

THE EMPEROR AUGUSTIN DE ITURBIDE.

sponded with his head. He was consistent in everything, and recognizing the fact that war was a cruel necessity, he spared neither himself, his friends, nor his enemies. His piety was sincere and unostentatious, and throughout the five years of arduous service in behalf of his country, he did not omit his religious duties. He never went into an engagement without previously confessing himself; but after his first battle, always delegated to the chaplain the celebration of mass.

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With feelings of more than ordinary interest I now turn to a contemplation of the life of Augustin de Iturbide. A peculiar chain of circumstances has associated his memory intimately with my own experiences and first days spent in Mexico, imparting a flavor of romantic interest to the details that follow.

It will be remembered that in exploring the immense old house in which I lived, my curiosity was richly rewarded by the discovery of the dust-covered and cobwebbed portrait of a beautiful woman. The soft eyes beamed on me from the painted canvas and the lips parted as if to speak. For two years it remained a mystery, but at length I ascertained that it was the portrait of Doña Ana, the beautiful wife of the Emperor Iturbide. More than two years passed, and I again returned to the land of the Aztecs; even now scarcely expecting to tread the soil which had nurtured both Iturbide and Doña Ana. But I had not only the pleasure of visiting at Morelia the identical houses in which they were born and reared, but also had the happiness of enjoying the acquaintance and friendship of, with one exception, the last living and only descendants of this handsome and distinguished pair. Augustin de Iturbide was fifteen when his father died, and the management of large estates devolved upon him.

His parents were of noble birth from Navarre, in old Spain; but Augustin was a native of Mexico, having been born at Morelia, September 27, 1783. He was married, at twenty-two, to the lovely Doña Ana Maria Huerte, also of a distinguished Spanish family. The same

year in which his father died he joined a volunteer militia regiment in Morelia, and in 1805 entered the regular royalist army. His first experience of real military life was at the encampment at Jalapa, and in 1809 he gave material aid in crushing an embryo revolution at Morelia.

It is said that Hidalgo so highly appreciated the military talents displayed by Iturbide, that he offered him the position of lieutenant-general before the first *grito* at Dolores. He declined this office and afterward, as colonel of the royal army, took part in many brilliant engagements, directed mostly against Morelos, the recognized successor of Hidalgo. The dashing young colonel, full of enthusiasm for the maintenance of established law and order, and the grave, clerical leader, had been nurtured among the same scenes.

Mention has been made of the defeat of Morelos by Iturbide at their native city. One of the most memorable events in the War of Independence was this encounter on the hills of Santa Maria, which skirt the city. Iturbide, who was second in command, sallied out with a small party to reconnoiter. Seeing defects in the position of the insurgents, where Matamoros had not taken due precautions in forming his line, he determined to seize the advantage, and with only three hundred and sixty cavalry, he dashed up the hill, accessible only by a steep path, where they were much exposed to cross-fires from the revolutionary army. He gave a loud cheer and rushed forward with his gallant band, creating dismay and confusion in the forces of Morelos. Not expecting such an attack, they were panic-stricken, and, it being then after dark, believed that the entire royalist forces were upon them. A desperate battle ensued in the darkness of the night between the insurgents themselves, during which, after his gallant feat, and with captured banners and cannon, Iturbide retired in safety to the city, where he was received with enthusiastic demonstrations.

He received no promotion for that service, and Calleja said in after years, "Colonel Iturbide deserved more than I thought proper to give him." Soon after this brilliant action he became involved in

dissensions with the military authorities, in consequence of which he retired to private life. But, smarting under the injustice that had been shown him, he conceived the idea of devoting his talents and services to the liberation of his country. The royalists evidently feared his marked abilities, should he again come upon the scene. A bishop, writing to Calleja, then viceroy, said of Iturbide, "That young man is full of ambition, and it would not surprise me if, in the course of time, he became the liberator of his country." Later events proved the correctness of the prediction.

The seed sown by Hidalgo was nurtured by Morelos, and, in due time, the whole grand scheme was harvested by the strong arm of Iturbide.

In the opinion of many writers, Morelia has given birth to the two most brilliant men in Spanish-America—Morelos and Iturbide.

For four years the cause of independence languished, though a guerrilla warfare was for a time kept up by Guerrero, Guadalupe Victoria, and others. In 1820 the troubles in Spain urged the Mexicans to a renewed effort for independence. Iturbide was again called upon by the viceroy, and given the command of the army of the southwest. In the distracted condition of the country, he knew the only safe and practicable plan would be to accept and then carry out his own design of freedom. Having a secret understanding with Guerrero, under pretense of an engagement, he soon afterward coalesced with that leader, taking his army with him. Thus it was, after all the struggle and sacrifice of years, independence was achieved by a bloodless victory. Iturbide then formulated "the plan of Iguala," an embodiment of his ideas of government, the first article of which declared the independence of Mexico.

