tive of the Mexican nation. They were the mere mouthpieces of Louis Napoleon, and subservient to his will.

For good or ill the die was cast—and ill, indeed, it proved for the chief actors in the sad drama which was about to be unfolded. A deputation hurried off to lay the Crown at Maximilian's feet, and a new chapter in Mexico's troubled history was opened.

CHAPTER VI.

MAXIMILIAN'S OVERTURES TO DIAZ.

FIERCE raged the controversy in Europe over the Maximilian episode in Mexico. There was about it a glamour of romance lacking in the history of most modern thrones. That the Austrian Prince with his beautiful wife should sail away to rule an almost unknown land, notorious for bloodshed and brigandage, aroused every one's sympathy.

Napoleon, too—now but a tattered, empty memory—was a commanding personality in Europe in those days; the man of destiny, the working of whose mind none had been able to fathom.

What did it all portend? The novelty of the enterprise, the high station of the chief actors in the drama, and the conflict which it threatened between the monarchical institutions of the Old World and the Republicanism of the New, all added to the interest with which people in Europe watched the course of events.

Unfortunately, although it has been my good luck to meet in Mexico so many people who had to do with the overthrow of Maximilian and his death, I know nothing personally of the intense excitement the whole story caused in Europe at the time. Those of an older generation have told me how they rushed wildly to the papers every morning to see what was happening; for in those days telegraphic communication was almost nil, and news took long to filter through to Europe.

It was a terrible chapter in history, a terse chapter of buoyant hopes, treachery, desertion, and death. Luckily I

am able to give in General Diaz' own words the part he himself played in those three remarkable years.

Maximilian was the younger brother of the Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria, who, since his father's abdication in 1848, has ruled his divided kingdoms for more than half a century, chiefly by the strength of his own personality and the affection in which he is held by all his subjects. Born in 1832, Maximilian was by two years the junior of the present Emperor. The brothers grew up together. As a lad of fourteen Maximilian entered the Austrian Navy, and afterwards became a Rear-Admiral and its Commander-in-Chief.

He was an exceptionally handsome man. Although gracious and genial in manner, he was somewhat reserved. Proud of his descent from the rulers of Imperial Rome, he held stoutly to the doctrine of the divine right of kings. At the age of twenty-five he married Princess Charlotte Amélie (Carlota), only daughter of Leopold, late King of the Belgians, a sister of the now reigning monarch.

Her influence upon Maximilian's somewhat weak nature remained paramount to the end. She was but seventeen at the time of their union, and was widowed at twenty-seven.

After Maximilian's wedding he was appointed by his brother Viceroy of Lombardy, and established at Milan a Court which was celebrated for its magnificence. Here the young Archduchess, who loved power and display before everything, reigned supreme. All seemed happy and prosperous; but the expense of this splendour brought down the condemnation of the Austrian Government. Maximilian resigned, after only two years' enjoyment of his vice-regal powers, and with his wife retired to the Castle of Miramar, on the Adriatic, where they had built a beautiful palace. In this seclusion Maximilian was perfectly happy, enjoying his lovely home and the society of his much loved wife. But, alas! she soon became weary of monotony, and when Napoleon III. offered the crown of Mexico to her husband she begged him to accept it.

It is well known that he at first refused the tempting bait. That he had any real enthusiasm for the task in which he finally

permitted himself to be engaged is doubtful. A sense of impending tragedy seems to have come over him during the interval before he sailed. In rough memoirs which he kept, and which were published after his death by order of the Emperor Francis Joseph, he wrote on the eve of his departure for Mexico:

"Must I separate myself for ever from my beautiful country? You wish me to quit my gilded cradle, and sever the sacred ties which bind me to the fatherland—the land in which the sunniest years of my childhood have been passed, where I experienced the exquisite feelings of early love. Must I leave it for shadows and mere ambition? You entice me with the allurements of a crown and dazzle me with foolish chimeras. Ought I to lend an ear to the sweet song of sirens? You speak to me of a sceptre, a palace, and of power; you place before me a boundless future. Must I follow you to distant shores beyond the vast ocean? You wish the woof of my life should be entwined with gold and diamonds. But are you able to give me peace of mind? And do riches confer happiness in your eyes? Oh! rather let me follow my tranquil life unobserved along the myrtle-shaded wayside. The study of science and cultivation of the muse are more delightful to me than the glare of gold and diamonds."

