

one would have thought to behold a Spanish soldier of the time of Charles V.

After the presentations, which were conducted with a formality that seemed strangely at variance with the surrounding scenes and circumstances, he announced that he had come to offer up the town to the body of consuls, whom he requested to form a provisional government, and turning to Captain Roe, said that to him would he surrender the castle of San Juan de Uloa. The Empire was at an end, the Emperor had been murdered, and the governor of the city had fled; he would never yield to the Liberal forces, but would surrender his charge to the American flag. The only stipulation was that he and such other of his officers as would be in danger at the hands of the Republican authorities, should be allowed to leave in safety.

The American commander expressed his thanks and appreciation of the confidence reposed in him, and agreed to accept the charge of the castle. He would not hoist the United States flag over it, but in due time, as soon as order could be restored, would turn it over to the people of Mexico. The general was also assured that the steamer "Tabasco," then lying in the stream, would be placed at his disposal to go where he wished, accompanied by such officers as he should select. With thanks and stately courtesy he withdrew and embarked immediately.

The English, French, American, and Prussian consuls at once organized a provisional government, closed all liquor shops, forbade placards of any description being posted, and induced the officer in command of the Foreign Legion to make them "fall in" at their barracks and keep them there. The assurance that they would be paid in full and sent away in the "Tabasco" aided greatly in securing their obedience. The merchants cheerfully subscribed the money necessary to discharge the obligations towards them.

The English and United States consuls rode out to General Benavides, informed him briefly of all that had transpired, and requested him to be ready to march into the city and take possession as soon as the gates were opened, which, it was expected, would be done on the following day. Apparently not realizing the exact state of affairs, the general replied that he had received fresh orders to enter into no more negotiations, and that General Porfirio Diaz was on the way there with fresh troops to assault the town. This seemed an extraordinary position to assume, evidently based upon a misapprehension of facts, but none the less embarrassing. They assured him that his evident doubts regarding the genuineness of the overture had no foundation in fact; the city was held by no enemy of the Republic, but by the consular corps, supported by the guns of the English and American ships. This

apparently silenced his scruples, and he acquiesced. It was agreed, however, that when every thing was ready and the Foreign Legion out of the way, the city should be turned over to the remaining officials of the civil government who should then open the gates.

In the meantime Captains Aynesley and Roe had sent joint word off to the "Tabasco" and to the schooner to disarm, which was promptly done, their guns being hoisted out into a lighter. The "Tacony" also shifted her berth farther out to the northward to avoid the pestilential air from the infected castle. In her new position she still commanded the city landing, and the port forward gun, which had been transported to the starboard side when in danger of being fired at from San Juan, was shifted back in place, and the starboard after gun moved to reinforce the port battery, and increase the weight of fire in the direction of the city.

Early the next morning the Foreign Legion, having been paid in full, was marched down to the landing, and boats from the men-of-war, supplemented by those of the town, were at hand ready to take them off to the "Tabasco." Just as they were about to embark, Mr. Saulnier, who, with his usual energy, was there, discovered that these soldiers still retained their arms and evidently did not intend to relinquish them. To allow such a troop to go to sea

armed would seem almost equivalent to fitting out a pirate, so he told the officers that they must disarm their men. But they shook their heads and replied: "They will not submit to that." Mr. Saulnier proved himself equal to the emergency. Without a moment's hesitation he strode to the nearest soldier and told him to give up his musket; the man refused. Pointing to the "Tacony," the consul then said in a loud tone: "That ship has orders to fire on this landing if I wave my handkerchief; the gates leading to the city are closed and your retreat is cut off; unless you instantly lay down your guns I will make the signal." While speaking he had taken his handkerchief in his hand. The effect was magical; one swift glance at the vessel showed the long threatening muzzles pointing ominously, with tompions out, and apparently ready to hurl shrapnel and destruction on them; down went the arms with a clash, and each man before stepping into the boat submitted to a personal inspection to prove that he had no arms secreted.

By noon all were on board the "Tabasco," and she moved out and anchored near the "Jason" to get water from her, preparatory to going to sea.

At three the consular government turned the city over to the Mexican civil officers who immediately opened the gates, and sent a deputation to wait upon General Benavides, and invite him to enter. Out behind this deputation streamed an army of hot

and weary men, women and children, who swarmed into the fields to get a bit of grass or a branch of green bush once more in their hands after the dreary captivity of over three months within the walls of the beleaguered town. In an hour's time the tents were struck, the bugles sounded their cheerful ringing calls, and the body of rugged, half-clad, dirty, but undaunted men and boys that we have been calling an investing army, got into motion, with their tattered flags and pennons gayly flying. At about five o'clock of that 27th day of June, 1867, the patriot army marched in and took possession of the city and fortifications. Mexico entire was now under her own flag; not a place was left under the dominion of the foreigner.

