

now to be a foregone conclusion that the Imperialist cause would come to a speedy end, the capitulation of Vera Cruz was but a question of time, and the interests of all concerned would evidently be best served by bringing that about as promptly as possible. While possibly not expressing himself exactly in the words of Macbeth, Captain Roe soon became actuated by the thought that "if it were done, when 't is done, then 't were well if it were done quickly." And he bent all his energies towards hastening the apparently inevitable.

One of the first steps towards this would be to open communication with the Liberal forces, having already free intercourse with the Imperialist authorities. In this he was met more than half way by General Barranda, who was in immediate command of the investing army, under the department commander, General Benavides, an officer of distinction who, during our civil war, served in the Army of the Potomac under General McClellan. A couple of days after the "Tacony's" arrival the former sent word off that he would like to communicate, and was answered that Captain Roe would be glad to have him do so, and would accommodate himself to any arrangement he might be pleased to make. So on the morning of the 3d of April the General came on board, bearing polite messages from Benavides. This introductory visit was one principally of compliment and courtesy to

the United States flag, as representing the only friend among nations to the Republic of Mexico. He brought the latest news from the interior, and told of the capture of Puebla by General Escobedo after a severe fight; every one was confident that peace would soon be restored. In regard to the operations in the immediate vicinity of Vera Cruz, their plan was to harass the Imperialist forces as much as possible in the hopes of inducing a surrender, but it was not General Benavides' intention to bombard or even assault the city; to capture it, without obtaining possession of the castle of San Juan, would be useless, as the guns of the latter would make it untenable and might destroy it.

The main feature of General Barranda's visit, so far as ward-room interest was concerned, was the expression of a desire on his part that the "Tacony" should send an occasional boat to Boca del Rio, the mouth of a small stream about five miles below, so that he could communicate with them; and, as all resources were cut off from Vera Cruz, he would be glad to avail himself of such opportunity to send off fresh provisions for the officers and crew. It is perhaps needless to say that his request was acceded to. Just before that, on the occasion of a steamer arriving in the harbor, the ship's log bore the entry "Sent boat to steamer for Potatoes." What volumes were spoken by that capital P!

The offer was duly substantiated, and an occasional boat-load of fresh food was hailed with joy by the ship's company. Through the kindness of the Liberal officers the unexpected luxury of having some washing done also added to the ward-room happiness. It was soon arranged that the boat should go in on this errand regularly on Tuesdays and Fridays if the weather permitted; if not, on the succeeding day. It was also settled that all communications from Commander Roe should be forwarded at once by special courier to the city of Mexico, or to the head-quarters of President Juarez. As the ship was in plain sight from Camp Casa Mata, the United States ensign hoisted at the main truck was agreed upon as a signal that a boat was about to leave with the desire of communicating; whereupon an escort, with led horses, would be sent down to the beach to meet the boat and accompany the officers to head-quarters. Acting-Master John McGowan, the navigating officer, was deputed for this duty, with Midshipman Rich usually in charge of the boat. They were also accompanied, as a rule, by Mr. Melville, the chief engineer of the ship, who, having accepted the thankless office of caterer of the ward-room mess, did his best in this way to discharge his trust. This officer was the same that has since achieved such renown as an Arctic explorer. *Soit dit en passant* there was another future Arctic hero in

the little fleet anchored off Vera Cruz, in the person of Lieutenant Weyprecht of the Austrian Navy. He was the navigator of the "Elizabeth," and used often to meet Mr. McGowan on Sacrificios Island, where, with sextants and artificial mercurial horizons, they would take observations to establish the rates of their chronometers.

The visits of the sailing launch to Boca del Rio were a pleasant break in the monotony of life in that barren place. The first thing on reaching head-quarters was to sit down to a generous breakfast (comparatively speaking), which was most acceptable, as the party would have to leave the ship at six in the morning, so as to try to get back before the sea breeze set in, and would generally reach the camp at about ten. General Benavides would always insist that breakfast came first and business afterwards, and it was under the genial influence of subsequent cigars that the mail would be read and matters be discussed.

