

CHAPTER XI.

THE PROVISOIR—NEWS OF THE DAY, HOW PUBLISHED IN GUATIMALA—VISIT TO THE CONVENT OF LA CONCEPCION—THE FAREWELL OF THE NUN—CARRERA—SKETCH OF HIS LIFE—THE CHOLERA—INSURRECTIONS—CARRERA HEADS THE INSURGENTS—HIS APPEARANCE IN GUATIMALA—CAPTURE OF THE CITY—CARRERA TRIUMPHANT—ARRIVAL OF MORAZAN—HOSTILITIES—PURSUIT OF CARRERA—HIS DEFEAT—HE IS AGAIN UPPERMOST—INTERVIEW WITH CARRERA—HIS CHARACTER.

THE next three or four days I passed in receiving and paying visits, and in making myself acquainted with the condition of the country. Among the most interesting visitors was the venerable Provisor, since the banishment of the archbishop the head of the church, who, by a late bull of the Pope, had been appointed bishop; but, owing to the troubled times, had not yet been installed. A friend in Baltimore had procured for me a letter from the Roman Catholic archbishop in that city, to whom I here acknowledge my obligations, recommending me to all his brother ecclesiastics in Central America. The venerable Provisor received this letter as from a brother in the Church, and upon the strength of it, afterwards, when I set out for Palenque, gave me a letter of recommendation to all the curas under his charge. During the day my time passed agreeably enough; but the evenings, in which I was obliged to keep within doors, were long and lonely. My house was so near the plaza that I could hear the sentinels' challenge, and from time to time the report of a musket. These reports, in the stillness of night, were always startling. For some time I did not know the cause; but at length learned that cows and mules straggled about the city, which, heard moving at a distance and not answering the challenge, were fired upon without ceremony.

There was but one paper in Guatemala, and that a weekly, and a mere chronicler of decrees and political movements. City news passed by word of mouth. Every morning everybody asked his neighbour what was the news. One day it was that an old deaf woman, who could not hear the sentinel's challenge, had been shot; another, that Asturias, a rich old citizen, had been stabbed; and another morning the report circulated that thirty-three nuns in the convent of Santa Teresa had been poisoned. This was a subject of excitement for several days, when the nuns all recovered, and it was ascertained that they had suffered from the unsentimental circumstance of eating food that did not agree with them.

On Friday, in company with my fair countrywoman, I visited the

convent of La Concepcion for the purpose of embracing a nun, or rather *the* nun, who had taken the black veil. The room adjoining the parlatoria of the convent was crowded, and she was standing in the doorway with the crown on her head and a doll in her hand. It was the last time her friends could see her face; but this puerile exhibition of the doll detracted from the sentiment. It was an occasion that addressed itself particularly to ladies; some wondered that one so young should abandon a world to them beaming with bright and beautiful prospects; others, with whom the dreams of life had passed, looked upon her retirement as the part of wisdom. They embraced her, and retired to make room for others. Before our turn came there was an irruption of those objects of my detestation, the eternal soldiers, who, leaving their muskets at the door, forced their way through the crowd, and presenting themselves, though respectfully, for an embrace, retired. By her side was a black nun, with a veil so thick that not a lineament of her face could be seen, whom my countrywoman had known during her seclusion in the convent, and described as young, of exceeding beauty and loveliness, and around whom she threw a charm which almost awakened a spirit of romance. I would have made some sacrifice for one glimpse of her face. At length our turn came; my fair companion embraced her, and, after many farewell words, recommended me as her countryman. I never had much practice in embracing nuns; in fact, it was the first time I ever attempted such a thing; but it came as natural as if I had been brought up to it. My right arm encircled her neck, her right arm mine; I rested my head upon her shoulder, and she hers upon mine; but a friend's grandmother never received a more respectful embrace. "Stolen joys are always dearest;" there were too many looking on. The grating closed, and the face of the nun will never be seen again.

That afternoon Carrera returned to the city. I was extremely desirous to know him, and made an arrangement with Mr. Pavon to call upon him the next day. At ten o'clock the next morning Mr. Pavon called for me. I was told that this formidable chief was taken by external show, and put on the diplomatic coat, with a great profusion of buttons, which had produced such an effect at Copan, and which, by-the-way, owing to the abominable state of the country, I never had an opportunity of wearing afterwards, and the cost of which was a dead loss.