These pages are interesting reading. They show Maximilian to have been a highly cultivated, enthusiastic traveller, keenly alive to the beauties and wonders of Nature, well-read, and always a courteous, charming gentleman, whether the occasion upon which he jots down his memories be a visit to a royal palace or wild hours spent in roughing it in the primeval forest.

The Emperor Francis Joseph, aware of the difficulties and dangers that would surround the Mexican sovereignty, strongly opposed his brother's acceptance of the throne. Their mother, the Archduchess Sophie, supported Francis Joseph's plea, fearful of failure in her younger son's attempt to rule over this "barbarous people." Carlota had no misgivings. Visions of a Court wherein she would be the reigning Queen, ruling a splendid race, restoring to an ancient Church the wealth of which it had

been plundered—in short, the Sovereign lady of the land—determined her to throw the whole weight of her influence to secure her husband's acceptance of Napoleon's offer.

Maximilian still hesitated. No doubt the romantic traditions associated with Mexico and the ancient Empire of the Aztecs which he found himself called upon to revive, had weight with a man of his peculiar temperament; a dreamer rather than a political thinker. He did not realise how unstable was Napoleon's support, nor how wily were his plans. Then, too, there was his wife's unrestrained enthusiasm. Finally, still not without misgiving, he decided to take the crown, but only on the condition that it was offered to him by the unanimous vote of the Mexican people.

His chivalrous nature is shown in imposing such a condition, but it does more credit to his heart than to his head. What means had Mexico, held in subjection by forty thousand French bayonets, to record its unanimous will concerning Napoleon's nominee for its throne?

General Forey, his task accomplished, had been promoted Marshal of France for his services, and recalled to Europe. General Bazaine had been sent out by Napoleon as Generalissimo of the Army of Intervention, and while Maximilian hesitated, was clamouring for his arrival. A conscientious trifle of this kind was no obstacle to that rough soldier of fortune. The Mexican States entirely under French domination voted as one man, and Bazaine took care that any malcontents should not be heard.

Maximilian accepted the plébiscite as the will of the nation, resigned his rights to the Austrian Throne if his brother died without an heir, and was solemnly crowned Emperor in the Castle of Miramar by members of the Mexican Assembly of Notables sent to Europe for that purpose. He took an oath that he would "by every means in his power procure the well-being and prosperity of the Mexican nation, defend its independence, and preserve the integrity of its territory." The same day was executed a document, already arranged between Napoleon III. and the newly-crowned Emperor, by which the Empire about to be raised on foundations of national bankruptcy was at its birth

to be encumbered with the cost of the French intervention and other claims, constituting an additional public debt of one hundred and seventy-three million dollars.

Delighted with the joy and happiness of Carlota, the Emperor Maximilian embarked for his new kingdom on April 14th, 1864, after having paid a round of farewell visits to the Courts of England, France, Austria, Belgium, and the Vatican.

Judging from the accounts of people who knew Maximilian intimately, he was the last man who should have accepted such a throne. It needed a Louis XI. or a Cromwell, a ruler of iron nerve and will—perhaps not troubled with over many scruples—one who would unflinchingly pursue his set purpose, to govern Mexico with success, if success were possible. Instead, here was a man weak, vacillating, hypersensitive. Maximilian's temperament was romantic and artistic rather than practical, and above all, gentle and refined. He arrived in a country literally a seething cauldron of insurrection; he did not even speak the tongue of the people; he knew nothing of their history, their wants, their aims, or their capabilities.