Some inclination was shown to open fire upon the "Tabasco," which was just then heaving up her anchor; but it was promptly announced that she was under the protection of the two men-of-war, and that any such demonstration would instantly start their broadsides. That ended it. In a short time the steamer got under way and put to sea, with her motley crew, heading for Mobile. She reached her destination in safety, and those hungry, gaunt-looking soldiers, straggling about the city, were the occasion of much wondering comment. The vessel herself disappeared from sight; entering the port under the pretension of being a man-of-war, no custom-house return noted her arrival nor her

subsequent departure; and no history records her fate.

The armed schooner, of which mention has been made, tried to take advantage of the general excitement, and, hoisting American colors, tripped her anchor, and started to sea. But the "Tacony's" cutter was promptly called away and pursued her and brought her to, and she was turned over to the Liberals the next day.

And so the occupation of Vera Cruz was accomplished without a blow being given, or a drop of blood spilled. The two ships in the harbor had done the work of preserving order, and in so doing had protected not only the lives and interests of their fellow countrymen, but those of the citizens of Mexico as well. The two captains could at last sleep the sweet sleep of peace and approving consciences.

The rejoicings that followed can be well imagined; decorations in the daytime, illuminations by night, testified to the universal joy at the final expulsion of the foreign enemy from his last foothold. The day after the occupation General Benavides gave a handsome breakfast to the principal actors in the recent scenes. Joy was indeed unconfined at that repast, and they do say that the feelings of one member of the gallant body of consuls (not the American), were so wrought up that he required the services of a friend afterwards to guide him home; and being propped with careful solicitude against

his own door, soon gave an unwonted embrace to the dusky servant opening up from within.

At noon of the 29th, the thunders of the "Tacony's" guns sounded forth in national salutation of the Mexican flag displayed at the fort, the last echo being prolonged by answering peals from the south battery, where, gun for gun, the salute was immediately returned. Not many days elapsed before an opportunity was afforded to return this courtesy. On that glorious day of July, the advent of which makes the American heart beat proudly and fast, the "Tacony" "dressed ship" with festoons of signals and pennants all aloft, and fired the twenty-one-gun salute with the stars and stripes floating from the masthead; in this she was accompanied by the guns of the Castle of San Juan de Uloa which, only nine days before, had threatened to sink her where she lay.

There was no other ship present to take part in these expressions of friendship. The Austrian had left on the 25th, as stated; the "Jason" had sailed for Jamaica a couple of days after the surrender, to coal and provision ship; and the "Phlé-géton" had followed suit the next day.

Captain Aynesley, before leaving, sent a note, couched in very complimentary terms, to Captain Roe, asking him to care for British interests during his enforced absence. These two officers had formed quite an intimacy, not unnaturally, during

the progress of events, in the shaping of which they had borne so conspicuous a part, and it was with sincere regret that they parted. Captain Aynesley is still alive, passing his old age in the official retirement irrevocably brought about by the flight of time.

Commander de Pritzbuër, being a younger man, is still able to wear the harness; and an American man-of-war entering the vast dock-yard of Rochefort is sure to meet with a pleasant welcome from that gray-haired veteran who, as Vice-Admiral and *Préfet Maritime* of the Department, is an important factor in the maintenance of that superb navy.

Perhaps the most cordial leave-taking was with Captain Gröller, who returned in the "Elizabeth" on the 12th of July. He had cause to feel grateful to Captain Roe for the efforts made to save his Prince. A letter from him a month later (written in English) will perhaps indicate his regard better than in any other way, and the close of it is here transcribed:

No, dear captain, I shall never forget you, nor your exquisite kindness towards me, and your noble feelings in the disastrous days of Maximilian's murder. I have send your letter to Vienna; now they have been published in all the newspapers of Europe and America. I hope that you shall some day take a leave for Europe or be there as a commodore,—then be sure that I shall do all to persuade you that our land is quite a paradise.

May you be happy on your ways.

Believe me, dearest captain,

Your friend,

[Signed,]

GRÖLLER.

The count's name is no longer borne upon the navy list of Austria, and it is believed that he resigned his commission some years ago and retired to private life on his handsome estate.

The "Tacony" had to remain some days after affairs had become quieted down, as her orders were to stay there until relieved. The time was well put in overhauling and repairing the equipment and battery and *matériel* of every kind. Up to the moment of occupation of the city by the Liberal forces every thing had had to be subordinated to readiness for immediate action; now the guns could be dismantled, one at a time, and their iron carriages scraped, cleaned, and painted; holds and store-rooms were "broken out" and swept; and even the outside of the hull soon shone bravely in a glistening coat of black.

