

CHAPTER V.

DON AUGUSTINO ITURBIDE.

Rise of Iturbide—His services in the Spanish cause—Plan of Iguala—O'Donoju—Treaty of Cordova—Iturbide proclaimed emperor—Abdicates—His "Statement"—Returns to Mexico—Arrested and executed—Republican constitution framed.

THIS person was, at the period we have reached, the leading character of his country. When the revolution broke out, he was a lieutenant in the militia of Valladolid, of which province he was a native. He was very handsome, of elegant address, and with polished manners, as well as bold and daring. He was one of the first to look into the nature of the quarrel between Mexico and the mother country, and to adopt the cause of his native land. How this connexion terminated is now a mystery, two stories having been told, the one by Iturbide, that he was disgusted with their projects and refused to participate in them, in spite of the great offers they made him; and the other by the insurgents, that he demanded more than they thought his services worth, so young and so little known as he was. One thing is, however, sure, the insurgents committed a great oversight, as Iturbide would have been an invaluable acquisition at any price. Be this as it may, all negotiations were broken off, and Iturbide joined the troops assembled by the viceroy Vanegas for the defence of Mexico in 1810, and distinguished himself under the orders of Truxillo at Las Cruces. From that moment his rise was rapid, and his knowledge of the country and people rendered his



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services invaluable in every expedition. As a guerilla chieftain his services were important, and he inflicted on the insurgents two of the most important blows they sustained, at Valladolid and Puruaran (where Morelos's army was defeated and Matamoros captured). He never failed but once, which was in the attack on Corporo in 1815; when he was foiled, as will be remembered, by one of the ablest men Mexico has yet produced. He was appointed afterwards to a separate command in the Baxio, a rare honor for a creole. In this command he sullied his high reputation by wanton cruelty; writing to the viceroy after a battle he had won at Salvatierra, he says: "In honor of the day (Good Friday) I have just ordered three hundred *excommunicados* to be shot!" Iturbide's friends deny the authenticity of this letter, but the original is said to be in the archives of Mexico. He, however, shared this reproach with almost all who were engaged in that war. He was afterwards recalled for rapacity and extortion, to Mexico, where he remained from 1816 to 1820, when Apodaca again employed him as the fittest agent to overthrow the remnant of the constitution, and sent him to the western coast, at the head of a body of men, with the assistance of whom he was to proclaim the restoration of the king's absolute authority. During his retirement, Iturbide had devoted himself to religious exercises, and extended his intercourse among the clergy, by whom he was highly esteemed, and through whose influence he regained much of the popularity he had destroyed by his cruelty.

In the month of February, 1821, Iturbide left the city of Mexico to take the command of a large native force, ostensibly with a view to act against the insurgents in the south, who, under Guerrero, were again

becoming formidable; it is, however, supposed that he was really charged to keep in check the Spanish troops, who were principally collected in that quarter, whilst the viceroy should declare the re-establishment of the authority of the absolute sovereign at the capital.

Thus far, we have stated what appear to have been the facts; the remainder of Iturbide's proceedings are well known. On the 24th of February, 1821, he assembled the chief officers of his army at Iguala, and presented them a set of propositions for the institution of a national government in Mexico, which are termed in the history of that country, *The Plan of Iguala*. The amount of these propositions was:

1. That Mexico should form an independent empire, the crown of which should be offered to the king of Spain, and, in the event of his refusal, to the other princes of his family in succession, on condition that the person accepting should reside in the country, and should swear to observe a constitution to be fixed by a congress;
2. That the Roman Catholic religion should be supported, and the rights, immunities, and property of its clergy should be preserved and secured;
3. That all the actual inhabitants of Mexico, whatever might be their birth-place or descent, should enjoy the same civil rights.

These three propositions were termed *The three Guarantees*, and an army was to be raised for their establishment and defence. This plan is generally supposed to have been drawn up by the heads of the religious congregation of the *Profesa* in Mexico, under the direction of the bishop of Puebla, who was one of the most attached friends of Iturbide; the latter, however, always insisted that he himself had been the sole deviser

of it, although he admits that it was shown to and approved by the other persons mentioned.

