

## CHAPTER VIII.

VALENTINO GOMEZ FARIAS AND ANASTASIO  
BUSTAMENTE.

Farias an opponent of Iturbide—Elected vice-president—Attempts to obtain liberal institutions—Congress suspends its sessions—Farias banished—Returns to Mexico—Pronounces against Bustamante's government—His attempt defeated—Early life of Bustamante—Election to the presidency—Banished—Returns to Mexico—His second election to the presidency—Resigns.

VALENTINO GOMEZ FARIAS is one of the most eminent men in Mexico, and has always been found in the same phase of the political world, a partisan of radical reform. His name has appeared in the records of every event since the revolution, having been a *diputado* to the first congresses; always the defender of popular liberties, he opposed Iturbide when the latter made himself a monarch, although one of his partisans at the commencement of his career; supported both Pedraza and Victoria, and has always been willing to stand by any one who would take a step towards the advancement of popular liberty.

He first appears in a prominent position when, at the expiration of Pedraza's presidency, Santa Anna was chosen to succeed him with Farias as his vice-president. The state of affairs in Mexico at this period was most peculiar. Santa Anna was the constitutional president, and sought to destroy the instrument under which he held office so as to extend his authority, while Gomez Farias, a liberal, or "*exaltado*," was anxious to increase the privileges of the people, and assimilate the government to that of the United States his great object of ad-

miration. In the congress of 1833 and 1834, there was a strong majority in favor of the vice-president, and decrees were passed or proposed destroying much of the incubus of oppression, by which the church, heterodox in the eyes of the Catholic world, as it was repugnant to the principles of a free people, would have been removed. Santa Anna long protested against these innovations, and at length began to hint that he would employ force to counteract the views of the reformers. This was a hazardous scheme, the chances of which, however, he had well calculated; and by one of those manœuvres which he so well understood, he began to concentrate his forces around the capital. He proceeded so far as to post a guard at the door of the senate chamber, and gave to the officer in command, Captain Cortez, orders to exclude all but the senators known to be his friends. At this outrage, Cortez, who had been educated in the United States, represented, in a conversation not long afterwards, that though he obeyed his general, he felt as if he were guilty of matricide, knowing that he destroyed the liberties of his country. The consequence was, that the congress immediately declared the freedom of its discussions invaded, and on the 14th of May, 1834, suspended its sessions. This is the last thing a deliberative body should do. It should remember it has no dignity separate from that of its constituents; that it is its duty to do all things, to suffer all things, rather than degrade the character of the nation. A senate should never fly from a foreign enemy; and it may be with some propriety maintained, that it should sit, like the old Romans, calmly in the capitol till Gauls plucked at the beards of the senators.

The senate of Mexico, however, was not Roman. It was not even supported by the prejudices of the people.



It is one of the peculiarities of the Spanish race, on both continents, to love titles. The old Castilian, like the soldier in Kotzebue's "Pizarro," proof to bribes, can be won by an appeal to kindness and vanity. The race is everywhere fond of titles, and consequently jealous of those who possess higher distinction than themselves. Mier y Teran, when he dispersed the congress of Chilpanzingo, said "that instead of attending to the interests of the people, its members were occupied in taking care of themselves, and calling each other *excelentisimos*," and this account seems to exhibit all the characteristics of the legislative assemblies of the country, before or since. The consequence of such a state of affairs could not but be jealousy on the part of the people, the existence of which Santa Anna took advantage of. Immediately on the suspension of its sessions by the congress, Santa Anna appealed to the people by a proclamation, in which he set forth his views in relation to the preservation of religion, order, and law, all of which, he said, were threatened by the vice-president, Farias, and his tyrannical majority in the legislature. How potent this address was, will be understood by a reference to a subsequent chapter, in which is exhibited a statement of the condition of the church. The minds of the people having been prepared by this address, a pronunciamento was effected on the 25th of May, at Cuernavaca, a town of the department of Mexico, about thirty miles from the capital. The plan proposed on this occasion was strange: it put a negative on all prospect of improvement from the extension of religious liberty, by a provision that all laws affecting church property should be repealed; it destroyed liberty of political opinion, by an enactment that all the partisans of the federal system should be banished, that the actual congress had ceased

to exist, and that another should be convened, the members of which were to possess full powers to re-organize the government. This plan was almost universally adhered to, and the session of congress finally ceased. The new congress met on the 1st of January, 1835, as has previously been described, and the first act was to declare the vice-president, Farias, disfranchised, and he was accordingly compelled to retire to New Orleans, where he resided as lately as 1838. It then proceeded to a series of discussions, relative to the form of government, &c., the result of which was a declaration that congress might make any alterations it pleased in the organic form of the government, so that a republican constitution existed, and the Catholic religion was not interfered with.

