

CHAPTER XI.

THE FOREIGN INTERVENTION, THE FRENCH INVASION, AND THE RISE OF THE SECOND EMPIRE.

The National creditors and their claims. — The Treaty of London. — Arrival of allied army in Vera Cruz. — Measures of the Juarez government. — Decree of January, 1862, and its Execution. — The Intervention becomes an Invasion. — The scheme of Napoleon III. laid bare. — The French army reinforced. — Battle of Cinco de Mayo. — Forey the dictator. — Capture of Puebla and Occupation of the Capital. — The Regents. — The Assembly of Notables. — Election of Emperor. — The Austrian Archduke. — His previous career. — Popular election under French bayonets. — Treaty of Miramar. — Coronation of Ferdinand Maximilian. — Journey of Maximilian and Carlota to their new empire. — The regeneration of Mexico. — Adoption of an Imperial heir. — Character of Maximilian. — Benefactions of the Empress. — Difficulties in the way of the Emperor's success. — Disappointment of Napoleon III.

THE decree issued by Juarez from Vera Cruz in 1859, nationalizing the property of the Church, was quickly followed up by a decree suspending for two years payment on all foreign debts. The national debt at that time amounted to about \$100,000,000, according to some statements, and was divided up between England, Spain, and France. England's share was about \$80,000,000. France's

claim was comparatively insignificant. They were all said to have been founded upon usurious or fraudulent contracts, and the French claim was especially dubious. It originated in the claim of a Swiss banking-house, the head of which had become a naturalized French citizen, with the intention, as it would seem, of aiding in the deep-laid scheme about to be developed. Upon the issuing of the decree suspending payment on these foreign debts, the three creditor nations at once broke off diplomatic relations with Mexico, and Napoleon III., of France, proceeded to carry out a plan which had for some time occupied his mind, having been suggested to him by the reactionary government of Mexico during the period of the Reform, as a means whereby that government could secure its triumph over Juarez.

It was at his instance that a convention was held in London by representatives of the three creditor nations, and on the 31st of October, 1861, the Treaty of London was signed. This treaty proposed the sending to Mexico of naval and military forces sufficient to seize and hold the Gulf ports of entry, and apply the customs duties thereof to the payment of Mexico's indebtedness. No territory

was to be appropriated, nor was the right of the Mexicans to arrange their own form of government to be interfered with. Without waiting to learn the views of the United States government, to whom a copy of this treaty was sent with an invitation to join the expedition, the requisite forces were equipped and sent forward to Mexico, arrived off Vera Cruz in December, 1861, and landing, took possession of that city. The allied army consisted of six thousand Spanish, and twenty-five hundred French soldiers, and seven hundred English marines, all under the command of the Spanish marshal, Prim.

The Juarez government, apprised in advance of what was about to take place, exerted itself to the utmost to oppose the threatened invasion. Appeals were made to Mexicans to lay aside their personal feuds and unite against the common foe. The army was reorganized and increased, and money was raised for extraordinary defensive measures. And with the object more particularly of suppressing the monarchical party that had long been in existence, and was known to be in sympathy with the French invaders, Juarez issued a decree, in January, 1862, declaring that all Mexicans between the ages of sixteen

and sixty, who did not take up arms in defence of the republic were traitors; that any armed invasion of the country without a previous declaration of war, or any invitation of such an invasion by Mexicans or foreign residents of Mexico, was a crime against the independence of the country, and was punishable with death. Extraordinary powers over the persons and properties of the citizens were given to civil officers, and courts-martial were established in the place of the ordinary tribunals of justice. The severest terms of this decree were speedily visited upon a Mexican officer of high standing. He was arrested on his way to the French camp and executed. But the result of this action of Juarez was the reverse of what had been intended; and the ranks of the monarchical party were reinforced from among those who had formerly been indifferent.

To avoid war, if it were possible, Juarez first resorted to diplomacy, and a meeting of commissioners representing Mexico and the three foreign nations was arranged to take place at Orizaba in April. But in a preliminary convention held in Soledad, near Vera Cruz, in February, the true objects of France came to light, and England and Spain with-

drew from the enterprise, which was thereby changed from a foreign intervention into a French invasion.