Carrera was living in a small house in a retired street. Sentinels were at the door, and eight or ten soldiers basking in the sun outside, part of a body-guard, who had been fitted out with red bombazet jackets and tartan plaid caps, and made a much better appearance than

any of his soldiers I had before seen. Along the corridor was a row of muskets, bright and in good order. We entered a small room adjoining the sala, and saw Carrera sitting at a table counting money.

Ever since my arrival in the country this name of terror had been ringing in my ears. Mr. Montgomery, to whom I have before referred, and who arrived in Central America about a year before me, says, "An insurrection, I was told, had taken place among the Indians, who, under the directions of a man called Carrera, were ravaging the country and committing all kinds of excesses. Along the coast, and in some of the departments, tranquillity had not been disturbed; but in the interior there was no safety for the traveller, and every avenue to the capital was beset by parties of brigands, who showed no mercy to their victims, especially if they were foreigners;" and in referring to the posture of affairs at his departure he adds, "It is probable, however, that while this is being written, the active measures of General Morazan for putting down the insurrection have been successful, and that the career of this rebel hero has been brought to a close." But the career of the "rebel hero" was not brought to a close; the "man called Carrera" was now absolute master of Guatemala; and, if I am not deceived, he is destined to become more conspicuous than any other leader who has yet risen in the convulsions of Spanish America.

He is a native of one of the wards of Guatemala. His friends, in compliment, call him a mulatto; I, for the same reason, call him an Indian, considering that the better blood of the two. In 1829 he was a drummer-boy in Colonel Aycinena's regiment. When the Liberal or Democratic party prevailed, and General Morazan entered the city, Carrera broke his drum and retired to the village of Matasquintla. Here he entered into business as a pig-driver, and for several years continued in this respectable occupation, probably as free as one of his own pigs from any dreams of future greatness. The excesses of political parties, severe exactions for the support of government, encroachments upon the property of the Church, and innovations, particularly the introduction of the Livingston Code, establishing trial by jury, and making marriage a civil contract, created discontent throughout the country. The last gave great offence to the clergy, who exercised an unbounded influence over the minds of the Indians. In 1837 the cholera, which, in its destructive march over the habitable world, had hitherto spared this portion of the American continent, made its terrible appearance, and, besides strewing it with dead, proved the immediate cause of political convulsions. The priests persuaded the Indians that the foreigners had poisoned the waters. Galvez, who was at that time the chief of the state, sent medicines into all the villages,

which being ignorantly administered, sometimes produced fatal consequences; and the priests, always opposed to the Liberal party, persuaded the Indians that the government was endeavouring to poison and destroy their race. The Indians became excited all over the country; and in Matasquintla they rose in mass, with Carrera at their head, crying "Viva la Religion, y muerte a los Estrangeros!" The first blow was struck by murdering the judges appointed under the Livingston Code. Galvez sent a commission, with detachments of cavalry and a white flag, to hear their complaints; but while conferring with the insurgents they were surrounded, and almost all of them cut to pieces. The number of the disaffected increased to more than 1,000, and Galvez sent against them 600 troops, who routed them, plundered and burned their villages, and, among other excesses, the last outrage was perpetrated upon Carrera's wife. Roused to fury by this personal wrong, he joined with several chiefs of villages, vowing never to lay down his arms while an officer of Morazan remained in the state. With a few infuriated followers he went from village to village, killing the judges and government officers, when pursued escaping to the mountains, begging tortillas at the haciendas for his men, and sparing and protecting all who assisted him. At this time he could neither read nor write; but, urged on and assisted by some priests, particularly one Padre Lobo, a notorious profligate, he issued a proclamation, having his name stamped at the foot of it, against strangers and the government, for attempting to poison the Indians, demanding the destruction of all foreigners excepting the Spaniards, the abolition of the Livingston Code, a recal of the archbishop and friars, the expulsion of heretics, and a restoration of the privileges of the Church and old usages and customs. His fame spread as a highwayman and murderer; the roads about Guatemala were unsafe; all travelling was broken up; the merchants were thrown into consternation by intelligence that the whole of the goods sent to the fair at Esquipulas had fallen into his hands (which, however, proved untrue); and very soon he became so strong that he attacked villages and even towns.

The reader will bear in mind that this was in the State of Guatemala. The Liberal party was dominant, but at this critical moment a fatal division took place among its members; Barundia, a leading member, disappointed of a high office for a profligate relative, deserted the administration, and appeared in the Assembly at the head of the opposition. Party distraction and the rising of Carrera stirred up all who were dissatisfied with the government; and the citizens of the Antigua, about twenty-five miles distant, sent in a petition for a decree of amnesty for political offences, allowing exiles to return, and a redress of

other grievances. A deputation of the Assembly was sent to confer with them, which returned unsuccessful, and the Antiguans threatened to march against Guatemala.

