to break away in disorder, but in the narrow exit they became jammed. At this moment I ran forward and discharged a gun posted above the porch among the French, and its effect at close quarters so demoralised them that they left the courtyard which they had begun to enter, and beat a hasty retreat.

"This revived the spirits of my men. Many returned to their posts, and from the shelter of a fountain in the middle of the courtyard directed a quick fire on the breach. I had made a pretty large excavation in getting out material for backing up the door. This now served admirably as cover for my assailants. I therefore ordered a lieutenant with fifty men to go up to the second floor of the building, and fire down on the soldiers thus sheltered. Their fire was so efficacious that the French made no further show of resistance, and returned to their positions.

"All was over at the barracks of San Marcos at half-past ten at night, after fourteen and a half hours' continuous fighting. Once the enemy had withdrawn I advanced with a sufficient force to close the breach that their artillery had opened, and to restore our defences. This cost me several men, for it was carried on under the enemy's fire; but at last the work was completed."

Next day Diaz was again attacked. First, however, the French gave their attention to another part of his line of defence. The tactics were the same. A breach in the outer wall was opened with artillery. Then a column charged in and occupied the first court of a house, and a sanguinary encounter took place for possession of the inner court. Diaz is found at every point of danger.

Here is an incident quoted from his diary, which proves how indefatigable he was:

"When I arrived at the point of attack a wide breach had been opened in the wall, as wide as a street. Nevertheless, the French could not enter because they had no artillery supports. During the cannonade the walls of the house from which they had fired had partly fallen in, and covered the guns with the débris. This being the position, I ordered Colonel González to sally into the street with his men, and endeavour to seize the battery.

The task proved impossible under the close fire to which they were subjected, which was steady, accurate, and rapid. We had to abandon the attempt, but later were able, without danger, to fill up our own breach.

"In the night we burnt the demolished house. Some of the cannon which had remained ready-charged for firing went off when the flames reached them. We could recover none of the guns. Colonel González, to my great regret, was wounded at the end of the day."

Night and day, while the house-to-house fighting continued, the weary soldiers were given little rest. Hardly had the combats just recounted ended, when two bands of Zouaves charged through the ill-defended breach of San Marcos, which had been patched up the night before. The passage through the porch was difficult and was defended from the court, so the Zouaves collected in the ruined shop at the side; but the roof had been carefully prepared for their reception! Four grenades were exploded among them, so shaking the place that they must have expected the roof and walls yet standing to have fallen. When the smoke and dust cleared it was found that the Zouaves had retired to their former positions, leaving their dead and wounded.

It is always interesting to know the other side of every story. Fortunately there is a French account available of these first two days' attack on the lines defended by Diaz with so much personal courage and military skill. Captain Niox, the French officer before alluded to, differs in no essential detail from Diaz in his narrative of events, which concludes:

"The Commander-in-Chief went himself to the barracks of San Marcos to examine the obstacles against which our troops had fought in vain. He saw all the barricades which had been raised and were defended by artillery; the fortified walls, the flat roofs strengthened with bags of earth, balconies and apartments sheltering riflemen, who remained perfectly concealed. He could thus personally convince himself of the difficulties presented by these attacks, in which our most valiant soldiers

perished, because these, being always the men who go at the head of a column, naturally fall first. It was then ordered that mining works should be begun."

On the 5th of April, a renewed attempt was made to open the breaches at San Marcos, and the following day there was a further attack, which was again repulsed. Diaz had on this occasion the satisfaction of taking prisoners Captain Galland and thirty-five men who were cut off in the courtyard when the French retreat began, and who, realising their hopeless plight, surrendered.

Meanwhile, sapping was going on, and was advancing every day. Provisions were growing scarce in the beleaguered city. General Tomas O'Horán broke out of Puebla, and made his way through the French lines in order to inform the Government of the critical state of affairs.

Perhaps the most bloody fighting of all was that which attended the attack and defence of the Convent of Santa Inés. Diaz himself regards this as one of the most notable episodes in the defence of Puebla. It was for his services in this engagement that he received his final step in promotion. The assault came from a dwelling known as the Mesón de la Reja, which the French had taken a few days previously. Opposite was the garden of San Agustin, and a low wall, then held by the Mexicans, came out to the street along which the assaulting columns must pass. Behind the wall were built a series of low rooms, the flat roofs of which were open to fire from the balconies of the Mesón de la Reja.

The French columns stormed the position with the greatest bravery, though exposed to a murderous fire from barricades which had been hastily thrown across the street on their front, and from balconies at the side. Despite heavy losses they re-formed and charged again and again, every yard of their advance being marked by dead and wounded men. At one moment it seemed that the fortunes of the day would be theirs. The stubborn Mexican resistance was being worn out, and the French vanguard, detached from their supports, had already reached the convent, and entered.

