



THE FALL OF THE SECOND EMPIRE

AS RELATED TO FRENCH INTERVENTION IN MEXICO.



I HAVE always thought that the downfall of the Napoleonic dynasty at Sedan in 1870 was due to Louis Napoleon's intervention in Mexico. But further to confirm this opinion I laid my views on the subject before competent persons who knew a great deal more about the events causing the crushing defeat of 1870 than myself. One of these was Señor Luis Maneyro, a Mexican gentleman who lived for many years in France; who resided there during the inception, progress, and termination of the intervention, acting both before and after the intervention as Mexican consul at Bordeaux; and who kept himself very well posted about the political affairs of that country. Another gentleman whose opinion I regarded as carrying great weight was Mr. John Bigelow, United States minister to France during the same period. I received answers from both gentlemen, which I do not feel at liberty to publish, altogether confirming my views. I append here a copy of the memorandum which I submitted to both gentlemen for their criticism.

MEMORANDUM.

THE defeat of the French army under General Lorencez at Puebla, on May 5, 1862, and more particularly the complete failure of the French intervention in Mexico, ending with the withdrawal of the French army, and the fall and execution of Maximilian in 1867, were, in my opinion, the origin and the principal cause of the humiliation of France in 1870, and the consequent downfall of Louis Napoleon. It seems to me that the French emperor, artfully using the controlling power of France to further his own ends, was always eager and ready to take part in the international troubles arising in Europe, and very naturally the side to which he allied himself was in every instance the victorious one. Napoleon always made the best use of his victories, which gave him great prestige, thereby increasing proportionately his moral

influence. He was considered by Europe as a great political genius who was leading France in the pathway of greatness and prosperity, and who could make no mistakes; and he became in fact the arbiter of the destinies of that continent. His military defeat in Mexico in 1862, the first one he had suffered, and which showed that he did not possess the foresight with which he was credited, and his moral and political defeat in 1867, caused by the fall and execution of Maximilian, showed the thinking men of the world that he also could fall into errors of judgment, and that he was not by any means the great man he had been supposed to be, causing him at once to descend from the high pedestal upon which his former successes had placed him.

Men like Prince Bismarck saw that his reputation was usurped, and that he was not greatly above the average mortal, and prepared to strike the decisive blow which was dealt to him by Prussia in 1870. To deal this blow, Prince Bismarck took advantage of the complicated situation which Napoleon had created for himself in Mexico, by declaring in 1866 that war against Austria which ended with the battle of Sadowa, thus strengthening Prussia, and putting her at the head of the North German Confederation at a time when Napoleon, engaged in Mexico, and in imminent danger of becoming involved in difficulties with the United States, could not well take part in that contest without running serious risks. The talent of Prince Bismarck consisted in taking advantage of the right moment. If Napoleon had not been engaged with the Mexican intervention, he undoubtedly would have taken the side either of Austria or of Prussia, and the war would have terminated in favor of the power backed by France, with territorial advantages for the latter; and thus he would have increased his reputation as a sagacious statesman. But had Napoleon supported either power, the probabilities are that the matter would have been settled without any war, or, if a war had broken out, it would have ended

in favor of the allies of France. All this was swept away with the terrible collapse of 1867, which brought about his humiliation at Sedan and the fall of the empire.

It is true that before declaring war on Austria, Bismarck obtained assurances from Napoleon that he would remain neutral; but the difficulties in which the French emperor had involved himself by his Mexican venture decided his course in this case, and Prince Bismarck knew very well that while the Mexican scheme was pending the Emperor

of the French could not well afford to take part in any other undertaking of a serious character.

I believe that future historians, looking at these events without passion or prejudice, and inspired by a desire to present facts as they really are, can reason only in this way. Mexico will have, as a reparation for the injustice done her by the French intervention, the sad satisfaction of having been the prime factor in the emancipation of Europe from the Napoleonic rule.

Matias Romero.

THE ROYAL FAMILY OF GREECE.



OUR country is certainly more democratic than the United States," the Crown Prince of Greece once said to me, in the midst of a conversation about the political institutions of his country. He was surely right, if the remark be applied to the social and political instincts of the Greek people. No more naturally and unaffectedly democratic people exists under the sun than the Greek. Not only are there no aristocratic titles, but there is no apparent consciousness, in the ordinary life and manners, of the existence of social barriers. The village demarch sits placidly and comfortably with the other villagers and the peasants in the café or *bakáli*; the cabman who served you yesterday does not omit to give you from his box a graceful salute as he passes you on the street; no humbleness of occupation or of presumed station in life deters one man from greeting another whom he meets on the road or in the square, or from beginning the frankest and freest conversation. The reserve and cautious, if not bashful, self-respect of the Anglo-Saxon commonly interprets this Greek freedom at the first as bald effrontery. In the judgment of the newcomer the Greek commonly gains the credit of being what the American collegian would call «decidedly fresh.» In reality it is part and parcel of the national courtesy, tintured and conditioned, to be sure, by the equally national curiosity. Democracy is no affectation. The bashfulness which springs from suspicion of barriers is unknown.

And yet Greece is a monarchy. On the whole, the people are well satisfied that it should be. To be sure, that form of government was not from the first of their own choosing.

The revolutionary government from 1821 to 1830 had been republican; but in 1830 the powers, under whose protection the Greek nationality was able to achieve existence, decreed that its government should be a hereditary monarchy. It has not always been an easy throne for a king to sit upon, but at no time has the ruling family been more firmly entrenched in the good will of the nation than it is to-day. Otho of Bavaria was proclaimed the first king in 1832. The revolution of 1843 compelled the king to grant a constitution. Nineteen years longer he held the throne, until in 1862 a storm of discontent drove him and the efficient—almost too efficient—Queen Amalia from the country. Now, a generation later, a reaction in popular sentiment has placed the names of Otho and Amalia among the great benefactors of the land, and almost on a level with those of its liberators. Democracy had driven out one king, but it did not hesitate to call for another. It, indeed, proceeded to choose one. The plebiscite taken in 1862 resulted in the choice, probably in deference to the then prevailing admiration for British institutions, of the Duke of Edinburgh by a vote of 230,016 in a poll of 238,654. The powers, debarred by the terms of their agreement from accepting him, selected Prince William George, son of the reigning King of Denmark, Christian IX, as the successor, and since 1863 he has held the throne under the title of George I. He was scarcely eighteen years old when he came to the throne. The historical and social conditions were entirely new to him, and the whole situation was such as to have offered the severest test for even the most experienced. The hot-headed impulsiveness of the people, and their natural inclination to an individualism savoring of lawlessness and chafing