The proposed arrangements having been agreed to by the officers, were, on the 2d of March following, submitted to the troops, who received them with enthusiasm, and immediately assumed the name and colors of *the Army of the three Guarantees*. Guerrero, soon after, added his forces to those of Iturbide, and they also received an important accession in the person of Guadalupe Victoria, who had for the three years previous wandered in the forests of Vera Cruz without seeing or being seen by a human being. The news of the revolution spread rapidly throughout Mexico. At San Luis Potosi, Colonel Anastasio Bustamente, (afterwards president of the Mexican republic), with his whole regiment, declared in favor of the plan of Iguala; the province of Vera Cruz was in insurrection, and the city was besieged by Don Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, then a young officer; Puebla, Guanajuato, Queretaro, Durango, Valladolid, and all the principal places except the capital, were soon in quiet possession of the independents. The Mexicans, indeed, scrupled a little at first at the idea of receiving a Bourbon prince; but they soon became assured, that there was but little prospect of the execution of that part of the plan.

The viceroy, it is believed, was at first inclined to accede to the plan of Iguala; certain it is, that he took no very decided measures to oppose it, and he was on account of his apathy or apparent acquiescence deposed on the 6th of July, by the Spanish troops at the capital, who then placed General Novella at the head of the government. Ere the opposing parties could be brought in presence of each other, General O'Donoju, an old and highly respected officer, arrived at Vera Cruz from

Spain, with the commission of captain-general of Mexico; and seeing at once that all efforts to arrest the revolution by means of the Spanish forces in Mexico would be unavailing, he proposed to treat with Iturbide. This proposition was accepted, and the two generals met at Cordova, about sixty miles from Vera Cruz, on the 24th of August. The result of their conference was a treaty signed on the day of their meeting, by which the captain general recognised the independence of the Mexican empire upon the basis contained in the plan of Iguala: and it was agreed, that two commissioners should instantly be sent to Spain, to communicate it to the government of that country, and to offer the crown of Mexico as therein arranged. It was also agreed, that a junta should instantly be appointed, which should select persons to form a regency for the administration of the affairs of the empire, until the arrival of the sovereign, and that a cortes should be convened for the purpose of forming a constitution; moreover, that the army of the three guarantees should occupy the capital and strong places, and that the Spanish troops should, as soon as possible, be sent out of the country.

The independence of Mexico may be considered as commencing on the 24th of August, 1821, when this treaty of Cordova was signed by the highest legitimate Spanish authority in the country on the one hand, and on the other, by the person actually possessing the supreme power over it, by the will of the great majority of its inhabitants. Agreeably to its terms, the commissioners were immediately sent to Spain, the Spanish troops were withdrawn to places assigned for their reception, and the army of the three guarantees entered the capital on the 27th of September. On that same day, the junta was formed, its members being all chosen by

the general-in-chief; this board immediately elected the bishop of Puebla as its president, drew up a manifesto to the nation which was issued on the 13th of October, summoned a cortes of the empire to meet in February following, and appointed a regency, the presidency of which was, of course, conferred upon Iturbide. This daring man was, at the same time, made generalissimo of all the forces, and invested with almost regal powers and dignities, for the support of which he was to receive one hundred and twenty thousand dollars per annum. O'Donoju could not survive the mortification of being obliged to countenance these proceedings, by which his country was robbed of its most valuable possessions, and on the 8th of October he died in the city of Mexico.

Iturbide now employed himself diligently, in preparing the Mexicans for receiving him as the chief of the nation. With this view, he did all in his power to ingratiate himself with the aristocracy, the clergy, and the army, sedulously separating himself from those by whom the war of independence had been maintained. His plans for the organization of the congress, were however, not accepted by the junta; instead of two houses, but one was allowed, composed of deputies elected by the people; it was, however, arranged, that those provinces which sent more than four members, should choose one ecclesiastic, one military man, and one lawyer.