It was well received at the time and accepted alike by the leaders and people. Soon after, on his thirty-eighth birthday, he entered the great capital triumphantly, surrounded by his aids, greeted with all the enthusiasm and manifestations of delight which the people were capable of displaying. Keys of gold were handed him with great ceremony on a silver salver. The country showered honors

upon him, and on the night of May 18, 1822, he was made Emperor. In his address to the people he said, "If, Mexicans, I do not secure the happiness of the country; if at any time I forget my duties, let my sovereignty cease." He was crowned by the bishop, but with his own hands he placed the diadem on the brow of Doña Ana. An imperial household was established with imposing splendor, and money was coined in his image. He also instituted the Order of Guadalupe, a return to the days of chivalry, and designed to add to the prestige of the government. But "uneasy lies the head that wears a crown," and Iturbide was no exception to the truth of the apothegm. Only nine months from his coronation, pressure of circumstances and political changes forced him to abdicate. A sentence of exile was pronounced against him, and three months later, with his family, he was on his voyage to Italy.

To the soldier accustomed to a life of action, exile was intolerable; and possessed of an irresistible desire to return, within a year he made the homeward bound journey which proved fatal. A new and hostile government was in power, and Iturbide had lost his old influence. Not knowing the stern attitude of the government toward him, he landed July 14, 1824, at Soto la Marina, on the gulf coast; and scarcely had he touched his mother soil when he found himself a prisoner.

General Garza, the military commander, unwilling to act on his own responsibility, referred the matter to the State Congress of Tamaulipas, then in session at Padilla. With much show of respect and seeming confidence the ex-Emperor was conducted thither. He arrived late at night, hopeful and unsuspecting, having himself been placed by Garza in command of the escort which accompanied him. The next morning he was informed that he must prepare for death that afternoon. He remonstrated, asserting his innocence of any desire to disturb the existing order of things, and referring in proof of this to the presence of his family on shipboard. On finding the decree inexorable, he said, "Tell General Garza I am ready to die, and only request three days to prepare to leave this world as a Christian."

But even this was denied him, and on the evening of July 19th, when the shadows began to gather and all nature was sinking to rest, they led him forth to execution.

With noble and commanding mien; with all his beauty and valor and social gifts; his smooth white brow, encircled with wavy light brown locks, now bared to meet the last decree of fate, the patriot stood undaunted, in Roman dignity. In clear tones he addressed these words to the soldiers: "Mexicans, in this last moment of my life I recommend to you the love of your country and the observances of our holy religion. I die for having come to aid you, and depart happy because I die among you. I die with honor, not as a traitor; that stain will not attach to my children and their descendants. Preserve order and be obedient to your commanders. From the bottom of my heart I forgive all my enemies." The officer came to bind his eyes, to which he objected, but being told that it was a necessary form, he unflinchingly bandaged his own eyes; then being requested to kneel, he did so, and the next instant received the fatal volley which terminated his brilliant and eventful life. His remains were buried in the dilapidated old church at Padilla, where they rested until 1838, when, with somewhat tardy justice and appreciation, an act of Congress was passed by which they were removed to the capital. They now rest in a stately tomb, in the great cathedral, with those of the noblest and best sons of Mexico. Here also lies Morelos, his old-time opponent. Cradled in the same city, their final resting-place is beneath the same dome.

On a tablet in the front wall of Iturbide's house I read the following inscription:

"On September 27, 1783,
Augustin de Iturbide,
The Liberator of Mexico,
Was born in this house.
Morelia, September 16, 1881."

The 16th of September, being the Mexican 4th of July, was a fit-

ting time for Morelia to remember her two most distinguished sons.

The title of Liberator was conferred upon Iturbide in 1853, nearly thirty years after his death, and two years later the anniversary of his death was declared a public holiday. On that day a grand mass is celebrated in the cathedral of Mexico for the repose of his soul.

The ex-Emperor left a wife and eight children, but only the two youngest and Doña Ana accompanied him on his fateful return voyage, the others being left at school in England. The widow went first to New Orleans, afterward lived in Washington, then in Baltimore, finally taking up her permanent residence at Philadelphia, where in 1861 the once beautiful Doña Ana ended her eventful life, and now rests with several of her children in a vault of St. Mary's Church in that city.

The Princess Josefa, the only surviving child of the Emperor, resides in the City of Mexico. She remembers the coronation of her father and the pomp of court life which followed during his short reign. It was my pleasure to make her acquaintance, and I found her a woman of rare conversational gifts as well as great personal charm of manner. She is remarkably well preserved, and still shows a vigorous and cultivated intellect; is a fine linguist, and possesses a vast amount of historical information.