Pleasant as were those trips, they were not unattended with risk, however, as the bar of the river was a shifting one, and there was always more or less surf on it. On one occasion the launch struck heavily and half filled with water, and it looked for a time as though the occupants would have to swim for it and take their chances with the sharks; fortunately they succeeded in keeping her pointed straight, and crossed the bar with no further damage

than a good wetting. Another danger lay in the capriciousness of the weather, *northers* springing up frequently without the usual warning, and making it extremely difficult to come out of the river mouth; this done, there remained hours of heavy pulling dead to windward to reach the ship. Once they were able to afford assistance to others more helpless than themselves. It was blowing fresh, with the wind increasing, and they saw a sail-boat inshore of them making signals of distress. Running down there, they found it to be a native boat that had left the Boca an hour before them to take Colonel McLean and his wife (who was a daughter of General Sumner of the U. S. Army), and Major Howell, of Richmond, Va., off to the "Tacony." These gentlemen, who had fought on the losing side in the civil war, had gone to Mexico after the collapse of the Confederacy, and, becoming disgusted, were now trying to reach the United States again. They were taken into the launch, which, after a hard pull, succeeded in reaching the *dulce domum* gun-boat at half-past eleven that evening. There is no doubt that their little boat would soon have swamped had not the launch taken them off. They were afterwards sent up to the city, and, through the exertions of Mr. Saulnier, the U. S. Consul, were permitted to take passage in a Spanish steamer which sailed shortly afterwards for Havana.

Having succeeded in establishing intercourse and pleasant relations with the Liberal officers, Commander Roe appreciated that a next desirable move would be to gain the entire confidence of the commanders of the other men-of-war present. They were all courteous in their manner, but seeing this frequent communication with the besieging army, coupled with the known and greatly exaggerated sympathy of the United States government for the Mexican Republic, they were naturally inclined to let the Yankee act on his own initiative, distrusting his orders somewhat, and certainly feeling no desire to become entangled in the complications he might bring about. Complications were the last things that the American desired; while, on the other hand, there was no telling when concerted action by all might be needed to preserve life and property of foreign residents in Vera Cruz. This could not be without perfect accord, and to favor this he hit upon a step that was singular but successful. Pulling alongside the "Jason" one fine morning, he asked Captain Aynesley if he would allow him the use of his cabin the next day, and invite all the other captains to meet him there. "Why, yes, certainly, my dear fellow," was the Englishman's hearty answer, although he certainly could have had no idea of the object of the request. The invitation was sent out, and the next morning at the appointed hour the various gigs of the little

fleet could be seen pulling to the "Jason,"—all but the Austrian. Last of all came the "Tacony's." Entering the cabin, Captain Roe addressed the assembled officers, saying that they had been called together at his request, as he wished to read his orders to them. And he read them. Their pith was in the following paragraph: "The duty you are charged with is to exercise a general supervision over American interests, and you are referred to the President's proclamation in response to the decree of Maximilian declaring a blockade of Mexican ports, for your guidance."*

* President Johnson's proclamation was as follows:

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

A PROCLAMATION.

Whereas, A war is existing in the Republic of Mexico, aggravated by foreign military intervention; and

Whereas, The United States, in accordance with their settled habits and policy, are a neutral power in regard to the war which thus afflicts the Republic of Mexico; and

Whereas, It has been known that one of the belligerents in the said war,—namely, the Prince Maximilian, who asserts himself to be Emperor of Mexico,—has issued a decree in regard to the port of Matamoras and other Mexican ports, which are now in the occupation and possession of another of the said belligerents—namely, the United States of Mexico,—which decree is in the following words:

"The port of Matamoras and all those of the northern frontier which have withdrawn from their obedience to the government, are closed to foreign and coasting traffic during such time as the empire of the law shall not be therein reinstated.