The Mexican cortes or congress, thus constituted, met at the capital on the 24th of February, 1822; and ere they began their operations, an oath was taken by each member, separately, to support the provisions of the plan of Iguala. Notwithstanding this oath, however, they were soon divided into three parties; *the Republicans*, anxious to adopt a system similar to that of the

United States; the *Bourbonists*, in favor of the exact execution of the plan of Iguala; and the *Iturbidists*, who wished their idol to be elevated at once to the throne. The Republicans and the Bourbonists united against the third party, and the discussions became violent.

While these things were going on in Mexico, the Spanish cortes had, among other serious matters, been deliberating on the measures which should be adopted with regard to America, and various plans of pacification were proposed. At length arrived the news of the insurrectionary movement at Iguala, and afterwards, the commissioners who were empowered to offer the crown of the Mexican empire to the king and the other members of the royal family. How these propositions were likely to be received by the cortes, may be easily imagined; the convention of Cordova between Iturbide and O'Donoju was declared void, and orders were sent to the representatives of Spain, in other countries, to protest against any recognition of the independence of Mexico. It was also resolved, that efforts should be made for the preservation or recovery of the American possessions, by reinforcing the Spanish troops in those countries; this resolution could, however, only be regarded as an energetic expression of opinion on the part of the cortes, as not a man nor a dollar could then have been spared from the kingdom, torn by internal disturbances, and threatened by foreign enemies.

These determinations of the cortes, taken on the 12th of February, 1822, were made known in Mexico in April following, where they excited considerable sensation. In anticipation of such replies to the propositions made agreeably to the plan of Iguala, Iturbide had been employing every means in his power, to create a strong feeling in his favor among the people, as well as

in the army. The congress, however, were in general opposed to him, and many of its members wished to retire, in order to avoid the scenes which they saw must follow. The crisis at length took place on the 18th of May, when the army and the people of the capital proclaimed Iturbide emperor of Mexico, and the remaining deputies of the congress sanctioned the choice by a decree. On the following day, the regency resigned its powers, the new emperor took the oath to support the independence, religion, and constitution of Mexico, and was installed in the ancient palace of the viceroys, under the title of Augustin the First.

It may be supposed, that this choice was not hailed with universal satisfaction, and that the old chiefs of the insurgents, who had for so many years been submitting to dangers and miseries, could scarcely be pleased to see one of their most bitter persecutors raised to supreme power over them in a moment. Accordingly, Guerrero, Bravo, and Guadalupe Victoria, soon prepared to betake themselves to their old haunts, and to reassemble their followers in opposition to the new sovereign; and even Santa Anna, the most ardent partisan of the imperial cause, showed signs of discontent. The congress, too, was loud in its complaints against the extravagance and the despotism of its master; who, having endeavored in vain to quiet this body, by imprisoning some of its members, at length, on the 30th of October, closed its doors, and replaced it by a constituent junta, composed of forty-five persons of his own selection.

The constituent junta, established by Iturbide, did nothing to satisfy the people; and an insurrection broke out in the northern provinces, headed by a man named Garza. This was soon put down by the forces of the government; Iturbide was not, however, equally suc-

cessful with regard to the second attack made upon his authority. He had conceived suspicions of Santa Anna's fidelity, which induced him to withdraw that officer from his command, and he ordered him to appear at the capital. Santa Anna learned the news of his removal at Jalapa, a city on the road between Mexico and Vera Cruz; and without losing a moment, he set off for the latter place, which he reached before the arrival of the emperor's orders. Assembling the garrison, he harangued them upon the subject of the injustice and despotism of the existing government, and called upon them to aid him in overthrowing it; they received his proposition with joy, and immediately joined him in proclaiming a republic. Santa Anna having then reduced to submission the neighboring towns, marched against Jalapa; from this place, however, he was repulsed by Echavari, the captain-general of the province, and forced to take refuge for a time in a mountain, overlooking the celebrated royal bridge, thirty miles from Vera Cruz. Here he was joined by Guadalupe Victoria, on whose appearance many flocked to the standard of the insurgents; their success nevertheless remained a matter of doubt, until Echavari took part with them, and a new plan was formed on the 2d of February, 1823, called the *Act of Casas Matas*, by which that of Iguala was entirely superseded.