One position of vantage open to the Mexicans they had not yet occupied, namely, the roofs of the low rooms level with the garden wall of San Agustin, and overlooking the street in which the conflict was raging. It was a perilous place to hold, the roofs being open and exposed to direct fire from the higher balconies of the Mesón de la Reja.

The occasion called for desperate methods. Diaz, gathering some volunteers around him, led them through a door at the rear and up the few steps which gave access to the roofs. Immediately on their appearance a heavy rifle fire was directed towards them, in face of which they dashed across the roofs to the street front, and found what little shelter they could by lying prone behind a low cornice and the corner structure. Here they were able to reinforce the Mexican fire, which was being poured with deadly effect into the assailing columns.

Finally the French were checked, wavered, and retired, leaving prisoners in the hands of the Mexicans the survivors—numbering seven officers and one hundred and thirty men—of the 1st Zouaves, that plucky band who had fought their way to the Convent of Santa Inés, and at the last had found retreat impossible.

"Hundreds of corpses of French soldiers," says Diaz, "and among them those of many officers, littered the streets and courtyards of Puebla where the fighting had been hottest.

"On the following day General Ortega gave several promotions to officers who had taken part in the fight. For myself I was made General-of-Brigade in the permanent army, and the nomination was afterwards confirmed by the Federal Government."

This was on April 5th, five weeks after the investment had begun. The horrors of the siege were not yet at an end. That night, and again on the 29th, by consent of both parties, firing was suspended for two hours to enable the dead and wounded to be removed from the streets and the ruins—an indispensable step in Mexico in those burning hot days.

Difficulties of provisioning the town finally sealed the fate of Puebla. It maintained the defence gallantly, hoping for succour

from without, but twice mule convoys entrusted to General O'Horán failed to get through the French lines. Comonfort, the Ex-President, who in the hour of his country's need had returned to Mexico from exile, and was given a military command, was completely defeated when attempting the relief of the town, with a loss of some thousand prisoners and eight guns. He withdrew with the remnant of his force to Mexico City.

A young officer who served under Comonfort, and now holds an important post in Europe, speaks of him in eulogistic terms :

" He was gallant and a perfect gentleman, exceedingly talented, and an excellent friend.

" Comonfort's death was very tragic. At the time when the French occupied the capital and many Mexicans had retired to Laon, General Comonfort was ordered to Celaya, and General Uraga to San Luis Potosí. Their start was made at an early hour in the morning, and the two carriages drew up in front of the same house, as the generals were lodging together. As they were leaving General Uraga proposed to exchange escorts, as he wished to take the Rancheros squadron with him.

" The following day, when Comonfort was about to finish his journey to Celaya, the *jefe politico* of San Miguel de Alende told him he was furnishing him with an escort of the inhabitants, as that part of the road was infested with bandits, under the captaincy of the famous and dreaded brothers Troncoso, who were bold enough to attack even regular troops. He started with about fifty Rancheros, all well mounted, and they proceeded quietly on their way towards Celaya. These brothers Troncoso were dreaded throughout El Balgio, and finding General Comonfort was only attended by fifty men, some five hundred bandits opened fire upon them, and a terrible encounter ensued.

" Unfortunately the Rancheros, with their leader, fled, leaving Comonfort alone ; he fought gallantly against great odds for some minutes, but was overpowered and killed close to his own carriage by lance thrusts.

" His death was greatly regretted in Mexico, and, indeed, it was a misfortune to the country, for he was a brave soldier and a patriot."

With Comonfort's abortive effort to relieve Puebla the last hope of the garrison expired. General Ortega destroyed his artillery and ammunition, and on May 17th informed the French commander that the town lay in the power of the besiegers, to enter at will. Forey, with all the enthusiasm of a soldier-diplomat, was anxious to conciliate the future subjects of the Empire which it was his mission to establish. He offered to allow all the civil and military leaders to remain in Puebla on parole, if they would promise to enter no more into the politics or warfare of Mexico. The parole was not accepted by a single officer. A reply was sent by them declaring that their deep convictions forbade consideration of such a proposal.

Diaz made his escape the night before the melancholy little cavalcade of prisoners of war set out for Vera Cruz. He had seen his comrades in arms marshalled on the road to march on foot, and was himself to have been escorted thither with General Ortega and the officers of the Staff next morning. Over night he managed to change his uniform, and wrapped himself in a blanket. This large shawl, worn by every native in cold weather, attracted no particular notice, as the night was very cold. Avoiding the sentinel, who might, he feared, suspect his identity, he walked towards the French officer on guard, whom he found to be Captain Galland. This officer had at the beginning of the siege been his own prisoner, and they had become rather friendly. With a simple salute and a turn of the head to avoid recognition he passed, and reached the street. Some suspicion must, however, have been aroused, for soon afterwards he was searched for among his companions, and his escape discovered.

