

expectedly, and by a mere nominal majority; but they were not content to bow with submission, like good republicans, to the will of the people expressed according to the forms of a Federal Constitution. The consequence was, that before the new President had taken his seat, SANTA ANNA made his appearance on the political stage, and, under the plea that the election of Pedraza had been produced by fraud, "*pronounced*" against him at the head of a small but determined force. The movement became speedily popular. The prejudices of the *Creoles*, or natives, against the *Spaniards* and their aristocratic partisans, were skillfully played upon, and the *émeute* resulted on the 4th of December, 1828, in the "*Pronuncimiento* of the *Accordada*" in favor of the defeated candidate, Guerrero. The City of Mexico was given up to a mob; the Parian was sacked; the defenceless *Spaniards* suffered from the resentment of an infuriate populace; and Pedraza (abandoning the post of Minister of War to his opponent, Santa Anna,) fled from the country, and took refuge in the United States. On the first of January, 1829, Congress declared Guerrero to have been duly elected President;—Bustamante was named Vice-President; and the government went once more into quiet operation under the old Constitution.

The ease with which the supreme authority could be destroyed or established by a bold and daring chieftain, had been now most fatally demonstrated for the future peace of the country; and ambitious spirits were not long wanting to take advantage of this dangerous facility. Scarcely had Guerrero been seated in the presidential chair, and signalized his duplicity by desiring the recall of Mr. Poinsett, when Bustamante, who came into power with him as Vice-President, organized the army at Jalapa, and upon some trifling pretext, "*pronounced*" in that city. Santa Anna at first feebly opposed this movement, but at length joined the discontented General. The revolution was made effectual;—Guerrero was overthrown, and fled;—the Vice-President, Bustamante, assumed the reins of government, and under his administration, the Spanish power was finally subdued by the victory gained by Santa Anna over Barradas, on the 11th of September, 1830, at Tampico. The unfortunate Guerrero was in the meantime taken prisoner, and, in 1831, was executed for treason.

After this, tranquillity prevailed until 1832, when Santa Anna—who in fact had been the author of the present dynasty—suddenly "*pronounced*" against the Ministers, and soon afterward against the President himself, at Vera Cruz. A battle was fought at Tolomi, and the insurgents defeated;—but he retired again to Vera Cruz, strengthened his power by forces from some other Departments, declared himself in favor of Pedraza, (whom he had driven out of the country two years previous,) entered into a convention with Bustamante at Zavaleta, in December of 1832, and—having dispatched a vessel for the exiled Pedraza—brought him back to the Republic and sent him to the Capital, to serve out the remaining three months of his unexpired term!

The first act of the restored President was to eulogize his foe and friend, and his last, (in the brief power allowed him,) to exercise his influence in controlling an election to the chief magistracy, by which this skillful Warwick was elevated to supreme power on the 16th of May, 1833.

Santa Anna was not, however, to be safe from the perils that had beset his predecessors. He had given a fearful example of discontent to the country, and—notwithstanding his known and dreaded vigor—in the first year of his presidency, a "*Pronuncimiento*," (central in its character,) was made by Escalada, at Morelia, in favor of the "*fueros*" of the church and army. About this period he was proclaimed Dictator by the army at Cuautla—an office he refused to accept—and, immediately marching a sufficient force against the insurgents, he suppressed the revolutionary movement at Guanajuato.

In 1835, there was another "*Pronuncimiento*" against the Government in Zacatecas, which was quelled; and, in a few days after the victory over General Garcia, there was another declaration, known in the history of the country as the "*Plan of Toluca*," which is generally believed to have been favored by the President himself.

This Plan struck a fatal blow at the Federative System. It destroyed the Constitution of 1824;—it vested the power in a Central Government; abolished the Legislatures of the States, and changed those States into Departments, under the control of military commandants and governors, who were responsible to the chief authorities of the nation alone. This was the last great act in Mexico of the military President, and its principles formed the basis of the "*CENTRAL CONSTITUTION*," adopted in 1836, in lieu of the Federal Constitution of 1824.

While these things were occurring, the revolt in Texas had become so formidable, that it appeared necessary for the Mexican Government to strike a decisive blow against the rebellious province. Accordingly, as soon as Santa Anna had assured himself of the establishment of Centralism, he departed with the flower of his troops to reconquer Texas. The fate of that memorable expedition is too well known to require notice in this sketch. The regulator of his own country and the conqueror of the *Spaniards*, lost both his liberty and his reputation in a conflict against another race at the battle of San Jacinto; and it is perhaps owing to the private interposition of our own President, and the popularity, at that period, of Houston, that his life was preserved from a population infuriate with the memory of massacres that emulated the butcheries of Calleja. But he was both spared and liberated, and returned, through the United States, to his farm at Manga de Clavo, where, suffering under exceeding unpopularity with his countrymen, he buried himself for a long period in obscurity and retirement.

