



DON MARIANO PAREDES.

CHAPTER IX.

MARIANO PAREDES Y ARRILLAGA AND DON JUAN NEPOMUCENO ALMONTE.

Election of Herrera—Paredes pronounces against him—Herrera deposed—Paredes elected President—Deposed—Imprisoned—Escapes to Europe—Almonte—Battle of San Jacinto—Almonte sent minister to England and France—His character.

GENERAL PAREDES is a new man in the history of Mexico, though one of its oldest soldiers, having participated in all the events which have occurred since the days of Iturbide. He first appears in the history of his country when the revolution of 1840, the one which overthrew Bustamente, occurred.

General Paredes was one of the persons whom Bustamente had especially trusted, yet he was one of those who first pronounced against him, and evidently was one of the prime movers of the revolution; having been referred to pointedly by General Valencia, in his proclamation of August 30, 1841, in the same paragraph in which he mentions Santa Anna and Cortazar, who avowedly planned the whole movement.

At this time Paredes commanded at Queretaro, nearly north of the city, and in the direction of Guanajuato, and Bustamente marched against him, but was forced to return on account of intelligence he had received that Santa Anna was advancing to the capital from the direction of Jalapa and Vera Cruz.

There is little doubt that Paredes was very influential in this whole movement; and was understood to

speak the sentiments of the people of Jalisco, Zacatecas, Aguas Calientes, Queretaro, and the other mining districts, which had become aware that their mineral wealth could only be turned to advantage by the employment of foreign capital, and were eager for a repeal of those organic laws which prohibited foreigners from acquiring real estate (which, by-the-by, he has always been anxious to effect), religious toleration, &c. Whether he was sincere in this has appeared a mystery, as in the revolt of Farias, two months previously, he was known to have opposed that person with all his power. When the crisis, however, came, Paredes refused positively to accept the executive office, and insisted on its being conferred on Santa Anna. His reasons for this have been supposed to be that he was aware, as a general in command of a strong division, he would always be able to exert much influence, and at least take care of himself; while as president, he might, at any moment, be unseated, and driven into exile. On the 7th of October, the revolution terminated, leaving Santa Anna, where every change had contributed to place him, in power. One thing here occurred, which shows that both Santa Anna and Paredes estimated alike the value of the army at Guanajuato. It was proposed to make Paredes minister of war and marine; a compliment he declined, as he was aware its intention was to separate him from his division.

As previously stated, Santa Anna continued at the head of affairs as dictator until the first of January, 1844, when he was installed as president. In the course of less than one year, a revolution broke out, the result of which was his deposition, and the election of Herrera to replace him.

Santa Anna has always been in advance even of the

most enlightened of his countrymen, and was aware of the power of the United States. As soon as he saw that the annexation of Texas was inevitable, he prepared to submit to it, and sought gradually to bring over the Mexican people to his opinion. The consequence was, that towards the end of 1844, the views he had gradually begun to promulgate, were received with marked disfavor; and Paredes placed himself at the head of a spontaneous movement which pervaded the whole of Mexico, and resulted in the deposition and banishment of Santa Anna. When Paredes commenced this revolt he had twenty-five thousand men at his orders, to oppose which Santa Anna could muster but about six thousand, and thirty pieces of artillery, a proof the people sided with the former.

We will not repeat here the details of this *emeute*, which have been fully given in the life of Santa Anna, but will content ourselves with referring briefly to the immediate consequences of this one of the many changes of the Mexican government.

Many years since, a band of Indians of the Ojibway race, were sent by their tribe to Washington city, to arrange some of the many difficulties perpetually occurring where the white and red man come in contact. It need not be said that on their journey, every care was taken that the sons of the forest should see all that passed around them, and all the wonders of the pale faces. They finally returned home, having settled the business on which they had been sent, loaded with presents, but, as their brethren thought, having betrayed their interests. A general council of the nation was called, and the envoys were required to account for their acts. They told of the wonders of the city of St. Louis, with its thousand wigwams and twelve thousand inhabitants (this was