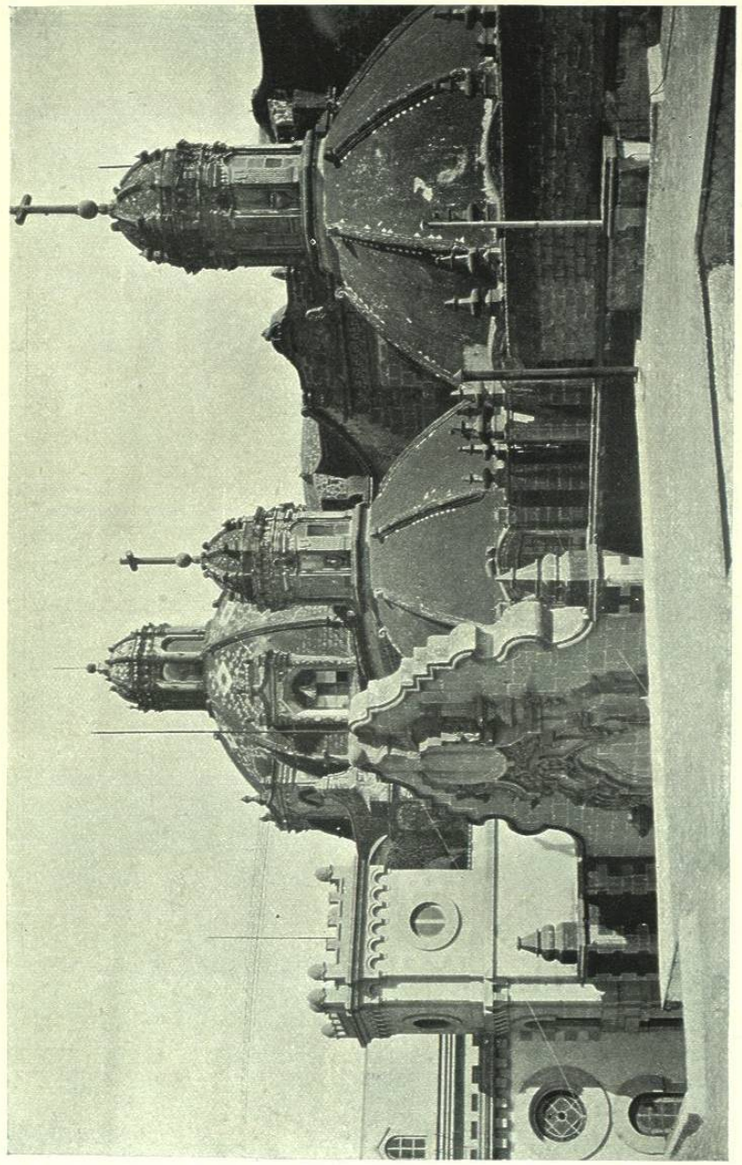
Diaz found some difficulty in getting away, as all the streets were guarded. Fortunately, he met a friend who took him to his house, where General Berriozábal was also being concealed. An opportunity was found, with the assistance of an officer who had surrendered to the French, to smuggle them out of the town. All night they wandered in the mountains, and when morning broke, utterly lost, they found themselves back before Puebla, and heard the *réveillé* of the French guards. They then went

on to the city of San Miguel Canoa, and presented themselves as deserters. Knowing that the parish priest was a friend of their deliverer, they asked him for a guide to Tlaxcala. Later they discovered they were being pursued, but finding a small Mexican cavalry force at Apam, they were able to evade capture, and after some adventurous days safely arrived at the capital.

The fall of Puebla sealed the fate of Mexico City, and altered the whole course of the war. It was impossible for the Republicans to hold the capital against the French with the forces that remained at their disposal. Many of their best troops had been taken prisoners. Confidence in the power of Mexico to resist the invader had received a severe blow. There was grave reason to suspect the loyalty of many of the men who still fought under the Constitutional flag. Diaz met Juárez immediately after his arrival in the city; the position was discussed, and it became evident that some considerable time must pass before those who were struggling for the independence of Mexico could again take the risk of a pitched battle.

A week after Puebla surrendered Juárez moved the seat of the Constitutional Government farther north to San Luis Potosí. It had been his earnest desire that Diaz should take supreme military command in the war. Diaz refused, on the ground that the appointment of so young an officer as himself would create further dissensions, and encourage some half-hearted leaders to abandon the cause at a time when Mexico stood in need of every man. He accepted command, however, as General-in-Chief of the Army of the East, with responsibility for defending the group of Eastern States against the invaders, and after a long and most difficult march, keeping in the mountains and manœuvring to avoid the French, quelling mutiny among his disaffected soldiers, and overcoming most serious obstacles, arrived at last at Oaxaca.