When Santa Anna departed from the Capital on this luckless adventure, he left the administration in the hands of General Barrigan, as President. This person, however, shortly died, and the government was

conducted subsequently by Coro, until Bustamante (whose friends had taken advantage of Santa Anna's misfortunes and unpopularity, to elect him to the Presidency under the new Constitution,) returned from France, where he had resided since his defeat.

Almost immediately after the accession of this distinguished personage to the chief magistracy, there were *émeutes* in favor of Federation, and Gomez Farias, who was then in prison; but these, and a number of other trifling conspiracies, were at once put down by Pedraza and Rodriguez.

The most brilliant, however, of all the exploits for the emancipation of Mexico, occurred in 1838, under the unfortunate Mexia. He advanced toward the Capital with a brave band of patriots, and was encountered in the neighborhood of Puebla by Valencia and Santa Anna, who, creeping forth from his retreat to regain popularity by some striking exploit, was weakly trusted by the man he had already so often foiled. Mexia lost the day, and with scarce time left for prayer or communication with his family, was shot, by order of his conqueror, on the field of battle.*

In the winter of that year, the port of Vera Cruz was blockaded by the French squadron, and the town attacked by the troops. This again afforded an opportunity to the victim of San Jacinto to repair his tarnished reputation by military glory, and to regain his standing with the army. Accordingly he at once repaired to the port, took command of the troops, and, while following the French, as they retreated to their boats, received a wound, which has lamed him for life. But this loss was a gain to the daring chieftain; and well-worded proclamations, and a discreet use of the amputated limb, (even to the present day, as we have seen in a preceding letter,) have served to restore him to the authority he so ingloriously lost in 1836.†

Yet he did not think that the time for him to appear again prominently on the political arena had then arrived, and he consequently remained quiet during the "*Pronuncimiento*" of the Federalists at the Palace of Mexico, on the 15th of July, of 1840, under Urrea, which was completely suppressed by Valencia, although President Bustamante, was at one time a prisoner in the hands of the insurgents.

In August of 1841, however, a different state of things existed; and it was then that the last (it is to be hoped) of the sanguinary revolutions which have distracted Mexico, broke out. This insurrection was announced by the "*Pronuncimiento*" of Paredes in Guadalajara, and was quickly

* "You are right," said he to Santa Anna, when he was refused a respite; "I would not have granted you half the time, had I conquered!"

† Santa Anna causes the 5th of December to be celebrated in Mexico, as a day of Victory over the French! They tell a story of him at Vera Cruz, which is illustrative of his cunning. One morning, early, during the siege, a party of French soldiers had made its way into the town and got possession of the house in which Santa Anna was lodged. As soon as he was disturbed by the noise of the troops, he jumped out of bed, and in his shirt and trousers, attempted to escape. On the stairs he met the soldiers, headed by the Prince de Joinville, who immediately demanded, "Where is Santa Anna?" "There," said he, pointing over his shoulder with his thumb to a room in which another General was quietly sleeping. "And who are you?" said the Prince; "Oh! nobody," said Santa Anna, "nobody but a servant of the house." The Prince pushed on in a hurry to secure the General, while the General as hurriedly pushed for the door!

enforced by Valencia and Lombardini in the Capital, and Santa Anna himself, at Vera Cruz. Its causes were various and indefinite;—but the chief matters of popular discontent, viz., the consumption duty of 15 per cent., and the Constitution of '36, were entirely beyond the control of the existing administration. The "*Pronuncimientos*" of the Generals were succeeded by a month's contest in the streets of Mexico; a bombardment of the Capital; some harmless conflicts between the rival troops on the adjacent plains,—and the drama was ended by the downfall of Bustamante, the elevation of Santa Anna to the Provisional Presidency, and the "*Plan of Tacubaya*," (as a substitute for the Constitution,) by the seventh article of which, he was invested with dictatorial powers.

It was provided by this Plan, that a Congress should assemble in 1842, to form a new Constitution for the government of the Republic; and, accordingly, in June of that year, a corps of patriotic citizens, *chosen by the people*, met for that purpose in the Capital. This Congress was greeted by the Provisional President, in a speech, strongly declaring his partiality for a firm and *central* Government, but intimating, nevertheless, his entire disposition to acquiesce in the final decision of that intelligent body.

Yet, in December of last year, after two attempts to form a system that would accommodate the wishes of the country and the administration,—the Provisional President, (in spite of the frank disclosure of his intention to submit to the popular will,) dissolved the Congress without authority, and convened a JUNTA OF NOTABLES for the purpose of proposing a new Constitution. The result of the deliberations of that body were, the "*BASES OF POLITICAL ORGANIZATION OF THE MEXICAN REPUBLIC*,"* proclaimed on the 13th of June, 1843.

