

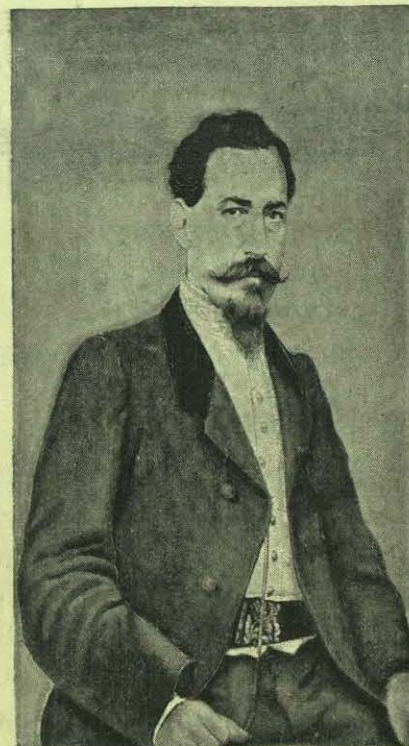
immediate action. The proposition was that Captain Gröller, as naval aide-de-camp to Maximilian, should go up to the city that night and demand the written authority of Governor Bureau to offer the immediate surrender of Vera Cruz and the castle of San Juan to General Benavides, on the single condition that the person of the Prince, alive and unharmed, should be delivered on the deck of the gun-boat "Tacony."

It was long past midnight when the English captain reached the gangway of the "Elizabeth." A short but impressive interview took place between him and the Austrian officer, and the plan of the American commander was received eagerly and with gratitude. Then while the tedious hours of the midwatch were slowly passing, another boat was lowered from the davit-heads and another captain might be seen threading his way through the reefs in the still, star-lit night, towards the invested city. This was a busy and a sleepless night for those three naval captains working to save the life of a Prince hundreds of miles away. As the "Jason's" gig pulled alongside of her own ship, the "Tacony's" boat was lying manned at the same gangway, her commander anxiously awaiting the return from the Austrian frigate. A few words were exchanged and these two officers once more separated and retired to their own beds, though not to sleep, until the return of the Austrian from Vera Cruz.

It was seven o'clock in the morning when the "Elizabeth's" barge was seen coming back towards the anchorage. Rounding-to alongside the "Tacony," the tall, athletic form of the Austrian aide-de-camp stepped over the gangway, and raising his cap received in silence the greeting of the American commander. "The Imperial Governor is a traitor," he finally exclaimed. "He is a traitor, and my Prince put him there." The two captains retired to the little cabin to breakfast, and it was there the story was told. It had been a violent and stormy night at the palace. Count von Gröller had made his propositions, had argued for their acceptance, had pleaded with passion as the only hope of saving the Prince's life. The Governor remaining inflexible and deaf to all entreaties, he had finally *demand*ed the surrender of the city and defences on the one simple condition offered. Hot and high words ensued, and swords were drawn, peace only being restored through the interference of the attendants in the palace. But the effort failed. The name of the fallen emperor was now insufficient to arouse the loyalty of his own officer. The attempt had been gallantly made, but was unsuccessful.

In the light of subsequent revelations it seems more than probable that the proposition, if it had been made by Bureau, would have been rejected by President Juarez, as Vera Cruz, as well as the city

of Mexico, was closely invested without possibility of aid from any quarter, and could not long hold out against the increased forces that would soon be brought to bear. Nourishing a persistent hope, however, that the Imperial Commissary would return to a sense of duty and loyalty, and make a final effort to save his Emperor, Captain Roe and Mr. McGowan went on shore to confer with General Benavides and ask his opinion as to the possibility of any such terms being accepted, and whether or not he would forward a proposition of that or similar nature. It was represented that Mexico did not possess within her own borders sufficient resources to make her independent of the rest of the world, and that it would be better for her to renew friendly relations with foreign powers, and far best to have Austria for a friend in the future. On the subject being first broached the General drew himself up and exclaimed: "We want nothing from any country except the United States. Maximilian has been a robber and a murderer, and as such let him die." Subduing his passion, however, he read over the propositions and afterwards said that while it was very doubtful the President would accept the terms, he still might possibly entertain them; for it was true, as pointed out, that Vera Cruz was the key to the hopes of the city of Mexico, and its surrender would instantly be followed by the fall of the capital. The possession by Juarez of Vera Cruz, the one port of import-



GENERAL BENAVIDES.

ance, with its custom-house receipts, had now become of vital interest to him for financial reasons, as was the capture of the capital for political reasons.