The object of France — a scheme that had long dazzled Napoleon III. — was the erection of an Empire in Mexico that would be in a manner feudatory to France. It was designed to succor the Latin race in its unequal struggle with the Anglo Saxon, and prevent the further spread of democratic institutions in the New World. The time was propitious. Civil war was engaging the attention of the United States; and the indications at the time were that the Confederate States would succeed in the struggle. When that result was finally attained the Confederacy was to be the ally of the Mexican empire as against the United States government and its enforcement of the "Monroe Doctrine."

Accordingly, when the English and Spanish troops were withdrawn from Mexico all efforts at concealment were thrown off by the French commissioners. Reinforcements arrived increasing the army to about five thousand men, placed under the command of General Laurencez. The co-operation of the opponents of Juarez and his policy was invited, and the result was the raising of an army

composed of reactionaries and monarchists, under the command of General Marquez, an adherent of the late Zuloaga and Miramon governments. These two armies united and advanced toward the capital. They were defeated before the gates of Puebla in the famous battle of *Cinco de Mayo* (the 5th of May, 1862), — a battle in which General Zaragoza was the hero, and Gen. Porfirio Diaz, Felix Berriozabal, and others were participants. It is this battle of Puebla that is annually commemorated in the vicinity of the capital.

The combined armies after their repulse from Puebla retired to Orizaba, where they were reinforced in September by troops from France, raising the invading army to twelve thousand, and General Forey succeeded Laurencez in the command. Forey assumed a sort of military dictatorship of the country, declaring that he had come to free the Mexicans from the tyrannical rule of Juarez, and to destroy his government.

The combined forces under Forey were able to capture Puebla in May, 1863, and then advanced to the capital, Juarez and his ministers taking flight upon their approach. In taking possession of the city of Mexico

on the 11th of June, the French commander appointed a Supreme Council of the Nation, composed of thirty-five eminent monarchists. This Council elected Juan B. Ormeacha, Bishop of Puebla, Gen. Juan N. Almonte, Gen. Mariano Salas, and Pelagio A. Labastida, Archbishop of Mexico, regents, pending the establishment of such a form of government as would coincide with the plans of Napoleon III. An assembly of notables, composed of two hundred and thirty-one representatives of all but four of the Mexican States, apparently selected without regard to the proportions of population in the several States, was the next step in the direction of the Napoleonic plan. This assembly, in a meeting held on the 10th of July, adopted a monarchical form of government, and offered the crown to Ferdinand Maximilian, Archduke of Austria. It is significant of the continued existence of the monarchical party that survived the overthrow of the first empire in 1824, that Señor José María Gutierrez de Estrada, then in Europe by reason of his temerity in proposing in 1840 such a form of government as was now being established, was made a member of the committee appointed to wait upon Maximilian, apprise

him of his election, urge his acceptance of the proffered crown, and hasten his departure for Mexico.

Maximilian represented the Austrian dynasty which had preceded the house of Bourbon upon the throne of Spain. The Assembly of Notables therefore, perhaps unwittingly, revived the Plan de Iguala, and carried out its provisions more successfully than Iturbide had done, though after a lapse of nearly half a century. The selection of Maximilian was made clearly at the dictation of Napoleon III., and it was stipulated that in the event of the refusal of Maximilian, the offer of the crown was to be made to a Catholic prince to be selected by the Emperor of France. It was probably before the signing of the treaty of London that the selection of the Austrian Archduke was made by Napoleon III., with the intention of recovering his lost prestige with European courts. "To give an American throne and an imperial crown to the Most Catholic House of Hapsburg would be likely to conciliate both the papal and the Austrian courts, with each of which the Emperor of France was under a cloud."

Maximilian was the second son of the Archduke Francis Charles of Austria and

the Archduchess Sophia of Bavaria, and the brother of Francis Joseph, emperor of Austria. He was born "Archduke of Austria, Prince of Hungary, Bohemia, and Lorrena, and Count of Hapsburg," and was in his thirty-second year. He was married to Carlota, daughter of Leopold I. of Belgium. His education had been liberally conducted, and he had travelled extensively. In 1854 he was appointed commander of the Austrian navy, and he subsequently served with great success as governor of Lombardy and Venice.