The task before him was herculean, and he had not strength to combat it even in a small degree. No man has ever successfully ruled a people supported by foreign money, and by troops of any other country than his own. Maximilian tried the impossible, and he failed, but through it all showed himself the courteous, amiable, kindly gentleman. That Carlota was charming every one who knew her maintains, and there are many in Mexico to-day who speak with tears in their eyes of this unhappy, unlucky pair.

Admiral Eardley Wilmot tells me he well remembers the deep impression they made on him as a young man. He was on the *Duncan*, Admiral Sir James Hope's flagship, at Port Royal, Jamaica, when on May 21, 1864, the Austrian frigate *Moara* arrived there, carrying the Mexican flag at the main, and having on board Maximilian and Carlota and a numerous suite, on their way to Mexico. A French man-of-war acted as escort. Young Eardley Wilmot was sent to help secure the ship alongside the wharf, and while so employed Maximilian and his wife

landed on the jetty. "I remember thinking what a remarkably handsome pair they were, and both seemed in the highest spirits," he said.

Eight years later, when Eardley Wilmot, then a lieutenant, wrote in his diary (January, 1872), foreign rule in Mexico had been extinguished in the tragedy of Querétaro. This is the picture he gives of the then condition of the country:

"There is no security for life and property, so that the risk of losing either requires an enormous percentage of gain to counterbalance the unpleasantness of living in such a country.

"But though this may retard in some measure the advancement of Mexico, the main cause is to be found in the character of the people themselves, who have no stability of purpose and are prone to change. From their ancestors of Spain they have inherited uncertainty; their Indian blood brings them cunning; and the mixture produces treachery. He would be a bold man who would predict the future of Mexico. A great deal of talking and writing is being done about the possibility of Mexico having to receive a Protectorate from the United States, with a final view to annexation, while many Americans openly advocate military invasion and forcible possession. The Mexicans, however, scout the idea, and assert that in such emergency they would quickly cease their internal warfare and become a united host to repel the invaders. If any prominent man in Mexico would dare even to suggest a Protectorate his head would not long remain on his shoulders. The Mexicans do not think it a very serious thing to have ten or twenty revolutions on hand; but for a foreign nation to interfere in putting them down, or act as mediator to save the nation's life, is to them a terribly serious aspect of affairs. That was conclusively shown in the tragic episode of poor Maximilian's brief career.

"Retribution, however, may come upon the perpetrators of that deed, not from any foreign source, but their own inability to preserve unity and concord amongst themselves. The two principal actors in that dark tragedy, which sent an indignant thrill throughout the whole of Europe, have now

quarrelled, and Juárez, who has been President ever since, finds it necessary to employ all his energies to defeat the attempts of his old general, Porfirio Diaz, who has raised the standard of revolution against him and aims at chief power. But, although the present supreme government of Mexico is seriously threatened by a powerful revolutionary element, well-armed and equipped, it is generally believed by foreigners that Juárez will be equal to the emergency.

"The revolutionists up to this time have robbed, plundered, and murdered along their tracks. The merchants, business men, and capitalists of the country have no faith in Diaz as the head of the nation, though they admit his successes in the past as a brilliant and able general. . . . . But there is no doubt that the Church party in Mexico is the party of wealth and culture. It has but little sympathy with Juárez, and less with Diaz. The Juáristas are Liberals, but the Diaz men are extreme Radicals. Both are determined that the Church party must be kept down."

These remarks by Eardley Wilmot were strangely correct, because there was difficulty at that time of procuring real information about Mexico even on its own coast. His words show that although the people with whom he talked believed in Diaz as a soldier, they had no desire to see him in power, doubting his ability as a ruler. Yet these scoffers are the very people who now most warmly support the Government of President Diaz,

Maximilian was thirty-two years of age, and his wife much younger, when they started out with high hopes to conquer a new world and mount an Imperial throne. Little could they have realised the entire hopelessness of the task they had undertaken. Pomp and splendour was their aim—a Court and a Crown—but, alas! only three years later the heartbroken Empress returned to Europe, alone, to beg for mercy and help, and her husband was shot as an enemy of the country for which he had suffered so much in his ill-judged and ill-advised attempt to rule. The sad records of the Imperial House of Hapsburg, filled as they are with many sorrows, contain nothing more tragic than the story of the death of this young Prince, and of

the pathetic, long-drawn-out years of immurement of his heart-broken, demented widow.

