

Commission to arrange the details of the capitulation, General Figueroa, Colonel Manuel González, and Colonel Félix Díaz. The enemy surrendered at discretion, and we entered the city on October 31st. I enrolled most of the men of the Imperialist forces in my battalions, and set apart suitable prisons for the officers and civil officials.

"On the occupation of the city of Oaxaca I gave the rank of General—which my position authorised me to do—to Colonels Manuel González and Faustino Vázquez Aldana. I did not confer the same rank on Colonel Félix Díaz because he was my brother, although his comrades begged me to do so. But on this omission coming to the knowledge of the Governor-General later, the credentials of 'General-Graduate' were sent to me in his favour."

Before Bazaine sailed from Vera Cruz in March, 1867, having completed the withdrawal of the French army, he arranged with Díaz at Oaxaca for an exchange of prisoners. In this way a number of active men were restored to the Republican fighting ranks.

General Díaz tells in his diary the story of a deal with Bazaine in which he distinctly made the best of the bargain, and of some very delicate negotiations to which he was invited. Bazaine offered to his old enemy—not to Maximilian be it noted—the spare but valuable equipment of the French troops at ridiculously meagre prices. Díaz at once determined to get them for nothing.

"After all the Mexican prisoners (he writes) who were in the hands of the invading forces had been exchanged, I sent back to Marshal Bazaine, without correspondence, about one thousand foreigners, on the condition that they should be immediately embarked at Vera Cruz. This, in fact, was done.

"When I sent Don Carlos Thiele to Mexico City to complete the arrangements for the exchange of prisoners referred to, Marshal Bazaine authorised him to propose to me the sale of muskets, ammunition, clothing and equipment, offering me these things at fabulously low prices; that is to say, at a dollar

per musket, and a dollar also for a uniform of linen, with boots. The proposal also comprised horses and mules, with their respective saddlery and harness.

"I understood from this offer, and from the destruction which the enemy was making of his stores, and the sales at such low prices, that the reason of it all was that he had no transport to take them to Vera Cruz. Possibly also, he may not have had room in his ships to receive them.

"I declined to buy them. As he had to leave them, it was cheaper for me to seize them as the property of the enemy than to buy them even at a low price.

"Then I issued a circular to all the garrisons, including those occupied by the enemy, in which I declared contraband of war anything that the enemy might leave in the country, under any pretext whatever. A heavy fine was imposed on the holders or receivers, which would be awarded in its entirety in each case to the informer, who was assured of the fullest guarantee of secrecy. This circular was extraordinarily productive in its results, and enabled me to present to President Juárez, on his arrival in the capital in 1867, twenty-one thousand men perfectly clothed, armed, and provided with ammunition, the greater part of their equipment having been obtained from the French in the manner referred to."

Marshal Bazaine was willing to offer a good deal more than a supply of equipment and rifles to the man who was at that time the most vigorous assailant of the Empire, which the French had spent thousands of lives and immense treasure to establish and uphold; in fact, he proposed to betray Maximilian into the hands of his adversaries.

"Bazaine (Díaz writes in his diary) sent Thiele to tell me that, on his departure from Mexico City for the coast, he would remain five days at Ayotla—as he did—and that if I should attack the capital whilst he was there, he desired I should send him information by Thiele notifying the uniform of my soldiers, so as to distinguish them from those of Maximilian; for, in that case, he proposed to return to the capital, with the ostensible

pretext of establishing order, so that everything should be satisfactorily settled for him and for me.

"I understood by this message that he wished to indicate that he would assist me to seize the capital, where Maximilian himself was, provided that I would agree in turn to certain insidious proposals to disown the Government of Señor Juárez, in order that France might treat with another Government before withdrawing her forces from Mexico. His actual words were :

"Tell General Díaz that I will repay him liberally for the *éclat* with which our flag might thus leave Mexico."

"It did not seem to me expedient to continue relations which had commenced with the object of an exchange of prisoners and had been extended to this degree, and this I said to Thiele, in order that he should communicate it to Bazaine as my only answer."

What deep scheme was working in the mind of this rough soldier of fortune will never be known with certainty. Time after time he had urged Maximilian to abdicate, and with considerable warmth at their last interview, but the luckless Emperor still vacillated. Bazaine, a man of humble origin, had by his bravery and merits risen from the ranks to the highest position. He had acquired riches by means more ingenious than honourable. During his days of power in Mexico he had married a Mexican lady of good family. The customs of the country requiring sponsors for bride and bridegroom, Maximilian had stood as godfather to him and Carlota godmother. The Emperor presented him with the palace of Vista Buena. For a time he had enjoyed—and enforced—almost regal honours, and had exerted supreme authority wherever his troops were stationed.

