

# My Recollections of Maximilian



**By Marie de la Fère**

A memoir of Mexico's brief, sparkling, but doomed  
Second Empire under Maximilian von Habsburg

**Edited and introduced  
by C.M. Mayo**

*Author of The Last Prince of the Mexican Empire*



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**An eyewitness memoir of Mexico's brief, sparkling but  
doomed Second Empire under Maximilian von Habsburg  
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**Edited and Introduced by C.M. Mayo**  
Author of *The Last Prince of the Mexican Empire*,  
the novel based on the true story

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# Introduction

## by C.M. Mayo

**It was the distinguished historian of Mexico, Robert Ryal Miller,** who told me about this circa 1910 English language handwritten manuscript long-languishing in the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley. Very generously, as was his way, he wrote to me, knowing that I was doing archival research for my novel, *The Last Prince of the Mexican Empire*, and recommended that I look it up on my next visit to the Bancroft. There is always something magical about touching old paper, running one's finger along the faded ink, but it turned out that I had to read "My Recollections of Maximilian" on microfiche—reeling a tape through a cranky old machine in a dark room. The handwriting appeared to me to be that of an older person, elegant but cramped, smallish, and set down in a first draft, as if jotted one afternoon on whatever paper might have been handy, and only after being repeatedly pressed by some younger friend. In places, here a word, there a sentence fragment, were impossible to make out. But reading it was well worth the trouble, for, among so many other things, it gave me insight into the

Mexican monarchists' passionate feelings for their unlikely emperor, Maximilian von Habsburg.

Younger brother of Austria's Kaiser Franz Josef, Maximilian was shanghaied by pie-in-the-sky promises into serving as the puppet emperor of Louis Napoleon's so-called Mexican Expedition. For Mexicans, this Austrian with the beautiful uniforms and splendid red beard who ended his young life in 1867 before a firing squad in Querétaro, shouting, "Viva México!" is a figure of endless fascination, ridicule, scholarly reconsiderations, gossip, paintings, operas, musicals, movies, and, of course, novels. Adding to the beguilement, his wife, the arrogantly beautiful Carlota— granddaughter of France's King Louis Philippe (the one who abdicated in 1848), daughter of King Leopold of Belgium, sister of Leopold II (of Congo fame), and first cousin to Queen Victoria— went raving mad in the Vatican and spent the rest of her long life— she died in 1927— sequestered in a castle in Belgium.

My novel is not about Maximilian and Carlota *per se*, but their decision to bring the grandsons of Mexico's Emperor Iturbide— a Mexican George Washington, monarchist version, who ended up before a firing squad in 1824— into their royal household. This was a decision fraught with consequence, for the mother of the younger child was Alice Green de Iturbide, an American from an old and well-connected Washingtonian family. Though young and naïve, in her attempt to get her child back, "Doña Alicia" proved a formidable opponent to Maximilian, raising a scandal from her forced exile in Washington to London and Paris, where the U.S. ambassador, John Bigelow, was working assiduously to convince Louis Napoleon to abandon Mexico.

Though Carlota negotiated the terms with the Iturbide family, she did not sign the contract celebrated at Chapultepec Castle in 1865. Often misunderstood as an "adoption," the arrangement was for Maximilian to take custody of the two

Iturbide grandsons, sending the older one to school in France and bringing the younger, a toddler, who would have been in line for the throne of Mexico had that earlier monarchy survived, into his Court, with a spinster aunt, Josefa de Iturbide, serving as “co-tutoress.”

Maximilian and Carlota had remained childless for the several years of their marriage; for a monarchy, the lack of an heir is a profound threat to the stability of the State. It has since come to light that Maximilian was trying to convince his family to send a nephew as heir; in the meantime, the two-and-a-half-year-old Agustín de Iturbide y Green would serve—and, so Maximilian and Carlota calculated, co-opt any possible Mexican nationalist monarchist movement that might coalesce around the heirs of Iturbide.

Mexicans of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries know of Maximilian from their television documentaries, movies, books, and most of all, State-approved school texts, which, of course, celebrate the Republican victory over the foreign invaders. Maximilian is treated as a ridiculous figure, a nose-in-the-air aristocrat, duped by Louis Napoleon or, less commonly, as romantically tragic—too kind, too noble, etc. My own impression, after seven years of reading and research, is that, though he made a grave miscalculation in accepting the Mexican throne, Maximilian was far more politically astute than is generally appreciated and, though he could charm, he was also capable of surprising thrusts of cruelty.