But it all came to nought. The offer was never made. As had been said by Count Gröller, Bureau was a traitor. Appreciating the fact now that his Prince had friends among the other men-of-war more active than he had any right to hope, the Austrian captain moved his ship in from the outer anchorage where he had remained isolated so long, and took up a berth near the other vessels.

In reporting all this to the Secretary of the Navy, by a steamer opportunely leaving for Havana, Captain Roe weighed upon the great desirability of Minister Campbell's presence at his post. Unfortunately, and for reasons not connected with the thread of this story, that diplomatic officer failed to reach the seat of the Juarist government, and the United States remained unrepresented in Mexico, except by the staunch body of consuls, who reflected such credit on their cloth and their country.

The steamer taking this report had hardly gone, however, before Señor Bureau, repenting his many vacillations, expressed a desire to parley again, and submitted to the United States and British consuls certain general terms for the surrender of the city. These terms he requested them to propose personally to General Benavides, asking that the naval commanders should accompany them. A note from

the "Tacony" secured the necessary escort with led horses, and on the morning of the 20th of May this little cavalcade appeared in Camp Casa Mata, and the almost threadbare subject was again broached to the Mexican commander-in-chief. With perfect courtesy that officer listened to the proposals, and accepted them in substance, stating in writing the basis of a negotiation into which he was willing to enter. Up went the peaceful emblem of a truce to the "Tacony's" mast-head, and for three days hostilities were suspended,—only to be renewed again, in consequence of Bureau's failing to meet his adversary as agreed.

Rumors of various kinds, probably shaped to meet the occasion, had reached him, and he alleged that he was not satisfied as to the truth of the report of Maximilian's capture, and would need further confirmation of the fact. Such confirmation probably did not fail to reach him, but with the stubbornness that had characterized his whole line of conduct he clung to the city and to the custom-house, until it dawned upon him somewhat suddenly that he had delayed capitulation too long; that the Foreign Legion of mercenaries had reached such a stage of discontent as to be hardly controllable. He therefore addressed repeated and urgent solicitations to the two consuls to visit him once more. They finally acceded to his request, and he declared his willingness now to accept the terms that had been

offered, and begged them to convey the announcement of it to General Benavides. He still retained sufficient authority, he said, to make a peaceful surrender possible, and it was his desire now to be relieved of the charge of the city and fortifications.

The consuls were getting rather tired of being humbugged so often, and felt rather dubious as to the success of their mission; but spurred on by the fear of a general insurrection in the city, and anxious to render such good offices as the interests of suffering humanity demanded, they once more went down to the fleet, and were set on shore abreast of the camp. General Benavides, preserving his equanimity, ratified completely the terms that he had proposed, and which were now so eagerly asked by the Imperialist, and ceased firing from his batteries. The city forts, strange to say, opened again with more than usual activity for a short while at sunset. This may have been through some mistake or misunderstanding; or it may have been intentional, for effect, to show that their powers of resistance were not at an end; or, lastly, it may very possibly have been due to the inability of the officers to enforce their orders. Bureau expressed himself as much pleased, but said he would require a little time to win the officers over to his wishes. This was apparently true, and no objection was made; but most unfortunate was that enforced delay, for, during the interim, on the 3d of June, an entirely new coloring

was put on affairs by the arrival of the American mail steamer "Virginia," with no less a person on board than General Antonio Lopez de Santa Ana, with a staff of five officers.

The wholly unexpected arrival of this man caused consternation in the minds of all who were familiar with his history and revolutionary proclivities, and above all at this critical juncture, when he might undo all that had been accomplished, not only in Vera Cruz, but throughout all Mexico. A subaltern in the Spanish army in 1821, during the first war for Mexican independence, he was quickly induced to espouse the cause of his native land, and in 1824 first came into prominence as the governor of the Yucatan peninsula, at the age of twenty-six; nine years later, elected President by the Liberal party, the first organization of the kind in the country, but, after a short voluntary retirement, heading a successful revolution against his own Vice-President, and then governing as a virtual dictator in the interests of the church and the army; exiled in 1837 for trying, while prisoner to the Texans, to negotiate a treaty recognizing the independence of that State,—the beginning of Santa Ana's political career was eloquent as an exponent of his turbulent character. Amnestied, he relapsed into obscurity until the French attack on the castle of San Juan de Uloa gave him an opportunity, when, in December, 1838, he once