twenty years ago); of Louisville, of the steamboats, and of the vast cities of the east, and were listened to with astonishment, but were believed. While the envoys were in the United States there chanced to be exhibiting himself, along the frontier, an eastern juggler, who, among other feats, amused the audience by swallowing a sword, and pulling ribbons from his mouth, by some peculiar legerdemain. The Ojibway council had believed all the astonishing accounts in relation to the power of the government; it had swallowed the histories by which the envoys had been imposed on, but would not hear one word in relation to the steam engines which manufactured cloth and ribbon, for they had seen the juggler pull them from his mouth. Arguing *a posteriori*, they disbelieved all former tales, said that the envoys were liars and unfit to live, and by the summary judgments of the Indian territory, put them at once to death. This was natural enough, for the world always measures what it hears by the events of its own experience.

So it was with Santa Anna; previous to the war of Mexico, he used to talk gravely of taking, some day, the city of New Orleans from the United States, and was not a little surprised when he found himself a prisoner, and at the mercy of a mere abrasion of that people.

On his way through the United States, he had learned how vain it was to contend against it, and sought on his return to import to his countrymen the rational views he had imbibed. The people of Mexico believed that his army had been routed in Texas; they had seen the fugitive and maimed soldiers, but they could not realize the information he bore them, that it was better for the magnanimous Mexican people to lose Texas irretrievably, than engage in war with a

nation the people of which would possibly not be satisfied till they had reached as far south as San Luis Potosi, if they did not insist on unfurling their banner over the halls of Mexico. This information, gathered by so painful an experience, could not be appreciated by the people of Mexico, and enabled Paredes to commence his revolt.

Those who have followed us in this rambling sketch of the revolutions of Mexico, have become aware that nowhere has power so little security, or does office hold forth less inducement, than in the Mexican nation. The supreme power has, since the first outbreak of Hidalgo, been occupied by more than forty persons, who, with the exception of those who have died by the bullet and the bayonet, have seemed determined to make good Mr. Jefferson's description of office-holders in other countries, "that few die, and none resign."

Herrera was unable long to keep possession of the presidency. Paredes pronounced against him, and in union with Arista contrived to depose him. The pretext for this movement was a charge that Herrera sought to dismember the Mexican union by treating with the United States; and the army of reserve, stationed at San Luis and Monterey, was advanced to the city of Mexico, and the troops of Herrera gave in their adhesion to the more successful Paredes.

This resolution was momentous to Mexico, the American minister immediately leaving the country, and Mexico proceeding to adopt a line of policy which made inevitable that war which, in spite of all occurrences, must terminate by placing her at the mercy of a more powerful adversary.

After having for some six months exercised the supreme power, the congress convened and proceeded

to re-organize the executive branch, which had not been legally occupied since the ejection of Herrera, and on the 12th of June Paredes was elected president, receiving fifty-eight out of eighty-three votes. General Bravo received thirteen, and Herrera seven. Bravo was then elected vice-president. After having been installed on the 13th, Paredes obtained permission to take command of the army, confiding the administration of the government to Bravo, who was recalled from Vera Cruz. The events of the war belong to another story than this; and it only remains to state that various pronunciamientos were made during the month of July, 1846, to which, on the 31st, the garrison of Vera Cruz, headed by Generals Landero and Perez, acceded, thus permitting Santa Anna to return, which he immediately did. Bravo assumed at once the title of provisional president. General Salas almost immediately seized on Paredes and imprisoned him in the citadel of Mexico, where he was confined until the latter part of September, when he escaped and proceeded to Havana. It is said that in Europe he is now perseveringly attempting to induce the governments of France and England to interfere in the existing war, in behalf of Mexico.

The motives of this pronunciamiento have been much discussed, and it is unfortunate that the interruption of intercourse prevents its being more fully understood, by means of information from Mexicans, who alone could solve the mystery which hangs around it. The government of the United States, there is no doubt, contributed to effect it, by suffering Santa Anna to pass, on his return, through a blockading squadron, a thing now not denied, if it ever was. Why it did so seems obvious. This distinguished chieftain would doubtless be a formi-

dable antagonist at the head of the Mexican army; but there was no doubt that the men who conquered at Palo Alto, Resaca de la Palma, and in front of Matamoras, the Mexican troops commanded by Ampudia, could conquer again the same men, commanded by Santa Anna; while it was obvious, that by the return of the latter to Mexico, a cabal which was headed by Paredes, who, for that purpose, had deposed Herrera, to place at the head of the Mexican government a Spanish or French prince, would certainly be frustrated. The event justified the means: the Bourbonists were defeated, and Paredes forced to seek protection among the kings for whom he would have sacrificed the independence of Mexico.