What took me time to comprehend—for I was born into the late 20<sup>th</sup> century U.S., hardly a bastion of monarchist sentiment—was the Mexican monarchists’ point of view. And this was vital, for, strange as it was to me, to create believable characters for my novel, I would need to render that point of view with both compassion and dignity. “Marie de la Fère” does not appear in *The Last Prince of the Mexican Empire*, but her spirit does, infusing my many characters based on real people close to Maximilian such as José Luis Blasio, his secretary; José Fernando

Ramírez, his Minister of Foreign Affairs; and the many conservative ladies who gather at Doña Juliana de Pedraza's at-homes, among them, Princess Josefa de Iturbide.

In his last letter to me, Robert Ryal Miller mentioned that he was preparing an edited and annotated version of "My Recollections of Maximilian." Not long afterwards, in 2004, to the great loss of all who care about Mexican history, he passed away. I never saw his edits or notes, I am sad to say, for I understand he had identified the author whose name was not— as I too, immediately suspected, "Marie de la Fère."

After Miller's death, as I felt this memoir deserved more readers than we intrepid few who have eyes for microfiches, so I wrote to the Bancroft for permission to print it both on-line as a print book. This was granted in 2006.

Would that I could offer a more detailed introduction, but this extraordinary memoir has been languishing in my files long enough. I have corrected some misspellings and punctuation, though in some places, where it reveals the author's charming linguistic *mélange*, I have left it intact. Where the handwriting was indecipherable, I added brackets around a question mark. For ease in reading on-line, my few notes appear in brackets rather than as footnotes.

Aside from such minor blemishes, what you have here, dear reader, is a true treasure of the Second Empire, left to us by an old *señora* who felt moved to pick up a pen, look back, and open her heart.

# My Recollections of Maximilian

## by Marie de la Fère

**It seems almost impossible that forty three years have passed** since I was a witness and participator in the events connected with Maximilian's reign three brief years in Mexico. My father was a retired American banker and while traveling in Mexico had met and married my mother, who is of Spanish and French descent. When Maximilian landed at Veracruz, I was but seventeen years old. I was old enough to realize and know that Mexican affairs both political and financially were in terrible straights. My father conversed very freely to us in English regarding the status of affairs. His money he trusted to no Mexican bank; everything we had was in New Orleans and he lived on the income accruing from his investments there. When Juárez left the city and we learned that the French troops were steadily advancing in [?] first Orizaba, Puebla and were almost in Mexico City, father wished us to all leave and embark either for New Orleans or Europe, but my mother would not listen to it. Monseñor Labastida, who was always a welcome visitor, had thoroughly imbued her with his ideas of Mexico's coming greatness as soon as the Church party got control of affairs and she was

determined to see it out. And again a letter from France notified us that our relative, Mama's uncle, an officer, was coming with the "Interventionists."

“ my father came home in a hurry saying that the French troops were entering the city, which he had scarcely finished before the cannon commenced their salutes, also the bells of all the churches began ringing

On June 10th 1863 my father came home in a hurry saying that the French troops were entering the city, which he had scarcely finished before the cannon commenced their salutes, also the bells of all the churches began ringing, the crowds in the streets were [?] Triumphal arches with pictures of Napoleon and Eugenia wreathed in flowers were in Plateros and San Francisco streets at the Cathedral a *Te Deum* was chanted in honor of the entrance of General Forey and Saligny with the French troops. In the evening a large reception was given by the Ayuntamiento at the Nacional [*sic*] Palace in honor of the French officers.

My uncle and Gen. B. [General Bazaine] and his aide [Captain Charles Blanchot?] made our home their stopping place and they certainly were a protection to us. Others of our friends had petty officers quartered in their best rooms and everything in the house was given over to them. My mother gave a large dinner to General Forey, Saligny, and my uncle and many of their brother officers enjoyed my mother's hospitality. At this dinner one toast was significant, a certain priest first calling for a standing toast to Emperor Napoleon said, "To the

French Intervention and their choice of a ruler for Mexico.” I heard much the next month about a convention of “notables” and that they were forming plans for the future government of Mexico under French protection.

