

WAR OF REFORM AND FRENCH INTERVENTION.

The Ayutla revolution finally succeeded, and General Alvarez was appointed President, assuming that office on October 4, 1855, when he organized a Liberal cabinet, of which Benito Juarez was Secretary of Justice, occupying soon afterwards the City of Mexico. Before an election could be held, General Alvarez appointed his successor as President *ad interim*, General Comonfort, one of the supporters of the Plan of Ayutla, and who belonged to the moderate wing of the Liberal party, and who assumed that office on December 12, 1855.

Federal Constitution of 1857.—Several military insurrections, promoted by the Church, took place against Comonfort in 1858, the city of Puebla having been twice the headquarters of the rebels; but General Comonfort finally succeeded in subduing them. Under the Plan of Ayutla, a Constitutional Congress was convened on February 18, 1856, which issued the present Constitution of February 5, 1857. An election was held, and Comonfort was elected Constitutional President for four years, his inauguration taking place on December 1, 1857. He appointed Juarez his Secretary of the Interior during his new administration. Unfortunately, Comonfort wavered in his political views, and he was persuaded by the Church party to annul the Constitution, under the plea that it was impracticable, and that it would keep up political agitation, and on December 11, 1857, he dissolved the Constitutional Congress which had just convened, and on the 17th of the same month he abolished the Federal Constitution which he had sworn to support on the first of the month, and to which he owed his position, and declared himself Dictator. The Liberal party could not, of course, stand such conduct, and they raised as a man against Comonfort's usurpation. Soon afterwards he saw that he had been betrayed by the Church party, as they proclaimed President, General Zuluaga, one of Comonfort's most devout friends, and Comonfort left the country.

Juarez's Leadership.—Juarez was a most remarkable man. He was a full-blooded Indian, born in a small town, Guelatao, inhabited only by Indians, and where there was but one man—the parish priest—who spoke Spanish and could read and write. Juarez was so anxious to learn Spanish and to acquire an education that he offered his services as a domestic to the priest on condition that he should be taught. The priest found him so intelligent that he sent him to the adjoining City of Oaxaca to be educated. From such humble beginnings he rose to be a prominent lawyer and a distinguished statesman. He was, at different times, Secretary of State of his own state, member of the State Legislature, State Senator, Governor of his state for several terms, Representative to the Federal Congress, Secretary of Justice and of the Interior, Chief-Justice, Vice-President, and finally Presi-

dent of the Republic. His principal characteristics were his profound attachment to liberal principles, his clearness of intellect, his remarkably good common sense, his great moral courage, his unimpeachable integrity and honesty, his ardent patriotism, his tenacity of purpose, and his devotion to civil government. In time of war, when the destinies of the country often depended on the result of a battle, and when many others in his place would have led an army, he purposely abstained from exercising any military duties. These he left entirely to those of his associates who had shown talent for war, and he himself gave the example of a purely civil government. He had as much personal courage as any man in the world. I saw him more than once facing as near certain death as any man ever faced with perfect calmness and almost indifference, but without bravado. I am sure that he felt that it is best for a patriot to die in the service of his country, because in that case he wins for himself immortality, and on this theory I account for the fact that he was never afraid of death if it should come to him, while in the performance of a patriotic duty.¹

¹ Mr. Seward's estimate of the character of Juarez shows how the Anglo-Saxon was impressed by the little Indian. When Mr. Seward visited Mexico on his trip around the world, he was heartily welcomed by my country, and in a remarkable speech that he made at the city of Puebla he said that Juarez was the greatest man that he had ever met in his life. His speech was taken down in shorthand, and Mr. Thomas H. Nelson of Terre Haute, Ind., then United States Minister to Mexico, noticing this phrase and thinking that in the excitement of the moment Mr. Seward had gone further than he intended, and further than he would like to have repeated on sober second thought, took it to Mr. Seward and said to him: "Governor, will you be willing to stand by what you said in your speech about Juarez being the greatest man you ever knew? Remember that you have been the peer and contemporary of Webster, Clay, Calhoun, and many other distinguished men of our country, and that you place Juarez above them all." Mr. Seward answered: "What I said about Juarez was after mature consideration, and I am willing to stand by my opinion." This statement has been submitted to General Nelson and his reply, which I insert below, shows that he found it correct.

TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA, September 30, 1895.

His Excellency Matias Romero, etc., Washington, D. C.:

MY DEAR MR. ROMERO:

The receipt of your kind note would have been acknowledged sooner but for my absence from home.

During Mr. Seward's visit to Mexico he often spoke of President Juarez in terms of enthusiastic praise, in private conversation and in public speeches. In his speech at the banquet in Puebla especially he paid a lofty and eloquent tribute to the ability, statesmanship, and patriotism of the President, ranking him among the most illustrious names of the century. If I can find a copy it will afford me pleasure to send it to you; also some allusions of mine in public addresses to Mr. Seward's estimate of the exalted character and public services of that truly great man.

With kind regards, I remain, *como siempre*,

Very truly yours,

THOMAS H. NELSON.

As already stated, Benito Juarez was appointed Secretary of Justice by President Alvarez, and on November 23, 1855, he issued the first law against the clergy, which deprived them of the civil privileges they were enjoying in the exercise of their religious functions. Under the Spanish rule, and also after the independence of Mexico up to that date, the clergy had special courts made up of clergymen to try them for any offence that they might commit. This was a privilege which insured them almost perfect immunity, and exempted them from the control of the civil laws of the country. The Liberals thought that this was an outrage, but they could not change the condition of things until the Juarez law of 1855, although they had attempted it in 1833. The army enjoyed similar privileges, of which the Juarez law also deprived them, by restricting the jurisdiction of military courts to military offences.

The Juarez law was succeeded by the Lerdo law of June 25, 1856, which provided that no corporation—meaning the clergy, as the Church was the only corporation existing in Mexico—could hold real estate, and that such as was held then by any corporation should be sold to the actual tenants at a price which was to be arrived at by capitalizing the rent on a basis of six per cent. per annum rate of interest. Thereafter the tenant was to be the owner of the property, the corporation retaining a mortgage equal to the price fixed in this way. These two laws were the cause of the two insurrections already referred to, promoted by the Church and subdued by President Comonfort.

Juarez, after the enactment of the law which bore his name, had for a time been Governor of the State of Oaxaca, and while holding that office he had been elected Chief-Justice of the Republic and ex-officio Vice-President, and was at the time of the Comonfort rebellion acting as Secretary of the Interior. He became Comonfort's successor, and undertook to stem the tide of rebellion and reaction. In the City of Mexico most of the old regular army of the country were in favor of the Conservative or Church party, and the city, therefore, fell into the hands of Juarez' enemies, and he had to fly from it. He went to the interior, where he established his government, first at Queretaro and afterwards at Guanajuato and Guadalajara. Finally he sailed from Manzanillo, a Mexican port on the Pacific, to Panama, thence to New Orleans, and then back to Veracruz, on the Gulf of Mexico, where he remained for about two years. Veracruz was the stronghold of the Liberal party, as it was naturally a strong place and was well fortified. It was protected also by its bad climate and prevalence of yellow fever, and was the best place that Juarez could have selected to establish his government, and, being more in contact with foreigners, its inhabitants were Liberals. He remained at Veracruz from March, 1858, to January, 1861, the principal cities of the country being during

that time in the hands of the Church party. The Liberal armies, though often defeated, were never destroyed, for the people were with them, and recruits came in abundance. After a defeat, the Liberal leaders reorganized their armies and were soon ready to meet the enemy again. Their courage and persistence were finally rewarded, and they were victorious in the decisive battle of Calpulalpan, on December 19, 1860.

Our old regular army, with very few exceptions, sided with the Church party, and that prolonged considerably the struggle, because the Liberals could only oppose disorganized and undisciplined masses to the regular troops of the Church party; but after some time they succeeded in organizing armies as well disciplined as those of our enemies, and in that way the war was brought to a close in December, 1860.