During the presidency of Bustamante, who seems far purer and less vindictive than any other of the public men of Mexico, the prohibition under which Gomez Farias lay was removed, and he returned to Mexico. Bustamante, it will be recollected, had been a friend of Farias, or, at least, at one period of his life, had professed as devoted an attachment to the old federal system; but during the absence of Santa Anna on his expedition against Texas, he had become chief magistrate under the constitution which declared the Mexican republic one and indivisible, and procured the exile of the subject of this notice. All accounts represent Farias as a pure and disinterested patriot, as one who, had he lived in the United States, would have acted with Jefferson and the other defenders of the greatest liberty against all and any usurpations. Bustamante, on the other hand, was a man of peace, a pupil of that school which believes whatever is safest is best, and which would inculcate the maxim that all things are better than a violation of public peace.



Madame Calderon, in her entertaining book, represents him as boldly avowing these opinions, admirable, perhaps, for a private citizen, but altogether unworthy of the chief of a nation. The minister, however, often finds it convenient to renounce the opinions he had professed when seeking power, and Bustamente, under the old and the new constitution, were different beings. The sanction of an oath, also, gave him an excuse for acting as he did.

No sooner had Farias landed in Mexico, which he did in the latter part of 1839, the date it is almost impossible now to ascertain, than he set to work to arrange his plans, and in General Urrea, already somewhat known from his participation in the campaign of Texas, he found a hand ready to execute what his head would suggest. This pronunciamiento was made on the 15th of July, 1840. At the head of two regiments, one that *del Comercio*, the commandant of which was the celebrated Count Cortina, now distinguished as being not only one of the wealthiest, but most erudite men in Mexico, but who appears to have sustained Bustamente in this movement, they rushed to the palace *del Gobierno*, and imprisoned the president. The whole circumstances are, however, best explained by the government bulletin, an extract from which follows:

"Yesterday, at midnight, Urrea, with a handful of troops belonging to the garrison and its neighborhood, took possession of the National Palace, surprising the guard, and committing the *incivility* of imprisoning his excellency the president, Don Anastasio Bustamente, the commander-in-chief, the *Mayor de la Plaza*, and other chiefs. Don Gabriel Valencia, chief of the *plana mayor* (the staff), General Don Antonio Mozo, and the minister of war, Don Juan Nepomuceno Almonte, re-

united in the citadel, prepared to attack the *pronunciados*, who, arming the lowest populace, took possession of the towers of the cathedral, and of some of the highest edifices in the centre of the city. Although summoned to surrender, at two in the afternoon firing began, and continued till midnight, recommencing at five in the morning, and only ceasing at intervals. The colonel of the sixth regiment, together with a considerable part of his corps, who were in the barracks of the palace, escaped and joined the government troops, who have taken the greatest part of the positions near the square and the palace. His excellency the president, with a part of the troops which had *pronounced* in the palace, made his escape on the morning of the sixteenth, putting himself at the head of the troops who have remained faithful to their colors, and at night published the following proclamation:

"*The President of the Republic to the Mexican Nation.*

"Fellow-Citizens: The seduction which has spread over a very small part of the people and garrison of this capital; the forgetfulness of honor and duty, have caused the defection of a few soldiers, whose misconduct up to this hour has been thrown into confusion by the valiant behavior of the greatest part of the chiefs, officers, and soldiers, who have intrepidly followed the example of the valiant general-in-chief of the *plana mayor* of the army. *The government was not ignorant of the machinations that were carrying on; their authors were well known to it, and it foresaw that the gentleness and clemency which it had hitherto employed in order to disarm them, would be corresponded to with ingratitude.*

"This line of policy has caused the nation to remain



*headless (acefala)* for some hours, and public tranquillity to be disturbed; but my liberty being restored, the dissidents, convinced of the evils which have been and may be caused by these tumults, depend upon a reconciliation for their security. The government will remember that they are misled men, belonging to the great Mexican family, but not for this will it forget how much they have forfeited their rights to respect; nor what is due to the great bulk of the nation. Public tranquillity will be restored in a few hours; the laws will immediately recover their energy, and the government will see them obeyed.