By the first Title of this Instrument, it is declared that Mexico adopts the form of a *Popular Representative* system for its government; that the territory shall be divided into Departments; that the political power essentially resides in the *Nation*, and that the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic creed is professed and protected *to the exclusion of all others*.

The second Title declares that slavery is not to be permitted;—that no one is to be molested for his opinions, or called on for contributions, except such as are regularly imposed by law.

The third Title specifies who are Mexican citizens, their rights and obligations. CITIZENS are—all who are born within the Mexican territory, or beyond it, of a Mexican father;—all who were in Mexico in 1821, and have not renounced their allegiance;—all who were natives of Central America when it belonged to the Mexican nation, and since then have continued to reside in Mexico;—and, lastly, all who have obtained or shall obtain letters of naturalization.

In order to enjoy fully the rights of Mexican citizenship, (in voting,) the following qualifications are required. Being Mexicans, they must be eighteen years of age and married, or twenty-one years, if not married; and they must enjoy an annual income of at least two hundred dollars,

* This is the title of the system. It is not called a CONSTITUTION.

derived from actual capital, industry, or *honest personal labor*. In addition to these requirements, no one will be allowed to vote, after the year 1850, *unless he is able to read and write*.

The *rights of citizenship* are suspended (among other disqualifications,) by domestic servitude, habitual intemperance, taking of religious vows, keeping of prohibited gaming-houses, and fraudulent bankruptcy.

The Legislative power is defined by the fourth Title. This power is to reside in a Congress, divided into a Chamber of Deputies and a Senate.

The CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES is to be composed of individuals elected by the Electoral Colleges of the Departments, in a manner which will be hereafter specified, and in the ratio of one for seventy thousand inhabitants. The Departments which have not so many residents shall, nevertheless, be entitled to a Deputy, and there shall likewise be one for every fraction over thirty-five thousand. It is required, that a Deputy shall be thirty years of age, and possessed of an annual income of twelve hundred dollars. A moiety of the Chamber is to be renewed every two years.

The SENATE is to be composed of sixty-three members, two-thirds of whom are to be elected by the Departmental Assemblies, and the other third by the Chamber of Deputies, the President of the Republic, and the Supreme Court of Justice. One-third of this body is to be renewed biennially. The Departmental Assemblies are to select five persons from each of the classes of agriculturists, miners, proprietors or merchants, and manufacturers; the rest of the quota to be chosen by them from distinguished individuals. Those who are to be appointed by the President and the Supreme Court, are to be taken from among individuals who have signalized themselves in the civil, military, and ecclesiastical career. Senators must possess an annual income of two thousand dollars.

The Congress, so constituted, will sit twice a year for the space of three months, commencing its terms on the 1st of January and 1st of July. Its members are not allowed to obtain place or preferment from the Government, except for the most imperative reasons.

A third body, called the Permanent Deputation, is to be formed by this Congress, and will be composed of four members of the Senate and five of the Chamber, whose term of office shall continue until the next meeting of the National Assembly and the election of their successors. The duty of this Permanent Deputation is to call extra sessions of Congress whenever they may be decreed by the Government, and to receive the certificates of the election of President of the Republic, Senators, and Ministers of the Supreme Court of Justice.

The fifth Title defines the EXECUTIVE POWER, which is confided for *five years* to a President, who must be a Mexican by birth, in the full enjoyment of all his rights of citizenship, more than forty years of age, and a resident of the Republic at the time of his election.

Among the numerous duties prescribed for him by the Bases, are the following:

To impose fines not exceeding \$500 on those who disobey his orders, and are wanting in due respect and obedience to the laws.

To see that prompt justice is administered; to visit the tribunals whenever he is informed of delays, or that prejudicial disorders exist in those bodies; to require that a preference be given to causes concerning the public welfare, and to exact information touching the same whenever it may be deemed proper.

To object ("*hacer observaciones*") within thirty days (after audience of the Council, which will be hereafter described,) to the projects of laws approved by the Chambers, suspending their operation in the mean time. If the project be reapproved, the Government may suspend it until the near termination of the period when the Chambers can consider the subject. If it be then approved by two-thirds of both bodies, the Government will be obliged to publish it as a law. If the thirty days terminate after the regular period of the session, the Government is to direct its observations to the Permanent Deputation; and if the term pass without any action by the President, the law will be considered as sanctioned, and published without delay.

The President may *declare war*, and dispose of the armed forces of the nation as he sees fit, according to the objects of their institution. He may expel from the Republic unnaturalized foreigners, who are deemed dangerous; and he may name orators from the Council to defend the opinions of the Government before the Chambers.