Laws of Reform.—During the terrible struggle which we call the war of reform, Juarez issued, from Veracruz, on July 12 and 23, 1859, our reform laws, which had for their object to destroy the political power that the clergy had exercised before. The church property was declared National property, and was sold by the Government to the occupants of it at a nominal price, payable partially in National bonds, then selling at a very low price, about five per cent. of their face value. To prevent that in the future the Church should accumulate the real estate taken from her, she was disqualified to own real estate. The clergy were then deprived of all political rights—that is, they were disqualified to be elected for any office. Their convents, both of monks and nuns, were suppressed. The number of churches existing in the country was considerably reduced. Complete separation between Church and State was proclaimed. A civil registry of births, marriages, and deaths was established, taking from the clergy all interference with such subjects; which had been up to that time under their sole supervision. Processions and all other religious demonstrations outside of the church, as well as the ringing of bells, were prohibited. The number of feast days, which then amounted to nearly one fourth of all the days of the year, and tended to keep the people in idleness, were reduced to not more than two or three for the whole year. The wearing outside of the church of the priest's peculiar habit was prohibited, and many other stringent measures against the clergy were adopted, with a view to destroy their political power and to deprive them of the means to bring about another insurrection against the Government.

It is a remarkable fact that most of the Liberal leaders were lawyers, who, influenced by patriotism and a desire for the success of the Liberal cause, and without any military education, had to lead our armies during the long civil wars. Some of them became very distinguished soldiers in our war, as happened here in the United States.

So it can truly be said that the final success of the Liberal cause in Mexico was due in a great measure to the jurists of the nation; so much so, indeed, that they incurred the special hatred of the Church party, by whom the name of "lawyer" was wont to be used as a contemptuous designation for the Liberal leaders.

After the battle of Calpulalpan, fought on December 19, 1860, where General Miramon, the last Church party President, was defeated, Juarez left Veracruz and established his government at the City of Mexico. He then convened Congress, ordered an election, and in 1861 he was elected President for the first Constitutional term. The reform laws became operative when Juarez occupied the City of Mexico, and his rule was extended over the country.

The Church party did not give up the struggle, but began again with renewed vigor to start a new insurrection in 1861, directed especially against the execution of the reform laws. Although this insurrection was not of a serious character, and the insurgents could not capture any important places or defeat the Government troops, they did succeed in keeping up an unsettled condition of things throughout the whole country, involving great insecurity to life and property.

French Intervention in Mexico and Maximilian's Rule.—When the Church party became satisfied that the Liberal party had grown so much that they had not strength enough at home to overcome it, they went to Europe and continued their intrigues with European courts to secure foreign intervention in Mexico. Unfortunately, about that time the civil war broke out in the United States and insured the success of the Mexican Church leaders in obtaining European intervention, as the French Emperor was apparently quite certain of the success of the Confederacy, and was very well disposed to avail himself of the opportunity offered by the Mexican Church party of gaining a foothold in Mexico and effectually aiding in the permanent division of the United States. He had, besides, a dream of establishing a French empire in America, bordering on the Pacific. Under his influence an alliance was made between France, England, and Spain, by a treaty signed at London on October 1, 1861, and Maximilian was persuaded to come to Mexico. England and Spain withdrew before the war actually began, and Napoleon's first army, under General Lorencez, was defeated at Puebla on May 5, 1862; but, after being considerably reinforced, the French army, under Marshal Forey, succeeded in occupying both Puebla and the City of Mexico in 1863, and so began the French intervention. The details of that intervention are quite familiar in this country, and therefore it is not necessary to say anything more about it here.