On the 8th of July the bells again rang out a message to the Mexicans. My father told us that they had met and voted that Mexico should have an Emperor and that Napoleon had been asked to select some Catholic prince in Europe willing to accept the throne of Mexico. One of my mother’s brothers was a member of the Junta and by him I heard much of the affairs of Mexico.

In a letter to my mother dated Trieste, August 10th 1863, he describes their reception in the Castle of Miramar. In it he says, “Maximilian is 33 years old, tall, golden hair, straight nose, blue eyes, golden beard, mustache much lighter, beard long, and parted in the middle, he wore a blue frock coat, white vest, black trousers and black tie. On his coat was the order of San Esteban and he wore the golden collar of Toisón [Orden del Toisón de Oro, Order of the Golden Fleece]. His manners were affable, he stood calmly and serenely during the entire presentation address of Señor Estrada, President of the Delegation.”

When the address was finished Maximilian told them that, “if by popular vote of the Mexican people he was their chosen ruler he would consider the petition.” He remarked that, “French Intervention,” he hoped “would be the means of uplifting the Mexican people.” He then introduced the Deputation to the archduchess Carlota whom he described as being, “Young, lovely, handsomely groomed wearing superb collar of large diamonds her manners he said were were gracious.”

The Deputation were invited to dine with the archduke and his wife that evening which they did everyone expressing themselves as delighted with Napoleon’s choice. I heard at the time that the reason for Maximilian’s demand for a vote of the Mexican people was that some Mexican gentleman in an interview

with the Archduke had made the statement that Napoleon did not have a right to appoint an Emperor to the Mexican throne and that the masses of the people did not desire it.

“ In a conversation with my mother in 1865 the Empress Carlota told her that, “She did not want Maximilian to accept the crown of Mexico that she had premonitions of terrible things. That she was so happy at Miramar— too happy to last.”

In a conversation with my mother in 1865 the Empress Carlota told her that, “She did not want Maximilian to accept the crown of Mexico that she had premonitions of terrible things. That she was so happy at Miramar— too happy to last.”

On April 10th 1864 Maximilian being advised that by the popular vote he was the choice of the Mexican people signified his acceptance of the crown of Mexico.

In another letter written from Paris in October ‘64 my uncle said that Maximilian had received the blessing of the Pope and that the courts of Europe were pleased with Maximilian as choice as Emperor for Mexico.

My father was dubious and used to say to my mother, “These Mexicans are laying up for themselves a terrible tragedy. Juárez will never tamely submit to a monarchy.” And when reading of Lee's surrender at Appamattox he said, “As soon as things begin to settle down at Washington you may look for trouble here.” And

when Maximilian sent Señor Mariano Degollado as minister to Washington and the government there refused to receive them then my father looked wise indeed.

On May 28, 1865 the *Themis* with Maximilian and Carlota and their escort the French [it was Austrian] gun boat *Novara* were sighted by the French officers at Ulloa [Úlúa]. My mother had insisted that we all accompany my uncle to Veracruz and a trip to Veracruz by carriage in those days was a most serious undertaking bandits and cut throats infested every mile of the way. But we had the protection of the French troops who were to be a guard of honor to Maximilian and his suite to Mexico. Veracruz in those days was much smaller than it is now— but on that day it really looked beautifully [sic] every street had its flower covered arches. Every balcony was decorated and everyone in gala attire. There were thousands of Indians with their gaily colored blankets or sarapes from the mountains. In every street was detailed French troops. The ships in the harbor were gaily decorated with flags and also all of the public buildings in Veracruz.

We were at the table when the guns at Ullua [sic] commenced. The arrival of the expected Monarch we accompanied the French officers to the wharf although their majesties did not come ashore for more than two hours from the time they were first sighted.

When they landed they were presented by Maximilian's minister first to the French officers and their wives and daughters, then to the Committee from Mexico City and Veracruz. A speech of welcome was addressed to them and then they were driven to the Palace where an informal reception was held. It was my first glimpse of Maximilian and Carlota and the glitter and gaiety of the already-forming court was a great attraction for a young girl and then the social position of my parents made it possible for me to mingle as an equal with the brightest in the land. Then commenced the triumphal procession of their majesties to the Mexican capital. The first night of their arrival was a grand Ball. I can remember distinctly

the splendor of the ladies' dresses, and costly ornaments. The Empress had on a white silk trimmed elaborately with costly lace and her diamonds were simply magnificent. My mother looked so beautiful, dressed in shimmering folds of pink brocaded silk and the rope of pearls she wore caused many to turn and gaze on her rich Spanish beauty. As for me I was a young debutante and wore a simple white dress with a wreath of roses in my hair. When Carlota spoke to me that evening I was so happy, she told me, "I was dressed as befitted a young girl and that I looked very sweet." Her dear smile and kind words made me her admirer for the rest of my life.