The Act of Casas Matas, guarantying a republican form of government, was universally adopted, and Iturbide, finding himself deserted by all parties, abdicated the throne on the 19th of March, just ten months after he had first ascended it. He was escorted to the coast near Vera Cruz, and on the 11th of May embarked with his family for Leghorn. No one can suspect Iturbide of cowardice, and what prompted him to abdicate is a mys-

tery which, perhaps, can best be solved by his own statement:

THE epoch in which I have lived has been a critical one; equally critical is the moment at which I am about to submit to the world a sketch of my political career. The public are not uninformed of my name, or of my actions; but they have known both through a medium greatly discolored by the interests of those persons who have transmitted them to distant countries. There is one great nation particularly, in which several individuals have disapproved of my conduct, and have misrepresented my character. It becomes my duty, therefore, to relate my own history. I shall tell with the frankness of a soldier, both what I have been and what I am. My actions and their motives may thus be fairly judged by every impartial person of the present age, still more by posterity. I know no other passion or interest save that of transmitting to my children a name which they need not be ashamed to bear.

It would be an idle waste of time to set about refuting the various attacks which have been circulated against me; they are framed in terms calculated only to reflect dishonor upon their authors.

It was my good fortune to break the chains which enthralled my country: I proclaimed her independence: I yielded to the voice of a grateful and a generous people, and allowed myself to be seated on a throne which I had created, and had destined for others; I repressed the spirit of intrigue and disorder. These are my crimes; notwithstanding which I now appear, and shall continue to appear, with as sincere a countenance before the Spaniards and their king, as I have worn before the Mexicans and their new rulers. To both

countries I have rendered important services, though neither knew how to profit by the advantages which I acquired for them.

In the year 1810, I was simply a subaltern officer; a lieutenant in the provincial regiment of Valladolid, my native city. It is well known, that the individuals who serve in those troops receive no pay. The military profession was not the principal object of my pursuit. I possessed an independence, and attended to the improvement of my property, without disturbing my mind with the desire of obtaining public employments. I did not stand in need of them, either for the purpose of affording me a subsistence, or of adding distinction to my name, as it pleased Providence to give me an honorable origin, which my forefathers have never stained, and which down to my time all my kinsmen have supported by their conduct.

When the revolution, set on foot by Don Miguel Hidalgo, curate of Dolores, broke out, he offered me the rank of lieutenant-general. The offer was one that might have tempted any young man without experience, and at an age when his ambition might be excited. I declined it, however, because I was satisfied that the plans of the curate were ill contrived, and that they would produce only disorder, massacre, and devastation, without accomplishing the object which he had in view. The result demonstrated the truth of my predictions. Hidalgo, and those who followed his example, desolated the country, destroyed private property, deepened the hatred between the Americans and Europeans, sacrificed thousands of victims, obstructed the fountains of public wealth, disorganized the army, annihilated industry, rendered the condition of the Americans worse than it was before, by exciting the Spaniards to a sense of the

dangers which threatened them; they moreover corrupted the manners of the people, and far from obtaining independence, increased the obstacles which were opposed to it.

If, therefore, I took up arms at that epoch, it was not to make war against the Americans, but against a lawless band who harassed the country. The Mexican congress, at a later period, proposed that statues should be erected to the leaders of that insurrection, and that funeral honors should be paid to the ashes of those who perished in it. I have warred with those chiefs, and I should war with them again under similar circumstances. The word insurrection in that instance did not mean independence and equal liberty; its object was, not to reclaim the rights of the nation, but to exterminate all the Europeans, to destroy their possessions, and to trample on the laws of war, humanity, and religion. The belligerent parties gave no quarter: disorder presided over the operations on both sides, though it must be acknowledged, that one party are censurable, not only for the evils which they caused, but also for having provoked the other party to retaliate the atrocities which were perpetrated by their enemies.