When peace was restored in the United States after the collapse of the Confederacy, Louis Napoleon of course understood that he could

not continue for an indefinite period his occupation of Mexico, and that he had to give up his Mexican plans and withdraw his army from the country. We could by our own efforts and without any foreign aid have finally driven the French from our country, but it would have taken us some time longer, as Napoleon could have kept his army in Mexico for one or perhaps two years longer; through the assistance of the United States it was withdrawn that much sooner, which was a great service to Mexico.¹ Maximilian well knew, also, that he could not remain in Mexico after the withdrawal of the French, and he decided to leave the country as soon as he heard that the French army was to be withdrawn, and was satisfied that his wife's mission to Europe (where she was overtaken by a dreadful calamity) to obtain a revocation of the order of withdrawal was fruitless; but, unfortunately, he was a dreamer, without force of character, and he was not a man equal to the occasion. He was not steady in his resolutions, and he was easily persuaded by the leaders of the Church party to return to the City of Mexico after he had already started on his homeward journey, and had gone in October, 1866, as far as Orizaba, two thirds of the way between the City of Mexico and Veracruz, where the *Novara*, the same Austrian man-of-war which had brought him to Mexico in 1864, lay ready to take him back to his native country, having been sent over at his request by the Emperor of Austria, and after he knew of the failure of his wife's mission to Europe to induce Napoleon III. to keep his army in Mexico. Early in February, 1867, Maximilian left the City of Mexico and went to Queretaro, where he was finally captured, tried, and shot on the 19th of the following June.

The fate of Maximilian was indeed a very sad one, but when it is considered that on October 2, 1866, a few months only before his execution, he had issued a decree ordering all Mexicans fighting for the independence of their country to be shot without any trial or other formality, and that had he lived he would have been a permanent centre of conspiracies of the monarchical party to overthrow the Republic in Mexico and restore the empire, it will be seen that his death might be considered as a political necessity. Besides, Maximilian's pardon would not have been considered in Europe as an act of generosity on the part of Mexico, but as a proof of weakness, and thus it might have encouraged the repetition of the experiment which ended his life, and it was thought necessary to give a lesson which would serve the purpose of discouraging, and thus preventing all such experiments in the future. The sadness of the tragedy was considerably increased by

¹ In the *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* for May, 1897, I published an article entitled, "The Fall of the Second Empire, as related to French Intervention in Mexico," which, in my opinion, shows that the French intervention was the primary cause of Napoleon's downfall.

the unhappy fate of his wife.' It has been intimated sometimes that I had an important share in Maximilian's execution, but I had nothing whatever to do with it.

Restoration of the Republic.—In July 1867, the Juarez Government was again established at the City of Mexico, and another popular election took place, in which Juarez was almost unanimously elected by the people for another term, from 1867 to 1871.

The patriotism and firmness of Juarez were remarkable. There was a time during the French intervention in which many seemed to despair of the fate of Mexico, and that feeling was not entirely unreasonable,

¹ Mme. Del Barrio, who was with Archduchess Carlotta in Mexico, and who journeyed with her to France, when she went to solicit the aid of Napoleon III., in the hope that the French emperor would assist Maximilian in the great task of crushing the Mexican patriots, gave in a letter the following details of the calamity which overtook her young friend: "Her majesty was in a state of great nervous excitement bordering on insanity even before we neared the coast of France in that unhappy summer of 1866. It is generally assumed that her mental malady first asserted itself during her interview with the Pope, October 4th of that year. The fact is that her majesty became a raving maniac in the castle of St. Cloud.

"These are the circumstances: When our steamer landed at Brest there was nobody to offer a royal welcome, or any kind of welcome. Neither the French government nor the Belgian embassy was represented. The same happened upon our arrival in Paris. The empress trembled from head to foot as she stepped into the hired coach that brought us to our hotel.

"The day passed without a word from Emperor Napoleon. On the second day the Empress Eugenie's chamberlain came to invite her majesty to breakfast at St. Cloud. She refused the invitation, but said she would come to St. Cloud the following afternoon. At the castle my mistress and their majesties of France were closeted for an hour longer, I remaining in the anteroom.