On Sunday, the 20th of February (1838), proclamations of the Antiguans were found strewed in the streets, and there was a general alarm that the Antiguans were on their march to attack the city. The troops of the general government (less than 500 in number) and the militia were mustered; cannon placed at the corners of the square, and sentinels in the streets; and General Prem published a bando, calling upon all citizens to take up arms. Galvez, the chief of the state, mounted his horse, and rode through the streets, endeavouring to rouse the citizens, and giving out that Morazan was on his march, and had defeated 300 of Carrera's gang. On Monday all business was suspended. Galvez, in great perplexity, reinstated some officers who had been dismissed, and appointed Mexia, a Spaniard, lieutenant-colonel; which gave such disgust that Prem and all the officers sent in their resignations. Galvez begged and implored them to continue, reconciling himself to each individually; and at length, on his revoking the commission of Mexia, they consented. At two o'clock it was rumoured that Carrera had joined the Antiguans. Prem published a decree that all males from fourteen to sixty, except priests and persons labouring under physical imbecility, should take up arms. At nine o'clock at night there was an alarm that a party of Carrera's gang was at the Aycetuna. The square was garrisoned, and sentinels and cannons placed at the corners of the streets. To add to the excitement, during the night the Provisor died, and news was received that the Livingston Code had been publicly burned at Chiquimula, and that the town had declared against Galvez. On Wednesday morning fossés were commenced at the corners of the public square; but on Thursday the Marquis of Aycinena, the leader of the Central party, by a conference with the divided Liberals, succeeded in inducing a majority of deputies to sign a convention of amnesty, which gave general satisfaction, and the next day the city was perfectly quiet.

At mid-day this calm proved the forerunner of a dreadful storm. The troops of the Federal government, the only reliable force, revolted, and with bayonets fixed, colours flying, and cannon in front, left the barracks and marched into the plaza. They refused to ratify the convention by which, it was represented to them, Galvez was to be deposed, and Valenzuela, the vice-chief, and a tool of Barundia, appointed in his stead. They refused to serve under any of the opposition, and said they could give protection, and had no occasion to ask it. Deputies were cited to attend a meeting of the Assembly, but

they were afraid to convene. The officers had a conference with the soldiers; and Merino, a sergeant, drew up a document requiring the President Morazan to be sent for, and Galvez to remain chief until his arrival. This was assented to. Deputies were sent requesting Morazan to come to Guatemala, and also to the Antigua, to explain the circumstances of violating the convention; but they were unsuccessful, and the same night the alarm-bell announced the approach of 800 men to attack the city. The militia were called to arms, but only about forty appeared. At half-past five Galvez formed the government troops, and, accompanied by Prem, marched from the plaza to meet the rebels; but before he reached the gate a conspiracy broke out among the troops, and with the cry "Viva el General Merino, y muera el Gefe del Estado, qui nos ha vendido—fuego, muchachos!" "Live General Merino, and die the chief of the state, who has sold us—fire, boys!" the infantry fired upon the etat major. A ball passed through Prem's hat; Galvez was thrown from his horse, but escaped, and took refuge behind the altar of the Church of La Concepcion. Yañez succeeded in dispersing the troops with his cavalry, and returned to the square, leaving fifteen dead in the street. Merino, with about 120 men, took possession of the small field-piece of the battalion, and stationed himself in the square of Guadalupe. Parties of the dispersed troops remained out all night, firing their muskets, and keeping the city in a state of alarm; but Yañez saved it from plunder by patrolling with his cavalry. In the morning Merino asked permission to march into the plaza. His number had increased by the return of straggling parties; and on forming in the plaza he and three or four of the ringleaders were ordered to leave the ranks, and sent to prison in the convent of San Domingo, where, on Monday afternoon, he was tied to a stake in his cell and shot. His grave at the foot of the stake, and blood spattered on the wall, were among the curiosities shown to me in Guatemala.

On Sunday morning the bells again sounded the alarm; the rebels were at the old gate, and commissioners were sent out to treat with them. They demanded an evacuation of the plaza by the soldiers; but the soldiers answered indignantly, that the rebels might come and take the square. Prem softened this into an answer that they could not surrender to rebels, and at about half-past twelve at night the attack commenced. The rebels scattered in the suburbs, wasting powder and bullets, and in the morning Yañez, with seventy cavalry, made a sally, and, routing 300 of them, returned into the plaza with lances reeking with blood. Probably, if he had been seconded by the citizens, he would have driven them all back to the Antigua.

