



A blind beggar.

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marked for special favour. An active Imperialist party, sincere and full of enthusiasm, sprang up, captivated in no small measure by the personal charms of the new monarch and his lovely and accomplished wife.

Those early months of sovereignty in Mexico City, before troubles began to grow thick upon them, were amongst the happiest in the shadowed lives of Maximilian and Carlota. There was then a time when the Empire, in spite of the difficulty and peril which the task promised, had a good chance for a bright future. It was an unexpected hour for Mexico; but neither the Prince nor his subjects knew how to take advantage of it.

Juárez, away in the mountains, could bide his time. A man of cool judgment and inflexible will, inured from his earliest days to a hard life of struggle against difficulty and apparent disaster, he foresaw more clearly than the hapless Maximilian the difficulties which must beset the Emperor's attempts to maintain himself in the country, with the Clerical Party scheming to keep its hold upon the Government and to rule. The Mexican Empire—to Maximilian the task of a life-time—was to Napoleon but a passing episode. Its pivot and base was the French Army. The episode would have its end.

Warned of his danger at San Luis Potosí by the advance of General Forey, Juárez had moved the seat of the Constitutional Government still farther north to Saltillo; and later, under similar pressure, again transferred it to Monterrey—the Mexican Chicago of to-day. He continued, in face of the monarchy, to assert his claim to be President of the Republic. As such he was still recognised by the United States, which consistently refused to pay any attention to the notifications of the "Empire of Mexico."

But to go back a few months and return to Diaz, who, meantime, has been lost sight of during his long march from the north to the Eastern States, which terminated with his arrival at Oaxaca at the close of November, 1863. The fortune of the cause in the South and East depended upon his preserving intact, as far as possible, the little body of troops

which still remained faithful to the Republican flag. This hazardous march, without proper transport or supplies, avoiding conflict with some 30,000 of the Imperial troops who were posted in and around Toluca, Mexico City and Puebla, and were anxious to intercept him, will certainly take rank among his important military achievements. With characteristic thoroughness he at once set himself the task of creating a new army for the defence of the Eastern States around the nucleus of veterans he had brought with him. A few weeks later he was able to send out a column which defeated the Imperialist Mexicans at Ixtapa—afterwards besieging them in San Cristóbal, and capturing that place.

This victory helped to consolidate his position.

A secret march and daring attempt to surprise and capture a French battalion near San Antonio Nanahuatipan, where a large force was concentrating, ended somewhat disastrously. The French were taken unprepared when bathing in the river, and many fell at the first volleys. It took little time, however, for them to recover their arms, which were piled on the banks, and organise a vigorous defence. The Republicans fell back on the church as a place of refuge, leaving on the field many dead, and most of their clothes and knapsacks, for they fought without time to dress. Reinforcements which Diaz had sent for found it impossible to come up in time, and he was obliged to retire with losses which considerably weakened his small force.

In the North events were happening calculated still further to break the heart of the Mexican resistance. The desertion from the Liberal ranks of leaders formerly so highly trusted as General Uruga and General Vidaurri, did much to weaken the Republican cause. When a further advance was made against the fugitive government, already pushed back into the mountains at Monterrey, it could count on no more than four thousand soldiers for its defence. González Ortega, with fifteen hundred men, had overtaken a force marching to reinforce the President, when the combined columns were attacked by the French and defeated. The Mexicans drew off from the field in fair order. In the night, however, the soldiers, sore at their defeat and

having been without food for two days, disbanded, scattered, and were seen no more.

This was the position in the autumn of the year 1864. Next to Juárez himself, there was no man in the country whose influence, could it have been won over to Maximilian's side, would have given such powerful support to the Empire as that of Porfirio Diaz. In this crisis in the fortunes of the Republican cause the moment seemed opportune for opening negotiations, and the Emperor seized it. With the French, as we have seen, Diaz had repeatedly engaged, and had, indeed, been their prisoner, but with Maximilian he had not as yet crossed swords on any battlefield.

Naturally the task was a delicate one. The renegades who had gathered around Maximilian acted with caution and craft. They sought to convince Diaz that the Empire being now established in Mexico, it was better that the Liberals should work to create about the Emperor an atmosphere favourable to their plans rather than leave the field clear to Clericals and Reactionaries. Maximilian, they represented, was in sympathy with the Liberals, and with their progressive ideas, as some of his acts had shown. Finally they told Diaz of the Emperor's desire to see himself surrounded by the chiefs of the Liberal party, whose cause of Reform he would himself support when the country had settled down to tranquillity.