"Suddenly I heard the Empress Carlotta cry out in agonized tones, which were full of contempt at the same time, 'Indeed I should have known who you are and who I am. I should not have dishonored the blood of the Bourbons in my veins by humbling myself before a Bonaparte, who is nothing but an adventurer.'

"A second later I heard a sound as if a heavy body had struck the floor. I ran to the door, which was locked, but after a little while the Emperor Napoleon came out with a troubled face. On entering, I found my mistress on a lounge, and kneeling by her side the Empress Eugenie, who was rubbing her hands and feet. She had opened her corsets, had pulled off her stockings, and, in short, done everything to arouse her from the fainting spell.

"The emperor's statement that he could do nothing for his majesty of Mexico had brought on this trouble, said Eugenie. Then she got up to get a glass of water, but, as she held it to my mistress' lips, the Empress Carlotta awoke and threw the water over her friend's dress, crying: 'Away, cursed murderer; away with your poison!' and then, falling on my neck, she added: 'You are witness to this plot. They want to poison me. For God's sake do not leave me!'"

After that she had lucid intervals for some time, but she collapsed again during the historic interview with Pope Pius IX. and it was this scene at the Vatican which first attracted the attention of Europe to the mental irresponsibility of the unfortunate Carlotta.

considering that the country was invaded by a very large French army—some 60,000 or 80,000 men, I think. Besides, Napoleon and Maximilian had contrived to obtain an Austrian auxiliary corps, a corps from Hungary, and another from Belgium—Princess Carlotta, Maximilian's wife, was a daughter of the former King of Belgium and a sister of the present King—and Maximilian had also a contingent from the French colony of Algiers, and the command of the troops of the Church party, which were on his side, and which embraced most of our old regular army, and, finally, he had all the aristocratic element of Mexico in his favor. Altogether the array was so great that it was no wonder that many of our public men had at times little hope of success. But Juarez never despaired for a moment. He was perfectly certain of final success, and was ready to sacrifice his life for his country's cause.

Diaz's Leadership.—General Diaz was born in the city of Oaxaca, on September 15, 1830, of an humble but good family, having a small portion of Mixteco-Indian blood in his veins, of which he is very proud. He followed a literary career, and was near being graduated as a lawyer when he joined, in 1854, the Ayutla Revolution against Santa Ana, having followed since then a military career, for which he was especially fitted, and in which he soon achieved great distinction. From 1857 to 1860 he fought in the Tehuantepec District, under the most difficult and perilous circumstances, and holding his own in a very creditable campaign.

General Diaz began to take a very prominent part in the military affairs of Mexico during the war of reform and the war against the French intervention, having had an important command at the battle of May 5, 1862, and at the siege of Puebla in April and May, 1863.

During the war of intervention, the Mexican government divided the country into four military Departments, the eastern, western, northern, and southern, and General Diaz was given the command of the eastern Department, embracing the States of Oaxaca, Veracruz, Puebla, and others. In 1865 he defended the City of Oaxaca against the French, and General Bazaine had to take the field in person with a very large French force before he could capture that city. General Diaz was made prisoner and brought to Puebla, from where he escaped and went south, where he organized a new army with which he began operations against the French intervention. He defeated the Imperialists, who had been joined by a portion of the Austrian military contingent, at Carbonera on October 18, 1866, having previously obtained a great victory at Miahuatlan on the 3d of the same month, and afterwards captured successively the cities of Oaxaca, Puebla, and Mexico. After the restoration of the Republic he began to take a very prominent part in public affairs, and since 1877 his leadership has been undisputed.

Civil Wars from 1868 to 1875.—In a country where civil war and the disturbances consequent to it had lasted for so long a time it was natural that everything should be demoralized, and thus even after our complete success against the French intervention and the so-called Empire of Maximilian, some uprisings took place, which were headed by dissatisfied Liberal leaders; and although they were not of a serious nature, and were easily subdued by President Juarez, they kept the country in an unsettled condition, and contributed to support the opinion that we were unable to maintain peace.