more came into prominence as the heroic defender of Vera Cruz, the loss of a leg in that fight adding to his prestige. Provisional President and then Dictator until deposed in 1844, tried for treason and banished for ten years; President again by popular movement when the war broke out with the United States, but compelled to fly for his life in 1848 in consequence of the unfortunate termination of that war; recalled again in 1853 by another revolution and made Dictator,—his name was indeed most intimately and painfully associated with the recent history of his distracted country, and the versatility of his political faith seemed almost without a parallel in modern history. The twenty years that had then elapsed since his first inauguration (by Liberal votes) had sufficed to enable him to become as despotic as he had once sworn to be constitutional. He arrogated to himself the title of Serene Highness for life, with power to name his successor. But that glory was short-lived. The standard of revolt was soon raised, and a serious insurrection broke out. Then did he perpetrate the crime that proved to be the death-blow to his own ambitions,—in giving (July, 1854) to Don José Gutierrez de Estrada* full powers to “negotiate with the courts of London, Paris, Madrid, and Vienna, and to make due

* The same ambassador who ten years later headed the deputation that waited on the Archduke Maximilian to offer him the Imperial throne of Mexico.

efforts to obtain from those governments, or any one of them, the establishment of a monarchy derived from one of the dynastic houses of those powers.” This step precipitated his ruin; driven out of the country, he was tried once more for high treason, and, being absent, was sentenced to confiscation of all his landed property. Eight years of exile seemed to kill the patriotism once his glory, and in February, 1864, landing in Vera Cruz, he wrote to the Imperial Under Secretary of War stating that he returned to Mexico “to co-operate in the consolidation of the government created by the Intervention.” But the Imperialist party declined his offers and refused to permit him to remain in the country. Retiring then to the United States he kept badgering President Juarez with entreaties to be allowed to help defend his native land against the invaders. His country could ill afford, however, to accept such help, as was quite plainly expressed by Señor Lerdo de Tejada, the Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs. In the closing part of a despatch from this gentleman to Mr. Romero, after touching upon the General's many vacillations, he used the following language:

“Although the government might wish to place in him [Santa Ana] some confidence, it does not believe it possible that it would also be felt by the defenders of the national cause.

“In order not to believe in his new protests of

patriotism, they would repeat that he has violated before all his oaths, and that he has broken before his most solemn engagements.

"In order not to believe his new protests of loyalty to the Republic, they would repeat the charges that have been made, that as an officer he has been disloyal to all the governments that have employed him; that as the head of the government he has been disloyal to all the parties who have aided him to power; and that as a Mexican he has lately been disloyal to the cause of his country.

"For these considerations the President of the Republic does not believe it compatible with his duty to admit the offer which Mr. Santa Ana has now sought to make of his services. Nor does he believe that his manifestations and protests of patriotism can be in any manner considered as sufficient to relieve him from the very grave charges which exist against him.

"Señor Santa Ana having asked you to transmit to the government his communication, you will be pleased to transmit to him this reply."

Still unabashed, this political mountebank then, in August, 1866, addressed himself to the United States government, saying that the crisis in Mexico had arrived at a climax, and that he could no longer remain inactive, and not endeavor to contribute towards the salvation of his country. In a letter to

Mr. Seward, he stated that he relied upon his assistance in this undertaking, where the interests of a sister Republic were at stake, and when the time had come to strike the decisive blow for the expulsion of foreign intruders and the tyrannical domination of France. One paragraph in this letter perhaps showed the not wholly disinterested purpose which swayed him. "Should we now succeed in our endeavors, and once more see Mexico free, *and my countrymen reinstate me in the highest position within their gift*, it would afford me the greatest pleasure to reciprocate all your kindness, and show my gratitude to your government with a liberal hand."

Mr. Seward's frigid reply speaks for itself.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
WASHINGTON, August 16, 1866.

The Secretary of State has had the honor to receive from General de Santa Ana, formerly President of Mexico, a communication, in which he states that he wishes to visit Washington, and that he would be pleased to know if he will be received as a private gentleman by the Secretary of State.

The distinguished gentleman is hereby informed that, inasmuch as his attitude towards the Republican government of Mexico, with which the United States maintain diplomatic intercourse, is pronounced by the President of Mexico to be unfriendly towards the government of the Republic, a reception of the General, in any character, at the present time, by the Secretary of State, would be

incompatible with the settled practice and habits of the executive department of the United States.