The next day we left for Orizaba there was fully five hundred troops guarding the Camina [*sic*] on which we traveled some rode ahead some at the sides of the carriages and others behind— Every little Indian village had its decorations and greetings. The Empress seemed so pleased with everything and everyone returned a kind smile. On reaching Orizaba there was a salute of cannon, the church bells rang, bands played and banners and flags from every building. The city officials gave the keys of the city to Maximilian with a speech appropriate to the occasion. We all first went to the Cathedral to celebrate High Mass from their [*sic*] to the city Palace where for two days followed a series of banquets, receptions and balls. The people of Orizaba seemed to vie with each other in efforts to make the royal visit one of pleasure and success. The Empress appointed two ladies in Veracruz as Damas de Palacio [*ladies of honor*] and in Puebla five and in Merida four, one in Campeche, the others including my beloved mother were in Mexico City, 38 in all. She had but two Damas de Honor [*a higher honor; and the author is mistaken; these included the wife of General Almonte, as she notes below*] those were Sra Da Concepcion Plowes de Pacheco and Srta Josefa Varela both of them I understand are now dead.

The Empress's Grand Chamberlain was Sr Conde del Valle de Orizaba, Viscount de San Miguel. Speaking of the discomforts and dangers of travel in the sixties when there were no railroads in the whole of Mexico. The Camino Real or Kings highway was the only means of connection from Veracruz to Mexico. Via Orizaba, Puebla and Mexico City this road still attests the care used in building it wide, and paved with stone all the way. Parts of it are in good condition yet. To illustrate the dangers of a trip to Mexico City, my aunt who lived in Veracruz married and wishes to bring her Paris finery to Mexico City to be presented to Carlota. She and her husband started. She was an industrious little woman she [be?guoled; began?] the trip with a small basket of knitting. An old aunt of mine

**“ within a few miles of Mexico City then they were ordered to get out of the coach. She was relieved of her trunks of finery forced to strip off even her dress**

living here had written to have her bring her a new bonnet of black braid this she had done up neatly in paper and had in the coach with her, they were not molested by robbers until within a few miles of Mexico City then they were ordered to get out of

the coach. She was relieved of her trunks of finery forced to strip off even her dress. They refused her aunt's bonnet permitting her to keep it. Her husband got out at the Iturbide Hotel wrapped in an old newspaper. My aunt was left her chemise, the black bonnet and her basket of knitting. Their fellow passengers an old priest, devoid of clothing, muttered continuous prayers of malediction on the robbers. The mozo [manservant / porter] at the Hotel always met the coach from Veracruz with blankets, for everyone was invariably robbed in those days.

The trip from Orizaba to Puebla was marked by no untoward event, stops were made at night along the route at the home of some rich hacendado [plantation owner] then a fresh start in the morning. The people of Puebla met the royal procession before we reached Cholula. The Empress insisting on sending for mass to the sacred chapel that crowns Cholula.

At Puebla a *Te Deum* was chanted in the cathedral and then a reception at the Palace and a grand banquet and ball at night. Two days more were spent there then began the last part of the trip to Mexico City. On this trip I first met my husband who was a colonel in the French army and who fortunately for me was my equal in point of birth everyway. How glad we were on the morning of June 12th 1865 to see the chapel of Guadalupe in the distance. My mother and I were worn out by the long series of social dissipations and wearisome carriage ride. Some three hundred miles. Her Majesty seemed to be fresh and unwearied making no complaints of the tedious trip, she was wonderful.

A *Te Deum* was chanted in the cathedral at Guadalupe. The Empress drank some of the water at the sacred well, and Maximilian also. They were both always sincere and devout in their attentions to all of the church services.