Don Juan Nepumoceno Almonte, so favorably known in this country, where he has long resided, is said to be a natural son of the distinguished General Morelos. In Mexico, where some time since the celibacy of the priests was scarcely a matter of profession even, the fact has never been denied; and the picture of the priest of Nocupetaro is said by travellers to have hung in the house of Almonte, and to have been treated with that respect which would scarcely be elicited by the picture of one not a relation. When Santa Anna marched against Texas, we first find the name of Almonte occupying a prominent position. In the massacres which will long serve to render the name of the Mexican soldier an approbrium, and which disgrace that campaign, we do not find, for a long time, any account of Almonte, and when we do, it is in the act of performing a military duty, and exhibiting a presence of mind which seemed to have deserted all others.

At the battle of San Jacinto, when the Texans made the famous charge with their clubbed rifles and bowie-

knives, which won the day, so utterly unused were the Mexicans to such an attack, that it never occurred to them either to resist or surrender. Trusting exclusively to flight, they were soon overtaken by the hardy western hunters who composed the mass of Houston's force, and indiscriminately slaughtered. General Almonte, seeing that the fight was over, called around him a few officers, and by great efforts contrived to surrender the remnant of that army with which Santa Anna had boasted he would encamp on the Sabine. By the terms of the capitulation, Almonte returned to Mexico, where he found all things in disorder, the cause of his friend and patron, Santa Anna, ruined, and Bustamente seated in the chair of state. He was, it is said, very poor, but had by his talents made himself so well known, that the new government was glad to avail itself of his talents as minister of war. When the pronunciamento of Urrea and Farias occurred, Almonte adhered to the president, and on one occasion distinguished himself by the same courage which was so pre-eminent at San Jacinto. When the first overt act was made, Almonte chanced to be in the street, and was met by Urrea at the head of few soldiers, who asked for his sword, saying, at the same time, the president was arrested. Almonte drew his sword, but instead of surrendering it cut his way through the insurgents, and reached the citadel, where he concerted the measures which enabled Bustamente to repress the revolution of July. Urrea immediately retraced his steps, and passing the house of Almonte, discovered his lady at the window, of whom, as quietly as if nothing had occurred, he asked after her husband's health. Her astonishment may well be conceived, when, not long afterward, she heard what had happened. When the revolution in the fall of the year



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deprived Bustamente of power, Almonte left office with a great portion of his salary undrawn, and was so poor that, previously to his appointment as ambassador to the United States, he supported himself by delivering popular lectures in the capital on scientific subjects.

General Almonte resided long in this country, making many personal friendships, which have not been interrupted by the occurrence of national difficulties; and finally returned to Mexico. When diplomatic intercourse was terminated by the retirement of Mr. Shannon from the city of Mexico, he continued high in favor with Santa Anna, until the cabal arose which exiled him; and even while the dictator was in prison, worked in his favor with such zeal, that more than once it was doubtful if he would not be removed from the citadel, where he was a prisoner, to the national palace as president. These efforts, however, were unavailing; and, when all was over with his friend, Almonte was sent, in a diplomatic capacity, to the courts of France and England. He repaired thither by way of Havana, where he saw and had much intercourse with General Santa Anna. Whether it be that the appointment he had received was a *ruse* to remove him from Mexico, or that Herrera had become alarmed at the results of his conference with the ex-dictator, cannot now be determined; but his mission was immediately revoked. He returned to Havana, where he remained until the recall of Santa Anna, under whom he has filled important functions.

Few men in Mexico are more favorably known. He is brave, cultivated, and intelligent; and is likely to rise to a more exalted position than he has yet reached, having now the respect and support of the better class of his countrymen, of all phases of political opinions.