On Wednesday Carrera joined the rebels. He had sent his emissaries to the villages, rousing the Indians, and promising them the plunder of Guatemala; and on Thursday, with a tumultuous mass of half-naked savages, men, women, and children, estimated at 10,000 or 12,000, presented himself at the gate of the city. The Antiguanos themselves were struck with consternation, and the citizens of Guatemala were thrown into a state bordering on distraction. Commissioners were again sent out to treat with him, from whom he demanded the deposition of Galvez, the chief of the state, the evacuation of the plaza by the Federal troops, and a free passage into the city. Probably, even at this time, if the Federal troops had been supported by the citizens, they could have resisted the entry; but the consternation, and the fear of exasperating the rebellious hordes, were so great, that nothing was thought of but submission. The Assembly met in terror and distraction, and the result was an assent to all that was demanded.

At five o'clock the small band of government troops evacuated the plaza. The infantry, amounting to three hundred, marched out by the Calle Real, or Royal-street. The cavalry, seventy in number, exclusive of officers, on their march through another street, met an aid-de-camp of Carrera, who ordered them to lay down their arms. Yañez answered that he must first see his general; but the dragoons, suspecting some treachery on the part of Valenzuela, became panic-struck, and fled. Yañez, with thirty-five men, galloped through the city, and escaped by the road to Mixco; the rest rushed back into the plaza, threw down their lances in disgust, dismounted and disappeared, when not a single man was left under arms.

In the meantime Carrera's hordes were advancing. The commandant of the Antiguans asked him if he had his masses divided into squares or companies; Carrera answered, "No entiendo nada de esto. Todo es uno." "I don't understand anything of that. It is all the same." Among his leaders were Monreal and other known outlaws, criminals, robbers, and murderers. He himself was on horseback, with a green bush in his hat, and hung round with pieces of dirty cotton cloth, covered with pictures of the saints. A gentleman who saw them from the roof of his house, and who was familiar with all the scenes of terror which had taken place in that unhappy city, told me that he never felt such consternation and horror as when he saw the entry of this immense mass of barbarians; choking up the streets, all with green bushes in their hats, seeming at a distance like a moving forest; armed with rusty muskets, old pistols, fowling-pieces, some with locks and some without; sticks formed into the shape of

muskets, with tin-plate locks; clubs, machetes, and knives tied to the ends of long poles; and swelling the multitude were two or three thousand women, with sacks and alforjas for carrying away the plunder. Many, who had never left their villages before, looked wild at the sight of the houses and churches, and the magnificence of the city. They entered the plaza, vociferating, "Viva la religion, y muerte a los estrangeros!" Carrera himself, amazed at the immense ball he had set in motion, was so embarrassed that he could not guide his horse. He afterwards said that he was frightened at the difficulty of controlling this huge and disorderly mass. The traitor Barundia, the leader of the opposition, the Catiline of this rebellion, rode by his side on his entry into the plaza.

At sundown the whole multitude set up the Salve, or Hymn to the Virgin. The swell of human voices filled the air, and made the hearts of the inhabitants quake with fear. Carrera entered the Cathedral; the Indians, in mute astonishment at its magnificence, thronged in after him, and set up around the beautiful altar the uncouth images of their village saints. Monreal broke into the house of General Prem, and seized a uniform coat, richly embroidered with gold, into which Carrera slipped his arms, still wearing his straw hat with its green bush. A watch was brought him, but he did not know the use of it. Probably, since the invasion of Rome by Alaric and the Goths, no civilized city was ever visited by such an inundation of barbarians.

And Carrera alone had power to control the wild elements around him. As soon as possible some of the authorities sought him out, and in the most abject terms begged him to state on what conditions he would evacuate the city. He demanded the deposition of Galvez, the chief of the state, all the money, and all the arms the government could command. The priests were the only people who had any influence with him, and words cannot convey any idea of the awful state of suspense which the city suffered, dreading every moment to hear the signal given for general pillage and massacre. The inhabitants shut themselves up in their houses, which, being built of stone, with iron balconies to the windows, and doors several inches thick, resisted the assaults of straggling parties; but atrocities more than enough were committed, as it seemed, preliminary to a general sacking. The vice-president of the republic was murdered; the house of Flores, a deputy, sacked, his mother knocked down by a villain with the butt of a musket, and one of his daughters shot in the arm with two balls.