Had Maximilian really founded any expectations of winning Diaz' sympathies by these overtures, he could have little understood the character of his antagonist. The cause of Mexican Independence and the development and progress of the country in accordance with Liberal principles were ideals to which Diaz had devoted his life since that early day when, in the polling hall at Oaxaca, stung by an undeserved taunt of cowardice, he had boldly declared himself ready to give his aid in overthrowing the Dictatorship of General Santa Anna, and had voted for the revolution.

No arguments, no bribes, could lure him from the performance of what he regarded as a patriot's duty—to resist to the last foreign domination on his native soil. Tempting offers were

not wanting. Don Manuel Dublán came to Diaz in Oaxaca, proffering him, on behalf of Maximilian, high office in the Empire, and a promise that if he would give his support to the Government he should be appointed to command all the troops in the Eastern States which formed the area of his operations.

"I was indignant at such proposals," writes Diaz, "and the more so that they were presented to me by a man who had intimate family connections with President Juárez, and had even received distinctions from the Liberal party. I forthwith gave orders that he should be arrested and shot. Finally, the influence of Don Justo Benítez and of General Salinas saved him from death. Happily, he survived to wipe out his fault, as far as possible, by giving his brilliant intelligence to the service of the Republic at an opportune moment, and bringing about, by his efforts, the happiest results."

This last sentence is typical of Diaz, showing his generosity of character.

Maximilian nevertheless persisted in these attempts to secure the surrender of Diaz to the Empire. Dublán's mission having failed, General Uraga, who had been Diaz' superior officer, and under whose orders, it will be recalled, he had fought in many of the sanguinary struggles which had for so long been the history of Mexico, was induced to try his influence. The diary kept by General Diaz may be again quoted :

"General Don José López Uraga, who, in command of Republican forces, had gone over to the enemy, and was employed about the person of Maximilian, sent me his adjutant, a man who years before had been Chief of my Staff, and was now serving the Empire. He handed me a letter dated 'Mexico City, November 18th, 1864,' in which Uraga invited me to follow him in his desertion, and offered to leave me in command of the States along the Eastern frontier, with an undertaking that he would not hamper me with foreign soldiers except at my own request. I had had great esteem and respect for General Uraga, but I was fully determined that neither this nor any

other influence should make me waver in the fulfilment of my duty. For the rest, Uraga had lost by his conduct the respect with which he had formerly inspired me.

"It would, I thought, be a good opportunity to judge the temper of my subordinates if I showed them the invitation that General Uraga had sent me. I called a meeting of the Generals and Colonels under my command, and read them the letter and my reply, warning General Uraga that a second envoy, no matter what his mission, would be dealt with summarily as a spy. On the same day I sent a report of what had happened to all the governors and military leaders of the Eastern lines."

The remarkable letters which passed are given below. The long phraseology of the Spanish tongue has, so far as possible, been preserved in the translation :

"Mexico, Nov. 18th, 1864.

"Señor General Don Porfirio Diaz.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"It would make a long story to relate all that I have suffered by reason of my party. Luis* will tell you something ; but let it suffice for me to say that without any notion of fighting, nor of leaving the country south of Jalisco, nor of limiting himself to taking from the people only that which might be necessary for subsistence, every one was hoping for and seeking a fortune in the revolution, and this whilst he had no intention of fighting, and, indeed, intended to be the hindmost.

"I did not consider that this was serving the country, nor defending our cause, nor honouring our principles ; and being unable to embark or to get away at any point, I surrendered in June to the Emperor, acknowledging nothing, but in the earnest hope of ending the war. I acted wrongly, because I acted with distrust ; but now that I proclaim here our principles, that I am listened to, that I contend on a legal field, and that I see how noble, how patriotic, how progressive and illustrious the Emperor is, I tell you, my friend, that our cause is the cause

* The bearer of the letter.

of the man who, a lover of his country and its Sovereign, looks only for the salvation of its independence and its integrity. He is here fighting with honour and loyalty for our very principles, neither extenuating them by apology, nor denying them, nor abandoning them.