About the month of October, in the year 1810, I was offered a safe conduct for my father and family, together with assurances that his property and mine should be exempted from conflagration and plunder, and that the people attached to them should not be subject to assassination (which was at that time a matter of ordinary occurrence), on the sole condition that I should quit the standard of the king and remain neutral. These propositions were made to me by the leaders of that disastrous insurrection, and are well known to the Mexicans. I was then at San Felipe del Obraje, commanding a

small detachment of infantry, and at a distance of four leagues from me was Hidalgo with a considerable force. I gave the same answers to these overtures, as to the propositions already mentioned. I always looked upon that man as criminal, who, in a season of political convulsions, sheltering himself in cowardly indolence, remained a cold spectator of the evils which oppressed his country, and made no effort to mitigate, at least, if he could not remove, the sufferings of his fellow-citizens. I therefore kept the field, with a view equally to serve the king, the Spaniards, and the Mexicans.

I was in consequence engaged in several expeditions, and had the good fortune to see victory never desert the troops under my command, except on one inconsiderable occasion (in 1815), when I made an attack on Coporo, a military point which was well fortified, and inaccessible from the nature of the ground. I then served under the orders of Llanos, a Spanish general. He commanded me to attack the place; delicacy forbade me to offer any opposition to his mandate, though I was fully convinced that the result could not be favorable. As soon as I was on the march, I communicated my opinion to the general by despatch: I retreated, as I had foreseen I should do, but I had the good fortune to preserve four-fifths of my force, in an action in which I apprehended that I should have lost the whole.

I engaged with the enemy as often as he offered battle, or as I came near him, frequently with inferior numbers on my part. I led the sieges of several fortified places, from which I dislodged the enemy, and I rendered them incapable of serving afterwards as asylums for the discontented. I had no other opponents than those of the cause which I defended, nor any other rivals than those who were envious of my success.

In 1816 the provinces of Guanajuato and Valladolid, and the army of the north were under my command; but I resigned my office through a sense of delicacy, and retired to pursue my natural disposition, in the cultivation of my estates. The reason of my resignation was this: two inhabitants of Queretaro, who were subsequently assisted by four or five families in Guanajuato, three of which consisted of the families of three brothers, and ought therefore to be considered as one, sent a memorial against me to the viceroy. Many were the crimes of which they accused me; they could not, however, find one witness to support their charges, though I had resigned for the purpose of removing every obstacle to their coming forward, by taking away the motives of hope on the one side, or of fear on the other. The families of the countess dowager of Rul, and of Alman, gave proof, by abandoning the accusation, that they had been taken by surprise, and that they had been deceived. The viceroys, Calleja and Apodaca, took cognizance of the matter, and after hearing the reports of the Ayuntamientos, the curates, the political chiefs, the commandants and military chiefs, and of all the most respectable persons in the two provinces, and the army (who not only made my cause their own, but gave me tokens of their unqualified approbation), they affirmed the dictamen of their auditor, and of the two civil ministers, declaring that the accusation was false and calumnious in all its parts, that I had permission to institute an action of damages against the slanderers, and that I might return to discharge the functions of the office which I had resigned. I did not choose to resume the command, nor to exercise my right of action, and I gave up the pay which I enjoyed.

The ingratitude which I experienced from men had

wounded my feelings deeply; their insincerity, to call it by no severer name, made me shun every opportunity of again becoming the object of their attacks. Besides, the anger of the contending parties having expended itself, and the country having returned to a state of comparative tranquillity, I was relieved from that sense of obligation which six years before had compelled me to have recourse to arms. My country no longer stood in need of my services, and without betraying my duty, I thought that I might now rest from the toils of the camp.

In 1820 the constitution was re-established in Spain. The new order of things, the ferment in which the Peninsula was placed, the machinations of the discontented, the want of moderation amongst the supporters of the new system, the vacillation of the authorities, and the conduct of the government and cortes at Madrid (who, from the decrees which they issued, and the speeches which some of the deputies pronounced, appeared to have determined on alienating the colonies), filled the heart of every good patriot with the desire of independence, and excited amongst the Spaniards established in the country, the apprehension that all the horrors of the former insurrection were about to be repeated. Those who exercised the chief authority, and had the forces at their command, took such precautions as fear naturally dictated; and those persons who at the former epoch had lived by disorder, made preparations for again turning it to advantage. In such a state of things the richest and most beautiful part of America was about to become again the prey of contending factions. In every quarter clandestine meetings took place, for the purpose of discussing the form of government which ought to be adopted.