There were few incidents to punctuate the four weeks that that gallant ship's company had still to pass in that dreary, almost provisionless region; and such as did occur were now all of a pleasant character. One may bear recital as forming a charming epilogue to the loyal persistence with which our country had recognized Señor Juarez as President of the Republic of Mexico, even when so hard pressed that the United States Minister accredited to him could not find or reach his head-quarters. On the evening of the 14th, rockets were seen

in the offing, and as the flag-ship "Susquehanna" was expected daily, the navigating officer of the "Tacony" was sent out to put his well-acquired knowledge of the ground at the disposal of the captain to bring her in, the pilots being such that no great reliance could be placed on their professional skill. It proved to be not the "Susquehanna," however, nor any vessel of the Gulf Squadron, but the U. S. Revenue Cutter "Wilderness," bringing the wife and family of President Juarez back to their beloved country after a long exile in the United States. Early in June, Mr. Seward had expressed a desire to Mr. Romero to place a government vessel at the disposal of that lady to carry her to Mexico. The offer had been gratefully accepted, and in obedience to instructions from the Hon. Hugh M'Culloch, Secretary of the Treasury, who gladly acquiesced in the wishes of the Secretary of State, the "Wilderness," was put in readiness for that pleasant duty, and every effort made to ensure the comfort of the august party.

The day after her arrival Señora Juarez was escorted to the shore by the naval boats amid the tumultuous ringing of bells, displaying of flags, and booming of cannon. And it is perhaps safe to say that that last act of courtesy on the part of Mr. Seward resounded gratefully in the hearts of many Mexicans who had continued to

look askance at the country that had befriended them.

American men-of-war soon began to drop in; the "Susquehanna" arrived on the 20th, and the "Glasgow" on the 22d. The latter came from Tampico with Don José María de Lacunza, quondam prime-minister of the late pretender to the Mexican throne, and Adrian Dufau, his secretary. They had sought final refuge under the American flag, and were now transferred to the double-ender for passage to the United States.

It was on the 24th of July, at daylight, that the "Tacony" finally bade good-bye to the ancient city of Vera Cruz, which owed so much to her,—to her guns, to her flag, and to the intelligence and determined action of her commander. Steaming along at a moderate speed she made a four-days' passage to Pensacola, but did not then escape the discomforts of a ten-days' quarantine. Many of the officers were detached and went to their homes to recover from the effects of exposure to tropical suns and diseases. Some, it is a mournful fact to record, were claimed by the Giver of all good, paying with their lives for their devotion to duty.

Captain Roe was relieved from his command, and found a reward for his lofty sense and sternly gallant execution of duty in the letter from the Navy Department ordering him to other scenes. The letter was as follows:

NAVY DEPARTMENT,
WASHINGTON, August 3, 1867.

SIR:—Your letter of the 20th ultimo reporting your arrival at Pensacola is received.

You are to-day detached from the "Tacony" and ordered to duty on the U. S. S. "Piscataqua," as Fleet Captain under Rear-Admiral Rowan, appointed to command the Asiatic Squadron.

In relieving you from the "Tacony" the Department embraces the opportunity of conveying to you its approbation of the manner in which you have discharged the responsible and delicate duties which have devolved upon you as the commanding American naval officer off Vera Cruz at an interesting and eventful period, when important occurrences were transpiring and decisive and correct action were required. For the discretion and zeal manifested by you, the Department takes this opportunity to express its acknowledgment, and the new and more enlarged duties assigned you indicate the confidence reposed in your intelligence and judgment.

Very respectfully,

[Signed,]

G. WELLES,

Secretary of the Navy.

Commander F. A. ROE,
U. S. Navy, Pensacola, Fla.

A proud moment must it have been for the commander when he read that letter from the head of the department, to whom he was directly responsible for correct interpretation and faithful execution of orders. Nor did the meed of praise flow only from that high source. On reaching Washington the Secretary of State introduced him to Mr. John-

son, in cabinet meeting, saying: "Mr. President, this is the commander who saved us so much trouble in Mexican affairs." And the Executive of the nation thanked him.

That officer is now a rear-admiral on the retired list, enjoying the rest to which advancing age entitles him, after an active and honorable career.

Many years have elapsed since the sad ending of Emperor Napoleon's unfriendly enterprise. But it will always remain a subject of interest to Americans; and the memory of it may in the future help to nerve the hearts and hands of our statesmen in the improbable event of the Old World again attempting to guide the destinies of the New. The example set by the little "Tacony" is also well worthy of emulation by those whose duty and privilege it is to sustain the fair name of the United States Navy.

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