But the one who connects the past with the present is Prince Angel de Iturbide. He attended the Jesuit College at Georgetown, D. C., where as a school-boy he met and loved Alice Green, the lovely daughter of Nathaniel Green, of that city. The wooing was persistent, and finally this charming and accomplished woman became his wife. In the course of time the laws which had banished Doña Ana and her family relented, and the Iturbides were allowed to return to Mexico.

Now comes an old, old story, but one which loses nothing by familiarity. In the checkered fortunes of Mexico, a prince of the house of Habsburg and an Austrian archduke was invited by the conserva-

tive party to preside over a new empire. Shortly after his arrival in Mexico he invited the Princess Josefa to take up her residence in the imperial household as a member of the family. She accepted, and was accorded the highest distinction by Maximilian and Carlotta.

Feeling the insecurity of his position and hoping to conciliate the discordant element among the Mexican people, Maximilian proposed to adopt the grandson of the Emperor Iturbide—son of Don Angel and Alice Green de Iturbide—and, should his empire succeed, the young Augustin, then three years old, would be heir to the throne. But a condition was made that his parents should leave Mexico without delay. The government then owed them a large sum of pension money, which it was agreed should be paid them in case of compliance.

The prospect was brilliant, and the parents thought that to some extent the arrangement would bring reparation for the wrongs inflicted on the child's grandfather, and so consented. The beautiful boy, with soft golden curls, gentle blue eyes and sweet baby prattle, became at once the idol of Maximilian and Carlotta. But the mother was bereft of her darling, and the compact was no sooner agreed to than regretted; she and her husband were to leave Mexico immediately, and the separation from her only child might be final and lasting. She reached Pueblo *en route* to Europe, but the anguish was too great, and she returned to the capital, hoping to regain the custody of her child. Marshal Bazaine received her with kindness, and she then addressed a heart-rending appeal to Maximilian. But under the guise of being taken to the palace she was decoyed from the city and forced to return to Pueblo. In Paris she met Carlotta, then on her ill-fated mission to procure aid for the fast crumbling empire. They had a memorable interview, and soon after, as Madame Iturbide herself told me, Carlotta received the death-blow to her hopes, and even when ordered to Italy by Napoleon, evidences of a tottering reason were manifest. Throughout these trying scenes Madame Iturbide maintained the dignity befitting a brave and high-bred woman.

When Maximilian felt his fate fast overtaking him, he sent

Augustin to Havana, and at the same time communicated with Madame Iturbide, who joyfully met and received again to her tender heart her idolized boy. He is now a strikingly handsome young man, twenty-three years of age, six feet in height, and possessing wonderful physical strength. He has a finished education, both European and American, and is an accomplished linguist. He is also a lover of scientific knowledge, and exceptionally well read in history. Added to these natural and acquired advantages, he has artistic tastes, sketches from nature, and is skilled in music. In 1885 he was awarded the gold medal at the college at Georgetown, D. C., for the best oration delivered at the closing exercises. The hero of a romantic story, he appears unconscious of the notice he has attracted, and retains his modest demeanor and genial disposition, with the dignity and social graces which render his society delightful to all who come in contact with him. On his handsome country estate he leads a business life, and never seems happier than when there, dressed in his buckskin suit and silver-decked sombrero, and mingling freely among his employées, who adore him. The minutest detail of *hacienda* life claims his careful attention, showing a happy adaptability to circumstances.

The elegant residence of the Iturbides at the capital stands on the grand *Paseo*, immediately to the right of the statue of Carlos IV. Both there and at their hacienda of San Miguel Sesma, I have enjoyed their graceful hospitality and unrestricted friendship. On these occasions Madame Iturbide related many interesting incidents and reminiscences of her boy's early life. Among them, to me, one of the most amusing was the manner in which Augustin, when a little more than four years old, spoke his first English. His cousin, Plater Green, a few months older, fell from a tree, when Augustin ran to his parents, crying out: "Plater he up de tree—Plater he down de tree—Plater he no cry—Plater he one very man!" After this he would speak no more Spanish. Although brought up according to the Mexican custom of dependence on a seryant, he early manifested the desire to throw off such bondage and prove his self-reliance. At the

age of fourteen, all alone, with \$1,000 in his pocket, he sailed from Vera Cruz to New York, thence to Liverpool, and from there to Oscott College, near Birmingham, where he presented his letters to the president, and entered himself as a student. His life is still before him, and with his rich natural endowments and intellectual culture, his career will doubtless be worthy of his lineage and training.