"If I had seen any danger to our independence or the integrity of our territory, I swear to you I would have died in the mountains rather than have acknowledged the Emperor, and if I should have had the cowardice to come here I should have had the good faith to say to you 'It is necessary to fight.' But it is not so, Porfirio. I believe that you will do me justice, you that know me, and that you will accept my view of the circumstances. We lose ourselves, and we shall lose our nationality, if we continue this fruitless war without result. Everything will fall into the hands of the Americans, and then what shall we have as our country? Up to now you have a name clean, honoured, and respected, a good reputation, and means of doing much in the cause of progress, entering frankly and nobly into the work. To-morrow, fighting for the hopes of worthless men, for the intrigues occasioned by their pride, and to restore a situation now entirely changed, nothing will be left to you—not even a glorious remembrance.

"I send Luis to you, whom you know. This and my name, are they not a guarantee to you of frankness and loyalty?

"Luis will talk to you. I am here for anything you may wish, and when you come and see what is happening and return to your post and your forces, if you do not agree with what I say, say what you think will be better. I will work (with you) in everything. Let us remain united. If we have lost the system do not let us lose the principles, and above all let us cherish the country's integrity and independence.

"Adieu, dear Porfirio. You know how much I have loved you, with what frankness I have always spoken to you, and how I am the friend who loves you and kisses your hand,

(Signed) "JOSÉ L. URAGA."

Knowing how deep was Diaz' admiration for his old general,

and how warm had been their friendship, one can imagine his feelings on receiving such a letter inviting him to play the traitor to the cause which throughout his military life had been nearest to his heart. Although the offer was thickly veiled, it is easy to read between the lines and realise what such a letter meant.

The reply which Diaz sent back by the envoy is pitched in quite a different key:

"Senor Don José López Uruga,

"Mexico.

"MY FORMER GENERAL AND ESTEEMED FRIEND,

"With indescribable pleasure I opened my arms to Luis, and fixed my eyes on what you were pleased to send me by him, because I had thought that his coming and his mission would have had quite a different purpose; but although the disillusion was as prompt as it was painful, and Luis has offered me to talk to you frankly and fully, I have to reply to you, if not at great length, yet with all fidelity.

"I am very grateful for the mediation you are pleased to offer me, because, although I lament the errors which have given rise to this step, I understand the full depth of the esteem and appreciation it betokens.

"I will not constitute myself a judge of your actions, because I should lack the necessary impartiality, and before submitting you to trial I should embrace you as a brother and persuade you to turn back in your path. But if you can, according to your opinion, explain your conduct, I should not be able to explain mine, because the means at my disposal, the troops and people who aid me, who, as you tell me, were adverse to our cause in the Centre, are in the East so many pledges of certain triumph.

"The spirit of my forces is the same as that of the brigade I commanded at Puebla; and you know that in few places have the French met with such resistance as in the State of Oaxaca. I have also troops from other States, but they are so perfectly identical with the others in their morale, discipline and enthusiasm, that they deserve to be considered their equals."

In reading this part of the letter it is well to remember that Diaz is writing to an old friend and commander who has proved treacherous to the cause, and naturally is not anxious to disclose the real weakness of his following.

"In the Eastern States the administration and organisation are so vigorous, and the supervision so scrupulous, that their limited resources provide us with the necessities of life without our having to take them from the people, and without my finding myself in the pitiable case of having to bear with pillage and extortion. The French, since the resistance of Puebla, have done nothing but make a triumphal march through the interior; and I promise myself that in Oaxaca, if fate reserves such a triumph for them, it will cost them dear, and that it will be achieved only by crushing us with superior numbers. But it will not be long before we obtain the victory, and the whole Republic will the next day become one vast barrier to foreign aggression. *The struggle may, it is true, be prolonged, like that which at the beginning of the century made us free and independent, but the result is certain.*

"You do me the justice, for which I also thank you, to believe that I hold an honoured and untarnished name, for therein is my whole pride, my whole patrimony, my whole future; nevertheless to the hireling Press I am nothing more than a bandit, nor shall I be anything else to the Archduke Maximilian and the invading army, and I accept with calmness and resignation that my name should be defiled, without repenting that I have dedicated myself to the service of the Republic.