Among the Europeans, and their adherents, some wished for the establishment of the Spanish constitution. They succeeded in realizing their views to a certain extent, but the system was badly understood, and the loose manner in which it was obeyed, indicated the shortness of its duration. There were some who conceived that it ought to undergo modifications, inasmuch as the constitution framed by the cortes at Cadiz was inapplicable to "New Spain." Others there were who sighed after the old absolute government, as the best support of their lucrative employments, which they exercised in a despotic manner, and by which they had gained a monopoly. The privileged and powerful classes fomented these different parties, attaching themselves to the one or the other, according to the extent of their political information, or the projects of aggrandizement which their imaginations presented. The Americans wished for independence, but they were not agreed as to the mode of effecting it, still less as to the form of government which they should prefer. With respect to the former object, many were of opinion that in the first place, all the Europeans should be exterminated, and their property given up to confiscation. The less sanguinary would have been contented with banishing them from the country, thus reducing thousands of families to a state of orphanage. The moderate party suggested only that they should be excluded from all public offices, and degraded to the condition in which they had kept the natives of the country for three centuries. As to the form of government, one party proposed a monarchy, tempered by the Spanish, or some other constitution; a second party wished for a federative republic; a third for a central republic; and the partisans of each system, full of enthusiasm, were

impatient for the accomplishment of their different objects.

I had friends in the principal towns, many of whom had been long connected with my family; others I had known in my expeditions, and during the period when I held my command. The army, I had reason to believe, was strongly attached to me. All those who knew me did their utmost to supply me with information. I had visited the best provinces, obtained accurate information as to the nature of the country and the character of the inhabitants, the points capable of being fortified, and the resources upon which dependence might be placed. I saw new revolutions on the eve of breaking out; my country was about to be drenched in blood; I was led to believe that I had the power to save her, and I did not hesitate to undertake so sacred a duty.

I formed my plan, known under the title of "the plan of Iguala." A pamphlet, which I have seen, has asserted that that project was the work of a club of serviles, who held their meeting at the *profesa*, a building belonging to the congregation of St. Philip, in Mexico. Any person who reads the document must be convinced, from its contents alone, that it could not have been dictated by servilism; I put out of the question the opinions of those persons to whom it is attributed, and shall only say that they are matters upon which the multitude is very commonly mistaken. For me, I look upon those persons as men eminently respectable for their virtues and their knowledge. After the plan had been drawn out, I consulted upon it with distinguished individuals of different parties; not one of them disapproved of it; it was not modified in any manner; nothing was added or erased.

In tracing out this project, my aim was to give inde-

pendence to my country, because such was the general desire of the Americans; a desire founded on natural feelings, and on principles of justice. It was, besides, the only means by which the interests of the two nations could be secured. The Spaniards would not allow themselves to be convinced that their decline began with their acquisition of the colonies, while the colonists were fully persuaded that the time of their emancipation had arrived.

The plan of Iguala guaranteed the religion which we inherited from our ancestors. To the reigning family of Spain, it held out the only prospect which survived for preserving those extensive and fertile provinces. To the Mexicans, it granted the right of enacting their own laws, and of having their government established within their own territory. To the Spaniards, it offered an asylum, which, if they had possessed any foresight, they would not have despised. It secured the rights of equality, of property, and of liberty, the knowledge of which is within the reach of every one, and the possession of which, when once acquired, every man would exert all his power to preserve. The plan of Iguala extinguished the odious distinction of castes, offered to every stranger safety, convenience, and hospitality; it left the road to advancement open to merit; conciliated the good opinion of every reasonable man; and opposed an impenetrable barrier to the machinations of the discontented.