The house of Messrs. Klee, Skinner, and Co., the principal foreign merchants in Guatemala, which was reported to contain ammunition and arms, was several times attacked with great ferocity; having strong

balconied windows, and the door being secured by bales of merchandise piled up within, it resisted the assaults of an undisciplined mob, armed only with clubs, muskets, knives, and machetes. The priests ran through the streets bearing the crucifix, in the name of the Virgin and saints restraining the lawless Indians, stilling the wildness of passion, and saving the terrified inhabitants. And I cannot help mentioning one whose name was in everybody's mouth, Mr. Charles Savage, at that time United States consul, who, in the midst of the most furious assault upon Mr. Klee's house, rushed down the street under a shower of bullets, knocking up bayonets and machetes, drove the mob back from the door, and, branding them as robbers and murderers, with his white hair streaming in the wind, poured out such a torrent of indignation and contempt, that the Indians, amazed at his audacity, desisted. After this, with an almost wanton exposure of life, he was seen in the midst of every mob. To the astonishment of everybody, he was not killed; and the foreign residents presented him a unanimous letter of thanks for his fearless and successful exertions in the protection of life and property.

Pending the negotiation, Carrera, dressed in Prem's uniform, endeavoured to restrain his tumultuous followers; but several times he said that he could not himself resist the temptation to sack Klee's house, and those of the other Ingleses. There was a strange dash of fanaticism in the character of this lawless chieftain. The battle-cry of his hordes was, "Viva la religion!" The palace of the archbishop had been suffered to be used as a theatre by the Liberals; Carrera demanded the keys, and, putting them in his pocket, declared that, to prevent any future pollution, it should not be opened again until the banished archbishop returned to occupy it.

At length the terms upon which he consented to withdraw were agreed upon, viz. eleven thousand dollars in silver; ten thousand to be distributed among his followers, and one thousand for his own share; a thousand muskets, and a commission as lieutenant-colonel for himself. The amount of money was small as the price of relief from such imminent danger, but it was an immense sum in the eyes of Carrera and his followers, few of whom were worth more than the rags on their backs, and the stolen arms in their hands; and it was not easily raised; the treasury was bankrupt, and the money was not very cheerfully contributed by the citizens. The madness of consenting to put in the hands of Carrera a thousand muskets was only equalled by the absurdity of making him a lieutenant-colonel.

On the afternoon of the third day the money was paid, the muskets delivered, and Carrera was invested with the command of the province

of Mita, a district near Guatemala. The joy of the inhabitants at the prospect of his immediate departure was without bounds; but at the last moment an awful rumour spread, that the wild bands had evinced an uncontrollable eagerness, before leaving, to sack the city. A random discharge of muskets in the plaza confirmed this rumour, and the effect was dreadful. An hour of terrible suspense followed, but at five o'clock they filed off in straggling crowds from the plaza. At the Plaza de Toros they halted, and, firing their muskets in the air, created another panic. A rumour was revived that Carrera had demanded 4,000 dollars more, and that, unless he received it, he would return and take it by force. Carrera himself did actually return, and demanded a fieldpiece, which was given him; and at length, leaving behind him a document requiring the redress of certain grievances, to the unspeakable joy of all the inhabitants he left the city.

The delight of the citizens at being relieved from the pressure of immediate danger was indeed great, but there was no return of confidence, and, unhappily, no healing of political animosities. Valenzuela was appointed chief of the state; the Assembly renewed its distracted sessions; Barundia, as the head of the now ministerial party, proposed to abolish all the unconstitutional decrees of Galvez; money was wanted, and recourse had to the old system of forced loans. This exasperated the moneyed men; and in the midst of discord and confusion, news was received that Quezaltenango, one of the departments of Guatemala, had seceded, and declared itself a separate state. At this time, too, the government received a letter from Carrera, stating that he had been informed, since his arrival at Matasquintla, that people spoke ill of him in the capital, and if they continued to do so, he had 4,000 men, and would return and put things right. From time to time he sent a message to the same effect by some straggling Indian who happened to pass through his village. Afterward it was reported that his followers had renounced his authority, and commenced operations on their own account, threatening the city with another invasion, determined, according to their proclamations, to exterminate the whites, and establish a government of pardos libres, "free tigers," and enjoy in their own right the lands which had devolved upon them by their emancipation from the dominion of the whites. To the honour of Guatemala, a single spark of spirit broke forth, and men of all classes took up arms; but it was a single flash, and soon died away. Again intelligence arrived that Carrera himself had sent out his emissaries to summon his hordes for another march upon the city. Several families received private information and advice to seek safety in