General Almonte who accompanied the Royal Couple from Veracruz to Mexico City was the leading spirit in everything, he had charge of the troops, formerly President of Mexico, he was a notable figure in the history of Maximilian's reign. Maximilian appointed him Minister of his Palace. When in full uniform, he wore the following orders:

Gran Cross Imperial Order of Aguila of Mexico

“ ” of Guadalupe

“ ” The Legion of Honor of France

:“:” Iron Crown of Austria

He was also member of numerous Historical and Geographical Societies of Europe and the United States. His wife, a most beautiful woman, was the chief Dama de Palacio [lady in waiting] to Carlota.

At Guadalupe thousands of people came to meet their majesties, the streets of the city were lined with people anxious to catch a glimpse of their majesties. Every street had arches covered with masses of beautiful flowers balconies were decorated with lace flowers and banners. Cannon boomed from the cuartels. Church bells rang a glad welcome, bands played [in the?] park. It was a most beautiful sight and never since has Mexico ever seen such a profusion of elaborate decorations. No one since Maximilian has ever received one tenth of the homage that he did, on that memorable, never to be taken again, trip to Mexico City.

They really did not enter the city until the 14th is my remembrance. Much time was consumed in the sacred villa of Guadalupe. The first stop in the city was the Cathedral which was a blaze of candles and the floral decorations were superb. A *Gran Te Deum* was chanted, Archbishop of Mexico Monseñor Labastida presiding.

From there they passed under the beautiful arch at the head of Plateros to the Castle of Chapultepec. Of this arch at the head of Plateros much should be said. I can only remember with distinctness that it was artistic and beautiful, at the top was alegorical [*sic*] figures and underneath a frieze portraying the presentation of the Crown to Maximilian by the deputation of Notables on the right side was a fine statue of Maximilian on the left, of Justice.

The Junta of Notables had inaugurated a series of Receptions, Banquets and Balls which followed for some two weeks after the arrival of Maximilian. My birthday occurred soon after the arrival of their majesties and on that day the

“ the Empress sent word by mother that she had a birthday gift for me. It was a beautiful necklace of opals each one a frozen tear drop, so it looked to me for I shared the superstition of the Mexicans and nothing short of a gift from her majesty would ever have gotten me to wear it

Empress sent word by mother that she had a birthday gift for me. It was a beautiful necklace of opals each one a frozen tear drop, so it looked to me for I shared the superstition of the Mexicans and nothing short of a gift from her majesty would ever have gotten me to wear it.

Thanking her majesty I hurried from the Palace as

quickly as the formal etiquette of the court would permit and never have I worn it since. I was afraid going home that something fearful might overtake me. It remains in my jewel box and always will, so long as I live, beautiful 'tis true, but carrying with it to the wearer, ill luck in love, and all the affairs of life.

At one of those brilliant functions which inaugurated the reign of Maximilian and Carlota I met the beautiful Princess Salm Salm. She was admired by everyone her manners were perfect. She was a blonde of more than medium height, slender, she had small tapering hands, and dainty feet, blue eyes like violets bathed in dew a laughing red mouth which ever opened to show a dazzling row of teeth. She received many attentions from Maximilian and the French officers, Carlota greeted her very kindly.

Another figure prominent in Carlota's court was the Princess Josefa Iturbide [and] a most charming American, formerly a Miss Green, I think [Alice Green de Iturbide, wife of Angel de Iturbide]. It was her son Agustín whom Maximilian adopted and made his legal heir.

In September we were all in a flutter at the arrival of their majestys [*sic*] grand coach of state, it was upholstered in white brocaded silk & gold fringe. On the panels of the doors was the Royal coat of arms the mountings were all of gold the Drivers seat upholstered in crimson velvet with gold fringe there were four cherubs in gold on the outside front & back. With the liveried coachmen and lackeys it was a truly royal sight drawn always by four beautiful white horses and followed by the French soldiers in their dazzling uniforms it was everything that we in Mexico will never see again. This coach, also his day coach, are in the National Museum there is a large collection of Maximilian relics donated by the widow of one of Maximilian's chamberlains, Señora Doña Isabel Pesado viuda de [widow of] Mier y Celis.

Scarcely had the court been fully organized and Maximilian vested with the reins of government than news came from all sides that Juarez who had been driven by the French troops across the border was again fighting his way to the city. My father was much alarmed at this state of affairs. That Maximilian did not fully understand Mexican political affairs was well known to everyone I heard great men of affairs say this, to my father again, and again, when Matamoros was stormed and taken by the French, it was esteemed an attack of Guerillas, nothing more.