The operation of putting the plan into execution was crowned with the happy result which I had anticipated. Six months were sufficient to untwist the entangled knot which had bound the two worlds. Without bloodshed, without fire, robbery, devastation, without a tear, my country was free, and transformed from a colony

into an empire. In order to render the work conformable to received customs, only one additional circumstance was required—a treaty, which the diplomatists would add to the long catalogue of those which they already possess, and which commonly turn out to be only so many proofs of the bad faith of men, as they are not seldom violated when it is the interest of one of the parties, and he happens to be the strongest. Nevertheless, it is right to follow the laws of custom. On the 24th of August, I had an interview with that most worthy Spanish general, Don Juan de O Donoju; and on the same day was concluded between us a treaty, which bears the name of the place where it was signed, and was sent off to his majesty, Ferdinand VII., by an officer of O Donoju's suit.

The treaty of Cordova opened to me the gates of the capital, which otherwise I could have forced. But it is always delightful to me to be spared the necessity of exposing my men, and of shedding the blood of those who had been my companions in arms.

There were persons who raised questions on the treaty of Cordova, by doubting my authority, as well as that of O Donoju, to enter into a compact upon a matter of so much delicacy. It would be easy to answer them, by saying that in me was deposited the will of the Mexican people at that period; in the first place, because that which I signed in their name was conformable to what they must have desired; and secondly, because they had already given proofs of their sentiments; such as were able to bear arms, by joining me, and others by assisting me in every way which lay in their power. In every place through which I passed, I was received in the most enthusiastic manner. Seeing that no one was forced to exhibit these demonstrations, it is to be inferred

that they approved of my intentions, and that their ideas accorded with mine. With respect to General O Donoju, he was the principal authority furnished with credentials from his government, and even though he might not have received specific instructions for that particular case, the circumstances authorized him to do the best he could for his country.

Had this general commanded an army superior to mine, and possessed resources sufficient to enable him to carry on war against me, he might have properly refused to sign the treaty of Cordova, without first communicating with his government, and receiving its answer. But attended as he was with scarcely a dozen officers, the whole country being in my power, his mission being adverse to the sentiments of the people, unable to procure intelligence of the state of things, without any knowledge of the localities, shut up in a weak fortress, which was exposed to our fire, with an army in front of him, and the few troops of the king who had remained in Mexico, commanded by an intrusive chief; under such circumstances, let those persons who disapprove of the conduct of O Donoju say what they would have done if they had been in his place, or what they imagine he ought to have done? He must have signed the treaty of Cordova, or have become my prisoner, or have returned to Spain! he had no other alternative. If he had chosen either of the latter, all his countrymen would have been compromised, and the government of Spain would have lost every hope of those advantages which it then obtained; advantages which it never would have acquired, if I had not been in the command, and if O Donoju had not been an able politician as well as a faithful Spaniard.

I entered Mexico on the 27th of September, 1821;

on the same day was installed the junta of government which is spoken of in the plan of Iguala, and the treaty Cordova. It was nominated by me, but not according to my arbitrary choice; for I wished to assemble together such men of every party, as enjoyed the highest reputation amongst their friends. This was the only means which could be resorted to in such extraordinary circumstances for consulting the public opinion.

Up to this point my measures gained general approbation, and in no instance were my hopes deceived. But as soon as the junta began to exercise its functions, it perverted the powers which had been granted to it; and within a few days after its installation, I saw what was likely to be the issue. From that moment I shuddered for the fate that awaited my fellow-citizens. It was in my power to resume the whole authority, and I asked myself, ought I not to resume it, if such a step be essential to the safety of my country? I considered, however, that it would have been rash in me to resolve on undertaking such an enterprise, relying solely on my own judgment. If I were to consult with others, my design might transpire, and intentions, which had sprung solely from my love for my country, and from a desire to promote its happiness, might be attributed to ambitious views, and construed into a violation of my promise. Besides, even if I were to accomplish everything which I proposed, I could not have done it without infringing on the plan of Iguala, which it was my great object to maintain, because I looked upon it as the ægis of the public welfare. These were the true reasons which, together with others of less importance, restrained me from taking any decisive measures. They would have brought me into collision with the favorite feelings of the cultivated nations of the world, and have

rendered me, for some time, an object of hatred to a set of men, who were infatuated by chimerical ideas, and who had never learned, or had soon forgotten, that the republic which was most jealous of its liberty, possessed also its dictators. I may add, that I have always endeavored to be consistent in my principles; and as I had proposed to form a junta, I fulfilled my promise, and was reluctant to undo the work of my own hands.