THE COUNCIL OF THE GOVERNMENT is to be composed of seventeen persons named *by the President*, whose tenure of office is perpetual, and whose duties are to give their aid to the Government in all matters required in these Bases, and others upon which it shall be proper to consult them. It is their privilege, moreover, to propose to the Government all regulations and systems they may deem necessary for the public good in every branch of the administration.

By the sixth Title, the JUDICIAL POWER of the country is deposited in a Supreme Court, in Departmental Tribunals, and others already established by law. There is to be a *perpetual* Court Martial, chosen by the President.

The GOVERNMENT OF THE DEPARTMENTS is regulated by the seventh Title.

Each Department is to have an Assembly composed of not more than *eleven*, nor less than *seven*, who must be twenty-five years of age, and possessed of the qualifications required for a Deputy to Congress. Their term of office is four years.

The powers of these Assemblies are very simple and irresponsible, and scarcely amount to more than a species of municipal police, the whole

of which is subject to the review of the President of the Republic, and of a Governor appointed by the President.

Title eighth, relates to the ELECTORAL POWER.

The population of Mexico is divided into sections of *five hundred inhabitants* for the election of primary Juntas, and the citizens will vote, by ticket, for one elector for every *five hundred inhabitants*. These *primary* electors will name the *secondary*, who are to form the ELECTORAL COLLEGE of the Department in the ratio of *one secondary* elector for every *twenty* of the *primary*. This Electoral College, again, will elect the Deputies to Congress, and the members of the Departmental Assembly; and its members must have an income qualification of at least five hundred dollars per annum.

On the 1st of November of the year previous to the expiration of the Presidential term, each Departmental Assembly, by a majority of votes, or, in case of a tie, by lot, will select a person as President for the succeeding five years. There is no clause in the Instrument limiting the term or terms for which an individual may be elected, or prescribing a mode of supplying the vacancy occasioned by his death, resignation, or incompetency.

Such is an outline of the chief features of this remarkable Document. At its opening, it declares the establishment of a Popular Representative Government, yet nothing can be less *popular* in its provisions than the Instrument itself. The people are divided into classes of Citizens and Inhabitants. Property qualifications are created, while domestic servants, and the clergy, (no matter how honest, excellent and virtuous they may be,) are disfranchised in the same category with gamblers and drunkards, though they possess both the required income and education.

The opinion of the people is not to be taken directly by vote in regard to the men who are to represent them in the Departments and in Congress, or to govern them in the Presidency; but their sentiments are to be filtered through three bodies of Electors before their representation is finally effected. And, last of all, the supreme power is vested in a CENTRAL Government, while the people are left with scarce a shadow of authority over their homes and interests in the Departments.

It will be at once observed, that President Santa Anna has thus succeeded in enforcing his favorite scheme of Centralism. He must, therefore, become directly responsible for its results, whether for evil or for good, and the glory or disgrace of his country, in the estimation of all foreign countries, must alight upon his head alone.

Qualifications, property, and the intrenchments of power, fortify him on every side. He is very distant from the people. The four millions of Mexican Indians, (scarcely one of whom ever had an annual income of two hundred dollars in his life,) must always be unrepresented in the Government. No hope is proposed to them of advancement or regeneration; while the Chief Magistrate, himself, is surrounded by a complicated machine, that wants every element of democratic simplicity, and possesses a thousand inlets to corruption and mismanagement. If it operates well, it secures strong central authority. If it operates badly, it must break to pieces like some cumbrous engine destroyed by the confusion and multiplicity of its forces.

In either event, the President may deem himself safe. If the Bases succeed in giving peace, progress, and prosperity to Mexico, he will have the honor of the movement. But if he finds that they are not efficacious, or are likely to injure his schemes, it will be a task neither of difficulty nor danger, in so complicated a maze, to loosen some trifling screw, or throw some petty wheel from its axle, by which the whole must be disarranged without the responsibility of even its humblest engineers.

So long as the President rules under an instrument which gives him complete control of the army, the power to declare war, entire patronage of the civil list, the right to impose fines, veto laws, and interfere with the judiciary;—he will possess an authority too great to be intrusted to any one individual in our day and generation.

In the preceding sketch of Mexican Republicanism for the last twenty years, you will observe that I have not aimed to give an extended notice of the various leaders who placed themselves at the head of different movements. I have not done so, because I perceived no evidence of a *progressive* principle throughout the revolutions. The Government has generally been strong enough to suppress all disturbances but those that were countenanced by Santa Anna. With a true love of freedom among a few, a scramble for power among others, and carelessness or supineness among the great body of the people,—the country has gone on blundering from revolution to revolution, without advancing nearer to liberty and enlightenment than did the Barons of old when they sallied forth on feudal forays against each other.