[Signed,] WILLIAM H. SEWARD.

Don Antonio Lopez de Santa Ana, New York.

Such was the self-established character and consequent political status of this celebrated man. Denied on all sides, his every overture sternly rejected, he now appeared suddenly upon the scene of conflict between two parties, to both of whom he had offered his sword, and by both of whom he had been spurned. His frequent and unblushing apostasy certainly made his ultimate intentions ambiguous, and his popular reputation as a soldier made his presence all the more dangerous.

The "Virginia" went to the inner harbor and anchored, and that same evening General Perez Gomez, a friend and adherent of his, who was in command of the castle of San Juan de Uloa, invited him to come there to remain until proper arrangements could be made for a grand reception in the city. Santa Ana accepted the invitation and repaired to the castle, where the regimental band played a march of welcome, and the garrison shouted, "*Viva el general Santa Ana.*"

Before going, however, he had invited Señor Bureau to a conference on board the "Virginia," which was accepted; and to him and to the general-in-chief, Don Antonio Taboada, who was also present, he put forth the idea of setting up a Republic in place

of the tottering Empire, stating that he came under American protection. No immediate answer was given, but a council of war was called, which met at ten that evening in the City Hall, and it was there decided not to allow the general to land. He had overreached himself in asserting that the American government sustained him. The opinions emitted were practically unanimous, even those who favored his claims personally rejecting the idea of fighting with American soldiers against the cause they were then upholding. General Taboada, commanding all the military forces in the city, said that the arrival of Santa Ana, under American protection, had aggravated the situation; his duty as a soldier was to defend the Imperial government even to the shedding of the last drop of his blood, and if the decision should be to accept the new proposals, he would resign his command and go abroad. Don Eduardo Soudriet, Lieut.-Colonel of the City Guards, said that so soon as Santa Ana should land at the head of American soldiers, his command was at an end. Lieutenant-Colonel Jorge Murcia said that General Santa Ana held the hearts of the garrison as a leader in the War of Independence, but that he (Murcia) could not agree to his bringing American soldiers there. Don Eduardo Figuerero, Colonel of the Vera Cruz cavalry, stated that he highly esteemed General Santa Ana, but he rejected the idea of fighting against the Empire with soldiers brought

from the United States. Don Tomas Marin, in command of the naval division of Vera Cruz, Tuxpan, and Tehuantepec, said: "I am totally disgusted with General Santa Ana, on account of his abandoning the country in 1855; but I would rather fall into his hands than into those of demagogues, although I distrust his good faith on account of the protection given him by the American government." General Santiago Cuevas, of the artillery, maintained that the general should not be allowed to land since he was backed by American soldiers; said he: "Our country has already felt one foreign intervention and should be spared any more." And so on.

A *norther* was blowing on the 4th, which prevented communication with the shipping or the port; but on the 5th, the commander of the castle and a part of the garrison were temporarily removed, General Santa Ana was sent back on board the "Virginia," and the consuls notified that he would be sent back out of the country in her.

Santa Ana then sought and obtained a visit from Mr. Saulnier, whom he entertained with a long discourse on his plans, saying that after interviews with President Johnson and Mr. Seward, at their solicitation he had come to Vera Cruz, Prince Maximilian having offered to deliver the government of the country to him. All of this Mr. Saulnier declined to accept, but informed Captain Roe of it, adding that he could not believe that the government was

disposed at such a late day to disavow Juarez, or that it would give countenance to such filibusterism. In this, the commander cordially agreed with him. It is not probable that either of them knew of the application to Mr. Seward for material and moral assistance, or of his declining to listen to such overtures; but they were well aware of the general's turbulent character, and the subversive effect of his partisanship on any cause that he espoused; and they certainly knew that such an extraordinary step would never have been taken by the United States government without notification of it having reached them. So not for an instant did they put any faith in such assertions.

The "Tacony" had now stayed several days longer than prudence dictated, in view of the shortness of her rations and the passage to Pensacola. But all the consuls, as well as General Benavides, begged Roe to hold on a little longer; even the Imperial governor earnestly requested him to wait a few days, urging that in case of opposition by the Foreign Legion to his effecting a surrender, he would have to call upon the American and English ships to come up and support the movement mutually agreed upon by him and the Liberal general.

Although Santa Ana was kept on board the "Virginia," the members of his staff frequently went on shore and great popular excitement ensued. Those officers played their cards so well that it was finally