The principal of these insurrections, that of La Noria, was headed by General Porfirio Diaz and other prominent members of the Liberal party, who were not satisfied with the policy of President Juarez, and who opposed his re-election in 1871, and proclaimed the principles of no re-election and a free ballot. His death on July 18, 1872, put an end to that insurrection, and the leaders submitted to the provisional government of Señor Don Sebastian Lerdo de Tejada, who, as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, was the ex-officio President. A popular election took place in 1872, and Señor Lerdo de Tejada was elected Constitutional President. In the year 1876 he was a candidate for re-election, and that brought about the revolution of Tuxtepec, promoted by prominent leaders of the Liberal party, who again proclaimed the anti-election and free ballot principles, under the leadership of General Diaz, who placed himself at the head of that revolution. The battle of Tecuac, fought on November 16, 1876, decided the success of the Tuxtepec revolution, and General Diaz was installed as Chief Executive with full legislative powers. In April, 1877, he was elected Constitutional President, and since then he has been at the head of the Executive Department, excepting a four-years term, from 1880 to 1884, when General Don Manuel Gonzalez occupied the Executive office. The great progress which has taken place in Mexico in recent years is mainly due to the wise policy and earnest efforts of General Diaz. Among the many distinguished services that General Diaz has rendered to Mexico, perhaps the principal one is to have restored complete peace to the country. During the several terms in which he has filled the executive office he has earnestly encouraged the material development of the country, and firmly established peace and order. Material development always furnishes the best security that public peace will be maintained. It would be impossible, in the limited space at my command, to attempt, even, to give a superficial idea of the great services that General Diaz has rendered to Mexico, but as they are of recent date they are well known by all cotemporaries taking any interest in Mexican affairs.

It has sometimes been stated that Mexico is ruled by an oligarchy, and if by this it is meant that the nation is divided into classes, and

that one of these classes is the ruling power, then the statement may be taken as correct, as Mexico is ruled by her educated class; but if by it it is meant that a few families have the ruling power by inheritance and do not allow others to share it, then it is altogether incorrect, as the humblest citizen in Mexico, belonging to any race whatsoever, even the pure Indian, can hold the highest position in the land, if his talents, his services, and his character entitle him to it. A case in point is that of Juarez, who was by birth an humble Indian, and, after being educated, became the foremost man in the country.

Disappearance of the Causes of Civil War.—It will be readily seen from this brief synopsis that the causes which brought about the civil wars in Mexico no longer exist. Ours was a contest for supremacy between the vital forces of the nation, between the old and the new ideas, which in other countries it has taken many years, and even centuries, to settle; but now our political problem is solved, the Church party is completely broken up as a political organization, and cannot cause again any serious disturbance, and the elements of civil war are now lacking.

The conditions in Mexico during the Spanish rule and even after the independence, and more or less up to the issue of our reform laws in 1859, were very similar to those existing in European countries during the feudal system. The clergy and their agents and followers were, in fact, the Mexican feudal barons, and their power and influence in the country were as great as those of the European barons, as they not only monopolized the wealth and education of the country, but also exercised great spiritual or religious influence upon the minds of the people. The position of the Mexican barons was perhaps even stronger, because, instead of being at cross purposes with the king or ruling power, as the European barons often were, they had a kind of alliance with the temporal power, by which each agreed to support and protect the other. When it is considered how long it took the kings of Europe to subdue the barons, how many efforts the people had to make to accomplish that end, and what protracted and bloody wars had to be fought before it was accomplished, which was not wholly until the French Revolution, it is rather a matter of surprise that Mexico and the other Spanish American countries similarly situated should have destroyed their feudalism in comparatively so short a time.

Mexico for nearly twenty years has been free from political disturbances and enjoying all the advantages of a permanent peace. Those who took part in former revolutions have either died off, disappeared, or are now interested in the maintenance of peace, because they are thriving in consequence of the development of the country. Even in case President Diaz's guidance should fail Mexico, I am sure peace would still be preserved, because there are very strong reasons in its