We were alarmed greatly when my mother related how Marshall Bazaine had been all one morning closeted with the Emperor and Empress, and that Carlota had rung her bell violently, and when some of her ladies rushed to her apartments she was in a fainting condition. Father Fischer and Señor Don Federico Semeleder

the Emperor's physician were summoned. My mother was seriously alarmed. We learned the next day that Marshall Bazaine had notified Maximilian of Napoleon's order to withdraw the French troops.

“ My mother who was always very outspoken replied, “Your Majesty had better have him shot, for if you do not, he may one day shoot you, they tell me this Don Porfirio is a man of great determination.”

My father had also received a letter saying that Gen. Grant was massing an army of 200,000 men on the Rio Grande. That same week Carlota announced to her ladies-in-waiting her purpose to go to Europe. Consternation was everywhere felt. Shocking things occurred daily. Robberies were nightly occurrences. Prices of food and clothing were going up every day. Before Carlota's departure my father and mother were invited to breakfast at the Palace, during the breakfast an officer asked to present a telegram to his majesty. On reading it, Maximilian turned to my father and said, “They have captured Capt. Porfirio Diaz a guerilla leader and ask what to do with him, he will not give a parole and I do not want to shoot him” & turning in his vivacious manner to mama he said, “Madame what shall I do with this rebel.” My mother who was always very outspoken, replied, “Your Majesty had better have him shot, for if you do not, he may one day shoot you, they tell me this Don Porfirio is a man of great determination.” His Majesty laughed, dismissing the officer saying, “He would think it over.” My aunt accompanied Carlota to Veracruz, she seemed very sad, all of her joyous lightness of disposition

had left her, during the night at Puebla she slept very little and my aunt who occupied the adjoining apartment heard her repeatedly get up walking and moaning. She remained sad during the entire trip to Veracruz although never out of humor or never in any way showing unkindness to the ladies and gentlemen accompanying her. She sailed on the 13th of the month and my aunt says that she refrained from calling Carlota's attention to the date, but it filled my aunt's heart with dread aforebodings [sic]. Maj. Robt. Gorsage, an American of high standing at court accompanied Carlota to the ship showing her many gentle attentions which were received by Carlota most graciously. Maj Gosage said to me then, "Madame I never expect to see her majesty again." My aunt exclaimed in horror. "What, do you mean Major! Do you not think her majesty's trip will have a successful ending & safe return?" Maj Gorsage replied, "Madame, the monarchy cannot survive the withdrawal of the French troops."

**“ In after years I heard that there were persons who made the statement that Carlota was insane before leaving Mexico, that she had been given Marijuana, before leaving Veracruz. I know this is false, that she was so very sad, is true; she seemed to have a premoni-tion of the terrible trial & its failure. She was perfectly sane in Veracruz**

In after years I heard that there were persons who made the statement that Carlota was insane before leaving Mexico, that she had been given Marijuana, before leaving Veracruz. I know this is false, that she was so very sad, is true; she seemed to have a premonition of the terrible trial & its failure. She was perfectly

sane in Veracruz. She conversed freely and sanely with my aunt and the other ladies accompanying her. She received the social attentions of the people of Veracruz in her usual dignified but generous manner.

After her departure for Europe, society was very dull. In the city there seemed to be apprehension of disaster on all sides. My father tried to urge my mother to make a visit to relatives in the U.S. but mother loved Mexico and did not care to make visits away from home. So we stayed on and witnessed the closing events of that brief, sad reign of Maximilian.

After Charlotte's [Carlota's] departure, social functions at court were at a standstill, the guerillas under Escobedo from the north and Porfio Diaz were steadily advancing. Maximilian seemed to be stupefied. The Emperor, so the gossips said, began a series of intrigues. I heard my aunt and other ladies of the court talking about it. Juan Mateos in his "Cerros de las Campanas" speaks of Pablo Fernandez's sister as being one of his victims. I do know that every few weeks he with one or two gentlemen and a body of troops went to Cuernavaca. My mother simply said, "He goes to a lower altitude for rest."

I heard many names well known to me connected with Maximilian. We were stricken with horror when it was announced that Carlota while talking to His Holiness the Pope had fallen senseless at his feet and had lost her reason.