He had lived in and breathed the atmosphere of a land where usurpers rose and fell in bewildering succession. The snuffing out at one breath of both the Monarchical and Republican chiefs, and the division of Mexico with himself as Dictator of the most considerable portion, may possibly have offered attractions to one of his insatiable ambition. Who can tell now?

The publicity given to this matter twenty years later, when

his career had been finally shattered by the capitulation of Metz and his subsequent disgrace, caused Bazaine much trouble of mind. He was living, an exile from France, in Madrid, and wrote a letter to General Díaz, then President of the Republic, who answered him in this wise :

"Mexico, January 11th, 1887.

"To Marshal Bazaine,

"23, Monte Esquinza, Madrid.

"SEÑOR,

"I have received a letter from you, dated December 10th last, the object of which, in brief, is to express to me your resentment at the publication of a letter of mine, written in 1867, in which I mentioned that, through a third person, you had made me proposals which I refused to accept, as I considered them indecorous. You ask me to give you the name of this intermediary, and you reproach me for not having paid acknowledgment to your consideration in refraining from publishing a letter which I sent to you on February 8th, 1865, as well as for having treated me as a prisoner of war and not as an insurgent.

"As to the first point, I must tell you, refraining from any remark on the tone of your communication, that the letter you first alluded to was not sent to Señor Juárez, as you aver, but to the Licentiate Don Matías Romero,\* in whose hands I usually placed all my information for the supreme head of the State on all that I did and on all that happened in the area with the defence of which I was entrusted. This was my sole intention in writing to him, and I did not publish the letter, neither did I think that it would be published. I correct your statement on this point, because this is the fact, and not because it would

\* Don Matías Romero was at the time Minister of the Mexican Republic at Washington. General Díaz' letter was in these terms : "General Bazaine, through a third party, offered to surrender to me the cities which they occupied, and also to deliver Maximilian, Márquez, Miramón, etc., into my hands, provided I would accede to a proposal which he made me, and which I rejected, as I deemed it not very honourable. Another proposition was also made me, by authority of Bazaine, for the purchase of six thousand muskets and four million percussion caps ; and if I had desired it, he would have sold me both guns and powder."

have been inconvenient to publish that letter, since the statements made in it have never been shown to be other than accurate.

"With regard to the second point, although some years have now passed, I do not think that you will have forgotten Señor Carlos Thiele. I must tell you, since you ask me, that he was the person whom I sent to you to arrange the exchange of Mexican prisoners who were in your power for those taken by me in the actions of Nochistlán, Miahuatlán, La Carbonera, Tehuantepec and Oaxaca; an exchange which was made with great advantage to the French army, because I sent as a favour all the chiefs, officers, and soldiers that were left with me when you had no officers of ours of equal rank to exchange for them. This Señor Thiele it was who, in your name, made me the proposals which I reported in the letter which has aroused your resentment, and who, a few months after the circumstances to which I refer, settled in Guatemala, where he can still be found. I should be very pleased if you could some day persuade me that the whole affair was an imposture on the part of this gentleman, and I would make it known to the public who read my letter; but for this I need Señor Thiele's own declaration, as the knowledge that I have of him does not justify me in doubting his honour.

"As to my own letter of February 8th, 1865, by the publication of which you think you could have done me harm—and might even now—this is another error into which you have fallen. I remember having sent it; and although I cannot call to mind exactly the terms in which it was written, I can rest assured that it does not dishonour me, simply because, looking into my conscience, both as a man and a soldier, I do not remember any deed of which I should be ashamed. For the rest, the immense inequality of numbers with which we fought, at least one against ten, and the circumstances and incidents of that campaign, are known up to now only by those who, like you and myself, were actors in it, by our respective subordinates, and by the people of the heroic State of Oaxaca. The publication of these facts will only enhance my military and patriotic

pride, and the necessity of answering any charges brought by you would put me in a position to publish them without the risk of appearing presumptuous, and with even more advantage if I should allow myself to compare the blockade, siege, and surrender of the fortress of Oaxaca with another contemporary case of the nature, but not similar.

"You remind me also—I do not know with what object—that I was your prisoner, and that you did not treat me as an insurgent. If you say this in order to reproach me with ingratitude, I can only repeat that it was chance, and not my will, that decided the publication of my letter which has so affected you. Whether you acted as you did as a duty or as a favour, allow me to refrain from any reply, for, however it may have been, I bear in mind that you have held the honourable position of Marshal in the French army. Whatever are the misfortunes that have oppressed you, and still weigh upon you, and the state in which they have left your mind and reason, I cannot, without offending both you and common sense, enter into a discussion which would have for its object to show you the difference that exists between the insurgent or brigand (*bandolero*) and the General of the Army of a nation recognised by the civilised world, who, fully authorised by her supreme powers, and under her flag, defends her in her territory against an invading army.

"I send you the expression of my regret for the lack of thought evinced in the letter which I am answering.

"PORFIRIO DIAZ."