"ANASTASIO BUSTAMENTE.

"MEXICO, July 16th, 1840."

Previous to this the president had escaped. One proclamation in Mexico always produces another, and Farias, who had been proclaimed president by his party, issued the following reply:

"Fellow-Citizens: We present to the civilized world two facts, which, while they will cover with eternal glory the federal army and the heroic inhabitants of this capital, will hand down with execration and infamy, to all future generations, the name of General Bustamente; this man without faith, breaking his solemnly pledged word, after being put at liberty by an excess of generosity; for having promised to take immediate steps to bring about a negotiation of peace, upon the honorable basis which was proposed to him, he is now converted into the chief of an army, the enemy of the federalists; and has beheld, with a serene countenance, this beautiful capital destroyed, a multitude of families drowned in tears, and the death of

many citizens; not only of the combatants, but of those who have taken no part in the struggle. Amongst these must be counted an unfortunate woman *enceinte*, who was killed as she was passing the palace gates, under the belief that a parley having come from his camp, the firing would be suspended, as in fact it was on our side. This government, informed of the misfortune, sent for the husband of the deceased, and ordered twenty-five dollars to be given him; but the unfortunate man, though plunged in grief, declared that twelve were sufficient to supply his wants. Such was the horror inspired by the atrocious conduct of the ex-government of Bustamente, that this sentiment covered up and suffocated all the others.

"Another fact, of which we shall with difficulty find an example in history, is the following. The day that the firing began, being in want of some implements of war, it was necessary to cause an iron case to be opened, belonging to Don Stanislaus Flores, in which he had a considerable sum of money in different coin, besides his most valuable effects. Thus, all that the government could do, was to make this known to the owner, Senor Flores, in order that he might send a person of confidence to take charge of his interests, making known what was wanting, that he might be immediately paid. The pertinacity of the firing prevented Senor Flores from naming a commissioner for four days, and then, although the case has been open, and no one has taken charge of it, the commissioner has made known officially that nothing is taken from it but the implements of war which were sent for. Glory in yourselves, Mexicans! The most polished nation of the earth, illustrious France, has not presented a similar fact. The Mexicans possess heroic virtues, which will raise them above all the



nations in the world. This is the only ambition of your fellow-citizen,

“VALENTIN GOMEZ FARIAS.

“God, Liberty, and Federalism.

“MEXICO, July 17th, 1840.”

Besides this, a circular was sent to all the governors and commandants of the different departments, from the “Palace of the Federal Provisional Government,” to this effect:

“The citizen José Urrea, with the greater part of the garrison of the capital, and the whole population, pronounced early on the morning of this day, for the re-establishment of the federal system, adopting in the interim the constitution of 1824, whilst it is reformed by a congress which they are about to convoke to that effect; and I, having been called, in order that at this juncture, I should put myself at the head of the government, communicate it to your excellency, informing you at the same time, that the object of the citizen Urrea, instead of re-establishing the federal system, has been to reunite all the Mexicans, by proclaiming toleration of all opinions, and respect for the lives, properties, and interests of all.

“God, Liberty, and Federalism.

“VALENTIN GOMEZ FARIAS.

“NATIONAL PALACE OF MEXICO, 15th July, 1840.”

Thus the ball opened, and as proclamations are valueless everywhere without force, and especially so in Mexico, the several documents were sustained by arms. Gomez Farias, though no military man, exhibited himself every where, and it was clearly enough shown that his cause was popular with the people and almost with

the military, by the impunity with which he rode through the city. Mexico was, however, devastated; there was almost a want of the necessities of life in the capital, and the lives of inoffensive citizens were lost in the public squares and private dwellings of the national capital.