"ARTICLE II.—Merchandise proceeding from said ports, on arriving at any other where the excise of the Empire is collected, shall pay the duties on importation, introduction, and consumption, and on satisfactory proof of contravention, shall be irremissibly confiscated. Our Minister of the Treasury is charged with the punctual execution of this decree.

"Now, gentlemen," said Captain Roe, "those are my written orders, and I give you my word that I have none unwritten."

Captain Aynesley immediately jumped up, exclaiming that his were practically the same, and he produced them. The French officer made a similar reply, regretting that he had not brought his with him. They were all there on the same mission; the fact that the governments of all but the American had acknowledged the Empire in Mexico in place of the Republic did not materially influence the main object of their presence, which was to simply watch over the interests of their individ-

"Given at Mexico, the 9th day of July, 1866."

And whereas, The decree thus recited, by declaring a belligerent blockade, unsupported by competent military or naval force, is a violation of the neutral rights of the United States as defined by the law of nations, as well as of the treaties existing between the United States of America and the aforesaid United States of Mexico. Now, therefore, I, Andrew Johnson, President of the United States, do hereby proclaim and declare that the aforesaid decree is held and will be held by the United States to be absolutely null and void as against the government and citizens of the United States, and that any attempt which shall be made to enforce the same against the government and citizens of the United States will be disallowed.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the city of Washington, the 17th day of August, in the year of our Lord 1866, and of the independence of the United States of America the ninety-first.

ANDREW JOHNSON.

By the President.

WM. H. SEWARD, Secretary of State.

This proclamation defined to Captain Roe the position taken by the United States in regard to the war in Mexico.

ual countrymen. Captain Gröller's orders, of the "Elizabeth," were generally known to be of a more personal nature in regard to the Archduke Maximilian, and it was regretted that he had not accepted the invitation to be present, as he, more than others, might have dubious feelings toward the American man-of-war.

There was some little amusement during this meeting, at the expense of the Spanish captain, who apparently could not be made to understand what it was all about. "Try him in Greek, Pritz-buer," they cried, when he had exhausted the resources of almost all European languages; but it was all in vain, and that gallant officer probably does not know to this day what he was called on board the "Jason" for.

By this rather unconventional proceeding, Captain Roe gained the point of allaying any suspicions that might exist as to the "Tacony's" true mission, and it was felt that if the emergency arose they would all be in perfect accord in whatever action might be deemed necessary.

The customary routine of a man-of-war was soon established,—regular drills, with occasional target practice, boats periodically called away "armed and equipped," and preparations made for sending off a small expeditionary force. Bathing parties also went frequently to one of the islands to enjoy the luxury that the sharks forbade at the anchor-

age. Thanks also to the fresh meat and vegetables so courteously provided, the health of the "Tacony's" crew remained perfect. In this respect they were far better off than their colleagues, though Roe did not at all detract from his popularity with the other captains by sending to each an occasional savory beefsteak.

The frequent trips of the "Tacony's" launch to the shore did not fail to cause distrust among the Imperialist authorities, who had been surprised at the outset by General Barranda's visit to the ship; and they soon began to manifest some curiosity regarding the strictness of the American's neutrality. When the subject was broached to the consul, he replied that an American vessel-of-war was free to receive visits from all nations, from the officers of the Juarist government, or from the gentlemen in power in Vera Cruz, if they desired to hold any intercourse. At the same time he notified the commander of the "Tacony," who returned assurances that he would maintain the most honorable neutrality, but that he held the right to communicate with Vera Cruz, Boca del Rio, Tampico, or any other part of the coast. At the same time American residents in the city were cautioned to be particularly guarded in expressions of opinion, and to do nothing that could give umbrage to the ruling authorities.