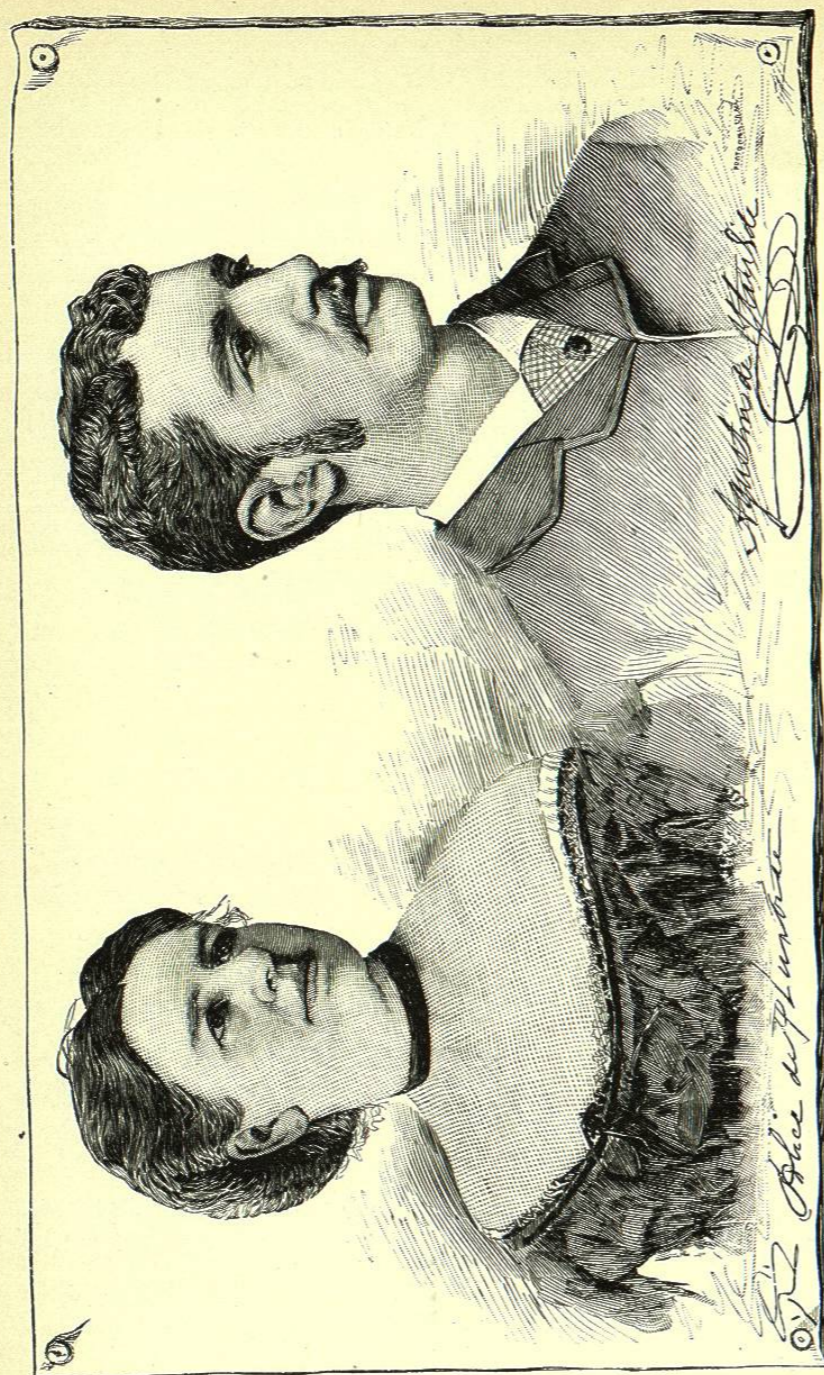
The accompanying portraits furnish an excellent representation of mother and son.

Madame de Iturbide, herself, is one of the most remarkable women of her time. Beautiful in her youth, she is still strikingly handsome in face and figure. Of distinguished presence, queenly in manner and bearing, she impresses one as possessing in reserve the strength of will and purpose which sustained her in so many trying circumstances. All the elements of kindness, courtesy, and dignity are combined in her, to which is added a personal magnetism which calls forth the warmest regard and devotion from all who enjoy the privilege of her friendship. During the thirty years since she went to Mexico, a bride, she has been a close observer of men and things. She is a living compendium of information on subjects of general interest, and is especially delightful in recounting those historical incidents which have come under her own observation.

In every transaction of business Madame Iturbide has proved herself equal to the occasion; and in the various lawsuits in which she has been engaged before the Mexican courts, she is said by competent authority to be as well versed in the jurisprudence of the country as the lawyers themselves. She is much attached to her Mexican friends, who warmly reciprocate the feeling, never losing an opportunity of showing their devotion to her. Americans everywhere may take pride in the fact that she is their countrywoman.

VINCENTE GUERRERO.

My interest in the history of Mexican independence was deepened by meeting and associating with many of the descendants



MADAME ITURBIDE AND SON.