When in October, 1863, the Austrian Archduke received the formal offer of the Mexican crown from the committee of the Assembly of Notables, at his palace of Miramar at Trieste, he replied that he would accept the same, "when the vote of the Assembly of Notables could be ratified by the Mexican people in a general election, and when the European nations would give him sufficient guarantees that the throne would be protected from dangers which might threaten it." The Franco-Mexican imperial army had been increased by reinforcements from France, and then numbered about thirty-eight thousand men, under the command of Marshal Bazaine, the ever faithful servant of Napoleon III., who had succeeded

Forey, and had occupied all the interior States of Mexico. There was little difficulty in obtaining, in the places occupied by the French arms, such a vote as would satisfy the scruples of the Austrian. The guarantees demanded by him as the second condition of his acceptance were duly given by Napoleon III. in the famous Treaty of Miramar, whereby he promised to maintain the French army in Mexico until the army of the empire could be thoroughly organized. Eight thousand men were to remain there for six years, and the empire was to be amply protected from the incursions of the Americans.

It was on the 10th of April, 1864, that the imposing coronation took place at Miramar, the Archducal palace of Maximilian, and the Emperor and Empress set out for their new home. A visit was made in Rome on the way, and an interview had with his Holiness Pope Pius IX., and on the 29th of May, 1864, the imperial party landed at Vera Cruz, and stood upon the soil of the new-made empire. The journey to the capital was made principally in carriages. In Puebla, on the way, the twenty-fifth birthday of the Empress was celebrated, on the 7th of June, and on the 12th of that month the entry was made into the

capital by way of Guadalupe, amid the most enthusiastic demonstrations of joy on the part of the people. A *Te Deum* in the great cathedral gave it the character of a religious demonstration.

A few days later the Emperor and Empress took up their residence at Chapultepec, thus adding to the interest which the visitor takes in that magnificent castle. An imperial court was formed, and the new rulers set out conscientiously upon the work which they hoped to accomplish, and which Maximilian termed "the regeneration of Mexico." He made journeys into various parts of the country, observing closely its needs and devising ways for supplying them. He sought more especially to ameliorate the condition of the six million Indians whom he found among the population of his empire. He also did much to improve his capital. The *Paseo de la Reforma* (that name was not bestowed by him), leading out to Chapultepec, was planned by him and is a monument to his taste and public spirit.

His government was absolute, but not more so than any that had preceded it, nor than those which have succeeded it. To provide for the succession of the empire, Max-

imilian and Carlota, who were themselves childless, adopted Agustin de Iturbide, the nephew of the first Emperor, thus establishing another connecting link between the second empire and that which resulted from the Plan de Iguala.

That Maximilian was personally of pure character cannot be disputed. But he had not sufficient strength to devise a strong policy of government and maintain it. And he was altogether unsuspecting of the men with whom he had to deal; and hence he suffered from his over-confidence in one after another, beginning with Napoleon III. and continuing down to the petted officer of his army who finally betrayed him into the hands of the republic. He was possessed of a large amount of personal magnetism, and it is no wonder that he found friends who were willing to go to death with him.

The Empress devoted her efforts and her fortune to the relief of the poor and the suffering. The *Casa de Maternidad* (lying-in hospital) in the city of Mexico may be regarded as a noble monument of her goodness to the people of her realm, though it by no means marks the extent of her benefactions.

The life of the capital and some of the larger cities in the vicinity was gay during the bright days of the empire. But the bright days did not last long. The Emperor's efforts to reconcile the various political factions, especially those who composed for the time being the Imperial party, failed to find favor with the clerical party, the strongest of them all. The Church had demanded the immediate abrogation of the Reform Laws of Juarez, but Maximilian did not (because he could not) yield to this demand. Thus the Emperor found the faction upon which he relied for the greatest support among those who treated him the most coldly. The liberals criticised his position in the country, maintained as it was by foreign arms. So that, so far from reconciling the various factions and consolidating them in a strong Imperial party, he found them one by one drawing off from him, and while not openly hostile, doing little or nothing to aid him in his task. He was thus thrown back upon the French army as his only support, while the commander of the French army was the most bitterly hated by the Mexicans of all those who were involved in the second Imperial experiment in Mexico. The Emperor

fell far short of being an able financier, and in the maintenance of the court pageantry to which he had been accustomed, and which he considered a part of the imperial dignity, and in the advancement of his schemes for internal improvements, he exhausted the revenues of the country without developing its resources, and involved the empire in debt. And Napoleon III. was disappointed in finding what he hoped would be an empire whence his own could derive some financial benefit, a constant drain upon his exchequer. So that what would unquestionably have been, all things considered, the redemption of Mexico, could it have been maintained, was doomed to collapse almost from the very start. But the direct and immediate causes of the overthrow of the second empire were from without and not from within, as we shall see.

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