There were at this time some deputies in Mexico who set little value on the public happiness, when it is opposed to their private interest, and who had acquired reputation by some actions that appeared generous to those who were benefited by them without knowing the secret views by which they had been prompted. They were well acquainted with the mysteries of intrigue, ever ready to stoop to servility when they found it expedient, and to assume insolence when their star was in the ascendant. These men disliked me because I had hitherto been successful in my career, and they began to foment those parties which were afterwards known under the titles of Republicans and Bourbonists, and which, however they differed on other points, were united in their opposition to me.

The republicans were hostile to me, because they well knew they could never bring me to contribute to the establishment of a government, which, whatever might be its attractions, did not suit the Mexicans. Nature produces nothing by sudden leaps; she operates by intermediate degrees. The moral world follows the laws of the physical. To think that we could emerge all at once from a state of debasement, such as that of slavery, and from a state of ignorance, such as had been inflicted upon us for three hundred years, during which we had neither books nor instructors, and the possession of

knowledge had been thought a sufficient cause for persecution; to think that we could gain information and refinement in a moment, as if by enchantment; that we could acquire every virtue, forget prejudices, and give up false pretensions, was a vain expectation, and could only have entered into the visions of an enthusiast.

The Bourbonists, on the other hand, wished for my fall, because as soon as the decision of the government of Madrid was made known, through its decree of the 13th of February, which was subsequently transmitted by the minister for the colonies, and in which the conduct of O Donoju was formally disapproved, the treaty of Cordova became null and void, as to that part of it which invited the Bourbons to the crown of Mexico, and effective with respect to the nation's entering into the full enjoyment of its right to elect as sovereign the individual whom it would deem most worthy of that high office. The Bourbonists, therefore, no longer expecting that a Bourbon would reign in Mexico, thought only of our returning to our former state of dependence; a retrogression which was impossible, considering the impotence of the Spaniards, and the determination of the Americans.

Hence I became the object of attack to both these parties, because as I had the public force at my command, and was the centre of general opinion, it was necessary to the preponderance of either party that I should cease to exist.

The leaders of the factions spared no pains to gain proselytes; and certainly they found many to adhere to them. Some who were the least experienced, suffered themselves to be easily led away; because they saw nothing more in the projects on foot than what was represented to them, and there is no design of which dif-

ferent views may not be given; some hoped that by the subversion of the government they might advance their own fortunes; and others, the natural enemies of established order, in whatever system it prevails, were anxious only for a change. Among the latter, one might be named who values himself on his literary accomplishments, and has made himself conspicuous in the revolution.*

The first duty of the junta after its installation, was to frame the Convocatoria, or proclamation for the assemblage of a congress, which was to give a constitution to the monarchy. The junta took more time to perform this duty than the urgency of the case permitted, and committed several errors in framing the convocatoria. It was extremely defective, but with all its imperfections it was accepted; I could do no more than perceive the evil, and lament it. The census of the provinces was not consulted; hence, for instance, one deputy was appointed for a province containing a hundred thousand inhabitants, and four for a province scarcely peopled by half that number. Nor did it at all enter into the calculations of the junta, that the representatives ought to be in proportion to the civilization of the represented. Three or four individuals might be easily selected from among a hundred well-educated citizens, who might possess the qualifications necessary to constitute good deputies; whilst among a thousand, who are without education, and are ignorant of the first rudiments, scarcely one man can be met with of sufficient ability to know what is conducive to the public welfare—whose mind is sufficiently enlarged to take

* The individual here referred to is probably Don Lucas Alaman.