On the 19th, the following proclamation was issued:

“*Address of His Excellency, Señor Don Valentin Gomez Farias, charged provisionally with the government of Mexico, and of the General-in-Chief of the Federal army to the troops under his command.*

“Companions in arms: No one has ever resisted a people who fight for their liberty and who defend their sacred rights. Your heroic endeavors have already reduced *our unjust aggressors* almost to complete nullity. Without infantry to cover their parapets, without artillery to fire their pieces, without money, without credit, and without support, they already make their last useless efforts. On our side, on the contrary, all is in abundance, (*sobra*) men, arms, ammunition, and money, and above all, the invincible support of opinion;—while the parties which adhere to our *pronunciamento* in all the cities out of the capital, and the assistance which within this very city is given by every class of society to those who are fighting for the rights of the people, offer guarantees which they will strictly fulfil to all the inhabitants of the country, natives as well as foreigners. Our enemies, in the delirium of their impotence, have had recourse to their favorite weapon, calumny. In a communication directed to us, they have had the audacity to accuse you of having attacked some property. Miserable wretches! No—the soldiers of the people are not robbers; the



cause of liberty is very noble, and its defence will not be stained by a degrading action. This is the answer given to your calumniators by your chiefs, who are as much interested in your reputation as in their own. Soldiers of the people! let valor, as well as all other civic virtues, shine in your conduct, that you may never dim the renown of valiant soldiers and of good citizens.

“VALENTIN GOMEZ FARIAS.

“JOSE URREA.”

Thus stood affairs for several days; and *Mexico la hermosa* was becoming a ruin. The palace of the archbishop was made a fortress by the party of Farias, a circumstance which, added to the fact that he had required, as one of the bases of any new organization of government, that the lands in possession of ecclesiastical bodies should be liable to alienation, and should pay taxes, as did the property of individuals, enabled the government to make representations that he had required the confiscation of the holy vessels of the cathedrals, and other churches, and thereby to alienate from him the people, whose superstition was more powerful than their patriotism.

At this juncture, came a letter from Santa Anna, dated Mango de Clavo, July 19, in which he professed his willingness to assist the president in allaying this commotion. This letter is remarkable; as Farias and Urrea, the latter of whom was never known to act but as the lieutenant of Santa Anna, had everywhere represented the last as their friend: and Bustamente at once took advantage of the circumstance, by publishing this *adhesion*, and others received from Valencia, Galendo, &c., in a bulletin, which, moreover, stated that

it would be seen, in spite of all misrepresentations, how devoted Santa Anna was to the *national cause*.

The people of Mexico were not deceived. They saw in this Janus-faced policy, that Santa Anna, whatever might have been his professions, now made a catspaw of the pure Farias, and was seeking to grasp the fruits of a contest his high-minded contemporary had entered into for the good of his country.

On the 15th of July, it is well enough here to state, the following proclamation was made:—

“Ministers: I protest that I find myself without liberty and without defence, the guards of the palace having abandoned me. Under these circumstances, let no order of mine, which is contrary to the duties of the post that I occupy, be obeyed; since, although I am resolved to die before failing in my obligations, it will not be difficult to falsify my signature. Let this be made known by you to the congress, and to those generals and chiefs who preserve sentiments of honor and fidelity.

“ANASTASIO BUSTAMENTE.

“NATIONAL PALACE, July 15th, 1840.”

The object of this was, that as Farias and his friends stated that Bustamente had been released, on condition that he would restore federalism, the public might be aware, either that such a promise had been extorted, or even if made in good faith, would be disregarded. On the same day, Urrea, who had command of the troops of the federalists, proposed the following terms for a cessation of arms:—

“Article 1st. It not having been the intention of the citizen, José Urrea, and of the troops under his com-



mand, to attack in any way the person of the president of the republic, General Anastasio Bustamante, he is replaced in the exercise of his functions.

2d. Using his faculties as president of the republic, he will cause the firing to cease on the part of the troops opposed to the citizen Urrea; who on his side will do the same.

3d. The president shall organize a ministry deserving of public confidence, and shall promise to re-establish the observance of the constitution of 1824, convoking a congress immediately, for the express purpose of reform.

4th. Upon these foundations, peace and order shall be re-established, and no one shall be molested for the opinions which he has manifested, or for the principles he may have supported, all who are in prison for political opinions being set at liberty."

All of which were rejected by the party of Bustamante.