This did not seem to satisfy Señor Bureau,

however, for a steamer called the "Tabasco" was fitted out and armed, and on the 9th came down to Sacrificios and anchored near the "Tacony." Roe immediately wrote to Mr. Saulnier that it would be well to let the Imperial Commissary understand thoroughly his intention to maintain his rights. "If the 'Tabasco' attempts to interfere with our boats, there will be trouble." He added that he proposed sending the boat in at seven the next morning. This was done and the boat was not interfered with, but the captain of the "Tabasco" sent a pronunciamiento on board forbidding any further communication with the Liberal camp. A similar document was delivered to each of the other vessels, although up to that time the American was the only one that had so offended. "*C'est grandiose, n'est-ce pas?*" remarked the Frenchman, with a good-natured shrug.

Roe's reply was as follows :

U. S. S. TACONY,
SACRIFICIOS, MEXICO, April 10, 1867.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of your communication of the 9th inst.

Ships of war of the United States will observe the neutrality of nations between belligerents.

Boats from this ship will occasionally visit Boca del Rio for the purpose of procuring supplies of which we may have need. But in all cases the flag of the United States will be carried.

I have the honor to be, sir, very respectfully your obedient servant,

[Signed,]

F. A. ROE,

Commander U. S. N., Commanding U. S. Naval Forces, Mexico.

Commander ANDRE SATELO,

Commanding Imperial Corvette "Tabasco," off Sacrificios Island.

The fact that the "Tacony's" battery was in an evident state of preparation when the launch left, probably accounted for no attempt being made to stop her, and there seemed to be no reason to fear any trouble from the "Tabasco" after that. The trips were made as usual, and the supply of provisions was kept up; and furthermore, at nearly every trip the launch brought off a number of Americans, mostly Southerners, who were trying to get home, and could find no way out of the country, excepting with the "Tacony's" aid.

Only on one occasion did the Mexican gun-boat make any overt act. Captain Aynesley had become very anxious to send his boat in also, to bring off English refugees as well as to get some fresh provisions, and at his request Roe had sent to ask permission of General Benavides for him to do so. The request was granted, with the stipulation that an American officer should accompany each boat. So one day the "Jason's" twelve-oared cutter went to the usual meeting-place in charge of Lieutenant Moore, R.N., and Acting-Master McGowan, who was familiar with the ground, accompanied him, in

compliance with General Benavides' stipulation. Lieutenant Moore was furthermore instructed by his commanding officer to consult with the American officer, and profit by his advice in the matter of bringing off refugees. There were as usual quite a number of applicants for assistance on the beach, and soon after hauling the boat up a gentleman introduced himself as General Joe Shelby, stating that he and five others—colonels—whom he presented, were anxious to get to Vera Cruz, so as to return to the United States. Lieutenant Moore cheerfully acquiesced in McGowan's proposal to take them off. Later in the day, an Englishman, with his wife, child, and maid, appeared and asked to be taken off too. The cutter could not hold all, and yet it would have been rather hard to say no, particularly as six Americans had been told that they could go. So after a consultation, it was decided that the passengers should charter a large sail-boat, that McGowan should hoist the United States ensign over her, and that he, with General Shelby and friends, should go in her, while the English officer would take his party in the cutter. They got across the bar all right, and started for the ships, but soon saw the "Tabasco" steaming towards them. The cutter was about a mile ahead, and to windward of the sail-boat, and the Mexicans in the latter, seeing the actions of the steamer, crawled under the tarpaulins, and could not be in-

duced to come out. General Shelby asked what was the matter, and on being told, replied: "Well, Lieutenant, if there is going to be a row, just count us in." His offer was thankfully accepted, and revolvers were prepared for use. The English cutter, however, pluckily ran down for them before the wind, the blue-jackets having their carbines in hand, and the gun-boat, seeing that offensive action would bring both the "Jason" and "Tacony" down upon her, sheered off, and our friends went on their way rejoicing.

