second Empire, and the story of Maximilian and Carlotta one of mistaken ambition, of the lust of power, of deserved misfortune.

But to those who salute the qualities of humanity, courage, and virtue in royal lives, the empress in her ability as a ruler, in her fateful and heroic mission to save the crown, and at last in her infirmity and sorrow, will command sympathy and admiration; and the emperor, wanting at times in strength and decision, but never in loyalty and honor, in his brilliant career as scholar, admiral, and viceroy, in his ideals of government and his chivalric endeavor to enforce them, in his gallant fight against the inevitable, consecrating both his purposes and achievements by his tragic sacrifice, will stand pre-eminent among the knightly sons of Hapsburg-Lorraine.

When the secrets of state, even now so jealously guarded, are made known, and the intervention can be seen in its true relations, the historian of our times will mark in the meeting of the envoys in London on that memorable day a remarkable chapter in human progress, the initial step in a march of events, out of which, in the providence of

God, have come, for the good of mankind, from imperial France, republican France; from Maximilian and the empire, Diaz and the republic; from despotism, liberty; from the curse of anarchy, the benediction of peace.

THE END.