On the 23d, the archbishop, acting in the capacity of mediator, which his social rank and functions entitled him to do, invited all parties to a conference in his palace, a proposition unanimously acceded to; but unfortunately, the truce was broken, and a bloody contest ensued; during the course of which, the *calle de Monterillo*, in which were the head-quarters of Bustamante, since he had left the palace *del gobierno*, ran with blood.

In spite of the rejection of the terms proposed by Urrea, Gomez Farias, on the same day, offered the following:—

"1st. The forces of both armies shall retire to occupy places out of the capital.

2d. Both the belligerent parties shall agree that

the constitutional laws of 1836 shall remain without force.

3d. A convention shall be convoked, establishing the new constitution, upon the basis fixed in the constitutive act, which will begin to be in force directly.

4th. The elections of the members of the convention will be verified according to the laws by which the deputies of the constituent congress were directed.

5th. His actual excellency, the president, will form a provisional government, he being the chief, until the foregoing articles begin to take effect.

6th. No one shall be molested for political opinions manifested since the year 1821 until now: consequently, the persons, employments, and properties of all who have taken part in this or in the past revolutions, shall be respected.

7th. That the first article may take effect, the government will facilitate all that is necessary to both parties."

These propositions were refused, and every means was used to prejudice the people against those who would have saved them; at the same time it was stated that Santa Anna was approaching the capital.

The more the revolution progressed, the more disgusting it became: evidently aware they were acting falsely to the interests of Mexico, every opportunity was taken to misrepresent the leaders of the revolt in the eyes of the people. A yet more unworthy system was pursued; the taxes were lowered to gain the support of the *leperos*, who thronged the capital. The consequence of this was, that on the 27th the president was enabled to say:

"We have the grateful satisfaction of announcing,



that the revolution of this capital has terminated happily. The rebellious troops having offered, in the night, to lay down arms upon certain conditions, his excellency, the commander-in-chief, has accepted their proposals with convenient modifications, which will be verified to-day; the empire of laws, order, tranquillity, and all other social guarantees being thus re-established."

Similar documents were sent to all the departments of the republic, and thus terminated the abortive but honest attempt of Farias to reform the government of his country.

The following letter of Santa Anna may be considered its finale:

"The triumph which the national arms have just obtained over the horrible attempts of anarchy, communicated to me by your excellency, in your note of the 27th, is very worthy of being celebrated by every citizen who desires the welfare of his country, always supposing that public vengeance (*la vindicta publica*) has been satisfied; and in this case, I offer you a thousand congratulations. This division, although filled with regret at not having participated on this occasion in the risks of our companions in arms, are rejoiced at so fortunate an event, and hope that energy and a wholesome severity will now strengthen order for ever, and will begin an era of felicity for the country. The happy event has been celebrated here, in the fortress, and in Tepeyahualco, where the first brigade had already arrived (and whom I have ordered to countermarch), with every demonstration of joy. I anxiously desire to receive the details which your excellency offers to communicate to me, so that if the danger has entirely ceased, I may return to to my *hacienda*, and may lay

down the command of those troops which your excellency orders me to preserve here.

"With sentiments of the most lively joy for the cessation of the misfortunes of the capital, I reiterate to your excellency those of my particular esteem.

"God and Liberty.

"ANTONIO LOPEZ DE SANTA ANNA.

"PEROTE, July 29, 1840."

This plan had for its object the political regeneration of the republic, and stated that six years previously a constitution had been adopted arbitrarily, which destroyed the lawful government of 1824, and which appropriated to a very few all the advantages of the social compact. The time, it stated, had come, when nothing but the exertions of the whole nation would win its ultimate salvation, and place Mexico in the position she should occupy among the nations of the earth. The first and fundamental article restored the constitution of 1824, and called for a congress to be composed of four deputies from each state. The constitution, after a scrutiny by this body, was to be submitted to the people of each state for approval. The third promises that the Catholic church shall be respected (*respectada*); the form of government was guaranteed to be popular, representative, and liberal, and absolute equality was insured. The fourth provided for a temporary government in the capital, whose functions were to be limited exclusively to foreign affairs. Other clauses provided for the refunding of taxes illegally levied, the closing of all internal custom houses, and the prohibition for ever of all taxes having such an object as the odious *Alcabala* of the Spanish rule. All political offences since the revolution were