Maximilian prepared to join the army. Then followed the fall of Puebla after a desperate resistance by the French Mexican troops. The marching out of the city of the French troops deserting Maximilian we all felt that it was shameful. I can remember watching the troops passing down Plateros— no arches— no flowers, it was like a funeral procession, not a salute was given, they passed in silence that was ominous. Their arrival and departure were scenes so dissimilar that one could scarcely realize that it was the same troops. My father said that in the rougher part

of town they were hissed and passed out of sight amidst hoots, yells, and many ugly epithets.

Maximilian left the city to the guardianship of Señor O'Horan. Diaz was advancing toward the city, Escobedo advancing towards Querétaro, Maximilian en route to Querétaro. General Lopez commanded Maximilian's troops

and it is he who sold them accepting a bribe of some thousands of dollars which was never paid. Maximilian was on horseback in the act of leaving Querétaro when General Escobedo intercepted him and Maximilian surrendered. We received the news two days later. It filled the hearts of everyone with horror. Food was so scarce that everyone, rich and poor suffered. My father had laid in stores of corn and carbon months before, our friends begged for help, which had to be refused, it was very trying.

Porfirio Diaz entered the city and Marquez tried to make terms and failed. Many of our friends were arrested and all of the adherents of the crown were under arrest. Many were shot, many exiled. My father, an American citizen was unmolested and we sailed from Veracruz to New Orleans one week after the arrest of Maximilian at Querétaro. From dear friends we received the last news of Maximilian. Of the large sums of money offered by those faithful to him for his release, and permission to depart in peace for Europe. The Princess Salm Salm went on her knees to Juárez begging for his life. He replied, "If Jesus Christ would ask for his life he would refuse it."

“ Food was so scarce that everyone, rich and poor suffered. My father had laid in stores of corn and carbon months before, our friends begged for help, which had to be refused, it was very trying.

His farce of a trial lasted but a few hours. Maximilian with his two faithful Generals Miramón & Mejía were condemned to be shot at daylight July 19th 1867. An example was needed by Juárez and he chose the highest to wreak out a vengeance which was unmerited by Maximilian, the dupe of an intriguing party.

Three large stone pillars mark the place of execution. The Austrian colony afterwards built a handsome chapel on the site. The marble pillars in front of the altar represent Maximilian and his two generals.

When I was in New York City in 1878 I met Señora Clotilde Borch de Cerda and her daughter the famous Esmeralda Cervantes, the beautiful harpist. In a conversation with Señora Cerda she told me of meeting and talking to Carlota at Trieste. Señora Cerda was sketching the Castle of Miramar one morning outside of the gates, for permission to enter was refused everyone. While sketching, a lady and gentleman drove through the gates and as she was quite close Carlota spoke to her asking of her sketch which she seemed to like was for sale. Señora Cerda replied, "That it was simply for her own pleasure." Carlota asked her why she did not sketch inside of the park that the view from the other side [of the] castle was

“ Her favorite amusement seemed to be to sit by one of the marble ponds where beautiful swans floated, playing with the water like a child.

more beautiful. Señora Cerda replied that, "she had asked for permission to sketch but that it had been refused." Carlota turned quickly and asked "who gave those orders" the gentleman, her physician replied. "You, your

majesty." Señora Cerda had not until then known to whom she was speaking, she quickly saluted her majesty who smiled at her evident embarrassment. She said. "I will leave instructions that you be admitted every day during your stay here señora." She then drove towards Trieste.

Señora Cerda accepted the kind permission of Carlota and sketched there for many days in which she often saw her majesty, who always seemed to remember her, and greeted her kindly often asking her to have tea or some light refreshment. Her favorite amusement seemed [to be] to sit by one of the marble ponds where beautiful swans floated, playing with the water like a child. Her appearance was that of a sad, lonely woman her talk was somewhat disconnected. She was still beautiful and seemed to care much for her pretty toilettes, being always artistically dressed. She was always attended by her physician or a lady attendant.

One day she came up to Señora Cerda holding in her hand a beautiful gold pencil saying, “You are going back to Mexico and I want you to have this pencil, it is very nice for drawing.” It was beautifully engraved, and had in end an emerald of large size on one side — M —

One of her ladies in waiting, Señora Otilia [also known as Cordelia] Degollado, is now in Europe. She went to Belgium to pay Carlota a last visit. All are old now and soon all of those connected with the short reign of Maximilian in Mexico will have passed away.



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