This General Shelby was the celebrated cavalry leader in the Confederate army, of whom it has been said, that had he remained loyal to his country, he would have been Sheridan's stoutest rival. Like so many others of that service, on hearing of Lee's and Johnston's surrenders, he had retired to Mexico. Crossing the Rio Grande at the head of a well-appointed troop of five hundred men, he had marched southward, selling the arms and gradually disbanding the force, and had finally settled in Princess Carlotta's colony at Cordova. It seemed indeed a caprice of fate that it should be under the protection of the United States flag that he was finally able to leave the unhappy country that he had tried to adopt in place of his own.

The shore boat was sent back to the beach with a prize crew, accompanied by the sailing launch with a twelve-pounder howitzer in the bows. The

"Tabasco" made no attempt to molest them, and after that day she did not interfere in any way with the English or American boats, which were the only ones that were permitted to approach the shore. Captain Roe had in vain interceded with General Benavides to allow Captain Pritzbuier to send in for French subjects who were in distress and wished to leave the country. The Frenchman naturally felt that in view of the recent relations that had existed between his country and the Mexican Republic, he was hardly in position to ask any favors of the Liberals. France had not concluded a peace with Juarez (in point of fact war had never actually been declared), but had only withdrawn her national forces from the support of the foreign prince whom she had tried to establish upon the ruins of an independent government. The relations were practically the same, and therefore Pritzbuier had even more cause than Aynesley to let Roe take the initiative, so far as his action might not conflict with his sense of duty. There were citizens of France, however, as of almost all nations, that managed to reach the coast and needed help to get away, and his feeling for his fellow-countryman prompted him to apply to Roe in an extremely courteous manner to help him. Captain Roe immediately wrote a letter, representing that in view of the nature of the request and the deferential manner in which it was

made, through him, he would venture to suggest the eminent propriety of complying with it. "This French commander," he added, "is very friendly with us, and more friendly to you than you possibly know."

The answer received was such as might be expected from an officer whose country had received such desperate injury from the nation represented by the commander of the "Phlégéton"; but it was such as could only have been dictated by a kind-hearted man who could not wish to see innocent people suffer from the fault of their emperor. While refusing to permit the French flag to approach the shore, he was willing that the "Tacony's" boats should come for the French refugees and deliver them to the care of their consul in Vera Cruz. This, Roe did not feel called upon to do. In his position there, under orders to protect United States citizens, he might perhaps have been willing to enter thus largely into a matter purely of philanthropy, but for the very presence of a war vessel belonging to the nation interested; that modified the situation. Moreover, the great labor that would have been imposed upon his officers and men by acceding to the proposition was more than he felt justified in assuming. Incidentally, however, many subjects of the hated country were befriended and helped away by both Americans and English, inquiries into nationality being, perhaps purposely, none too rigid.

Captain Roe had to end that little batch of correspondence by an official request of a rather unusual character. He had been enjoying some of the luxuries of life with uninterrupted regularity since a few days after their arrival. Those contributions to bodily welfare had been sent so far as a gift, and, as he expressed it to General Benavides, it was just possible that the Navy Department might embarrass him by asking why those things had not been paid for. "And so, may I beg of you, dear General Benavides, to order your people to receive remuneration in money for the beef we receive in return."

CHAPTER III.

By the end of April affairs in Mexico appeared to be approaching a final solution, so far as news from the interior could be relied upon. The outer defences of the city of Mexico had fallen, and rumors of a definite shape, although not official, affirmed the flight of Maximilian to Texas. Of course, this was not the case. That unfortunate Prince was closely beleaguered in Querétaro, and great fears were entertained for his safety. The Austrian Minister in Washington, in obedience to instructions from his court, had already begun to communicate with Mr. Seward, asking his friendly intervention to secure, if possible, respect for the person of the Prince in the not improbable event of his falling into the hands of Juarez.

There seemed indeed cause for fears that in case of capture he might not escape with the treatment usually accorded to prisoners of war. To those on the scene this appeared a very much more dubious matter than was even apprehended by the shrewd and anxious statesmen and monarchs of the new and old worlds. In Camp Casa Mata, the head-quarters of General Benavides, there was displayed a small