"I sorrow in my heart that having separated yourself from the Army of the Centre, with the intention of not compromising yourself in the politics of the foreigners, you should have been magnetised by the Archduke, and may come in time to unsheathe in his defence the sword which in other days you had given to the country; but if it should be so, I shall have at least the consolation of having remained in the ranks in which you taught me to fight, and having for my guidance the political symbol you engraved on my heart in words of fire.

"When a Mexican presents himself to me with the proposals of Luis I ought to have brought him to trial according to law, and not to have sent to you in reply anything more than the sentence and a notification of the death of your envoy. But the great friendship you invoke, the respect I have for you, and the memories of happier days which bind me so intimately to you and to that mutual friend, relax all my energy and convert it into the weakness of returning him to you safe and sound, without a single word of odious recrimination.

"The test to which you have submitted me is a very grave one, because your name and friendship constitute the only influence capable (if there be one) of forcing me to deny all my past, and to tear with my own hands the beautiful flag, emblem of the liberties and independence of Mexico. As I have been able to withstand this test, you may believe that neither the most cruel disillusion nor the greatest diversities will ever cause me the slightest vacillation. I have spoken to you almost exclusively of myself, but not because I forgot my meritorious comrades in arms, nor the heroic towns and States of the East, which have made so many sacrifices for the defence of the Republic.

"There is no room to doubt the loyalty of such worthy soldiers, nor of public opinion, nobly spoken and converted into decisive deeds at Tabasco, in Chiapas, in Oaxaca, and even at Vera Cruz and Puebla. As you know, the two former States have expelled the Imperialists from their midst; the third does not permit them to set foot within their territory; and in the fourth and fifth the fires of war are maintained over an extensive area.

"Do you think that I could, without betraying my trust, seal the fate of my comrades only to make my own secure? Do you think that they would not demand of me, and with reason, a strict account for my disloyalty, and that they would not know how to sustain themselves alone, or to confide their leadership to another more constant and faithful than he who had abandoned them? So it is then, that neither by myself, nor by the distinguished *personnel* of the army, nor by the towns of

this extensive part of the Republic, can the possibility of an understanding with the foreign invasion be thought of, *resolved as we are to fight without truce, to conquer or die in the challenge, to bequeath to the generation that succeeds us the same free and sovereign Republic which we inherited from our fathers.*

"I would, General, that, contracting no compromise, you might return in time to take up the defence of such a noble and sacred cause. That in the meantime your health may be preserved is the sincere desire of your very affectionate friend and faithful servant,

(Signed) "PORFIRIO DIAZ.

"Oaxaca, Nov. 1864."

General Uruga had at one time been most faithful to the cause of Mexico. He had been a patriot and an enthusiast, was wildly devoted to his men, and sure that with pluck and determination they would triumph. He had been certain that the Conservatives would be outdone, and Mexico would one day be herself again. Diaz was not only an officer under him, but became a great personal friend. In fact, the admiration of the younger man for the older was quite romantic at one time. They lived through many strange episodes together, cheated death on several occasions, and rose conquerors many times. All this must be remembered in reading Diaz' courteous yet indignant reply.

This letter is very typical of the present ruler of Mexico, showing how, in time of great stress, he was as true to his principles as he is now. Even in those days, now forty years ago, his own country and the feelings of the people had the strongest possible claim upon his actions. Mexico was, and is, the dominating note of his life.

But the blow of General Uruga's treachery hurt him more deeply than even his reply shows.

As these pages have indicated, Diaz is not only a soldier but a man of the strongest honour and integrity. Right and might are his watchwords, and he has nobly held to both through life. His friends seceding from what he considered right only

made him the more determined to aid his own party, and nothing but death could stop him.

Failing to find a traitor in Porfirio Diaz, or to manufacture one, Maximilian—or rather General Bazaine, the Emperor's masterful supporter and the pillar of his throne—did Diaz the honour of treating him as a soldier whom it would require a considerable force to suppress. An army was collected, the largest brought together by the French for any one campaign, to attack Diaz in Oaxaca and subdue the Eastern States into acceptance of Maximilian's rule. Bazaine himself went over to take command of the military operations. At this time he had altogether in Mexico about 35,000 French troops and some 8,000 Mexicans on whose services he could depend.

Diaz had busied himself with a scheme for putting the city of Oaxaca into a state of defence, but at the last moment his entire plans were altered by one of those instances of treachery which so much hampered the efforts of the defenders of Mexican nationality.