They received but a cold greeting from the trading port when they landed at Vera Cruz, on May 29, 1864, and their tedious journey to Mexico City must have sadly depressed their spirits. The capital, however, awoke to enthusiasm. A section of the better-class, well-to-do residents, harassed by endless civil wars, and despairing of seeing a stable Government of their own established in Mexico, hailed Maximilian as a deliverer whom they hoped would bring peace and prosperity to their distracted country. The Imperial pair were crowned with great ceremony in the Cathedral of the capital.

Legend dies hard, and the Indians who had formerly welcomed the Spanish Conqueror Cortéz as the white man from the East, who, in the form of Quetzalcoatl, the God of Air, was to deliver them from their oppressed condition, now greeted with joyful hearts the Austrian Maximilian. The manner of his appearance and the fact that in his journey from the coast he had travelled westwards of the pyramid of Cholula, firmly convinced them in a superstitious belief that he was really the man chosen for the fulfilment of their ancient prophecy.

As the year in which Maximilian mounted the throne was drawing to its close the struggle for national independence seemed to have reached its darkest hour. Foreign troops had been steadily pouring into the country, and as the effective occupation of the interior was extended the Republican forces fell back, diminished in numbers and yet further scattered. It was less to the desperate men fighting for their cause in the mountains than to the attractions of the capital that light-hearted Mexicans turned.

Maximilian and Carlota surrounded themselves with a Court of Western magnificence. The Clericals were gratified by a decree reconstituting the Roman Catholic Church as the established faith. Their hopes of seeing restored the property sequestrated by the "Ley Juárez" had not yet been shattered. The Conservatives obtained office and power in the train of the Emperor. Liberals who deserted their cause found themselves

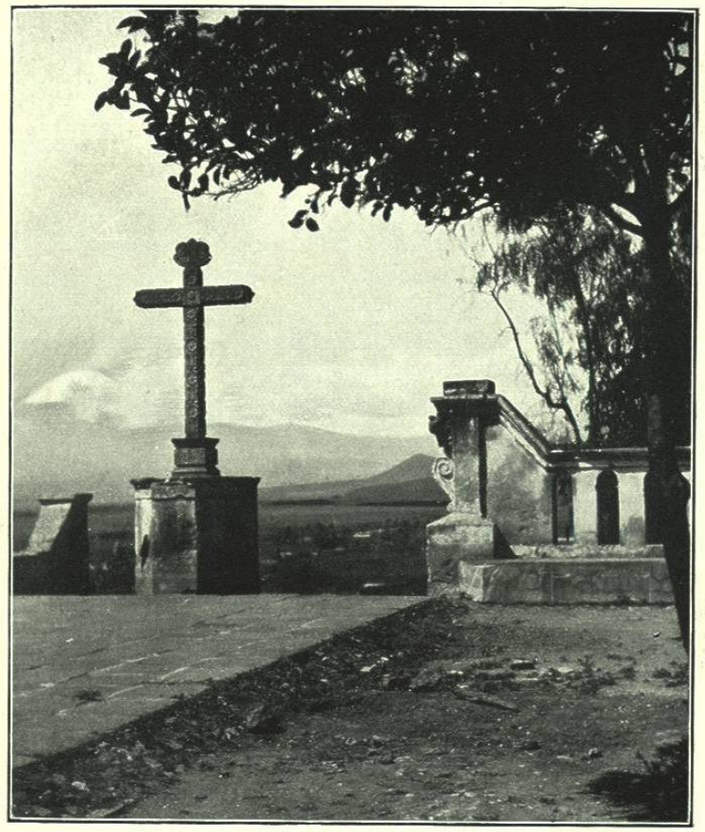

Photo by HON. HERBERT GIBBS.]
From the top of the Great Pyramid of Cholula. Stone cross dated 1662.

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