General Forey led his troops into Mexico City unopposed on June 9th, 1863. Thus early the French had driven a wedge into the country from the coast, occupying the central plateau, with their enemy pushed up into the mountainous districts of the north and south-east. The capital—or, at least, those



Mexican domes. [*Page* 100.

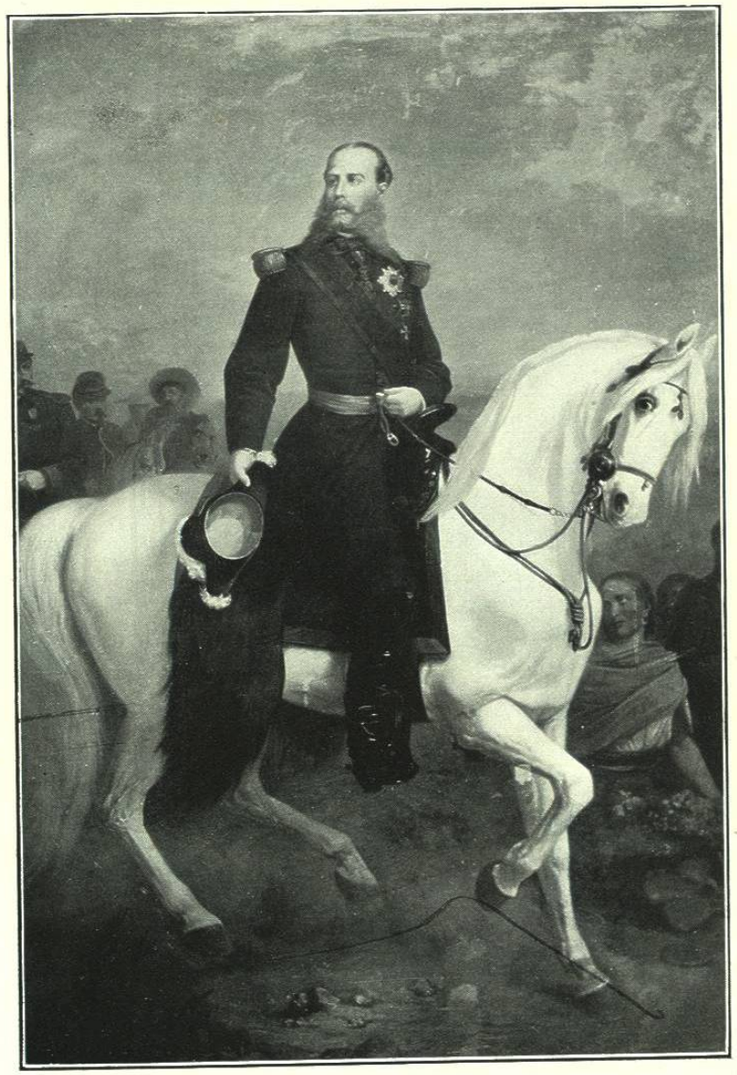


Photo by WAITE.

The Emperor Maximilian, from a painting in the Museum, Mexico City.

[*Page* 101.

renegade Mexicans who remained in it—welcomed the victors of Puebla with some show of enthusiasm.

Everything at that moment promised well for Napoleon. The plot to overthrow the national institutions of Mexico had succeeded. A tripartite regency was declared, with General Almonte, a traitor to his country, at its head. All could now go forward in orderly sequence.

It was thought well by the new masters in Mexico, who were gifted in the arts of stage-craft, that everything should be done in dramatic form. So one morning in July the curtain was lifted, and an astonished world was permitted to see an Assembly of Notables—of whose existence it had never heard before—sitting in conclave in Mexico City, and solemnly affirming the following propositions :

First : The Mexican nation adopts a Monarchical, Temperate, and Hereditary form of Government, under a Catholic Prince.

Second : The Sovereign shall take the title of Emperor of Mexico.

Third : The Imperial Crown of Mexico shall be offered to His Imperial and Royal Highness the Prince Ferdinand Maximilian of Austria, for him and his descendants.

Fourth : In case, from circumstances which cannot be foreseen, the Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian should not take possession of the Throne which is offered to him, the Mexican nation shall place it under the consideration of His Majesty Napoleon III., Emperor of the French, that he may indicate another Catholic Prince to whom the Crown shall be offered.

In this form the deluded Maximilian received his invitation to the country. It ought to have deceived no one. Some there were, no doubt, more especially among the old Spanish families, to whom the restoration of a monarchy, with its revival of old traditions and accompaniment of a brilliant Court, offered a fair promise of releasing Mexico from the toils in which she had become hopelessly involved; but this so-called "Assembly of Notables," who thus arrogated to themselves the right to barter away the liberties of the country, was in no way representa-