

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EARLY DAYS OF THE REPUBLIC, AND THE
REVOLT OF TEXAS.

Complicated condition of Mexican politics. — Changes of government. — Guadalupe Victoria, the first President. — Recognition of the Republic, and end of Spanish Rule. — Election of 1828. — Guerrero declared President. — The Spanish expelled. — Defeat of Spanish expedition. — The governing board. — Anastasio Bustamente. — Guerrero's attempt to regain power. — His apprehension and execution. — Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna. — Valentin Gomez Farias. — Plan de Cuernavaca. — Miguel Baragan. — José Justo Corro. — Early history of Texas. — Austin's grant from the Spanish Viceroy. — Rise and fall of the State of Fredonia. — Encounter at Fort Velasco. — Attempt of Texas to secure State franchises. — Austin's letter. — His arrest and imprisonment. — Santa Anna's attitude toward Texas. — Declaration of War. — Gen. Sam Houston and his army. — Capture of San Antonio. — Declaration of Independence. — The Republic of Texas. — Heroic defence of the Alamo. — The massacre at Goliad. — The battle of San Jacinto. — Santa Anna a prisoner of war. — Recognition of the Texas Republic.

MEXICAN politics, always a bewildering study, was by no means simplified by the adoption of a Republican form of government. It would be impossible to condense the political history of the *Republica Mexicana* and at the same time render it intelligible. It would likewise be unprofitable

to submit a detailed account of the rise and fall of the various factions that have in turn ruled the country. At most periods of its existence, but more particularly throughout its attempts to maintain a republic, Mexico has deserved the reputation it has had in the world for revolutions, unstable government, and frequent political changes. But while almost any one of the numberless political intrigues which mark the course of its history might furnish a plot for a thrilling historical novel, there are comparatively few events of more than local interest to be recorded. These will be duly set down in their proper places. The rest of the history of the pseudo-republic (for in view of the facts which must be recorded here, it is entitled to no fuller recognition as a republic) need consist of no more than the briefest accounts of the changes that have taken place in the administration of federal affairs.

By the provisions of the constitution the presidential term was to continue four years and no president was eligible to immediate reelection. It may be with some surprise that the reader learns, in the earliest chapter of the History of the United States of Mexico, that so little heed was given to constitutional pro-

visions that there were *nine changes in the administration within the first decade*; and this is an earnest of what is to be noted throughout the subsequent history. The reader who would be interested in knowing in every case who is the constitutional president (for the term is used long after the thing expressed by that term has disappeared from view) is doomed to disappointment. This book will make no effort to unravel such skeins. It can only adopt as the basis of its narrative the succession of the presidents *de facto*. Many a name on the list furnished us of the presidents of Mexico is that of a man who has reached that high position by virtue of a successful *pronunciamento*, or a *golpe de estado*, which means the forcible setting aside of the constitution when found to be in the way of an aspirant to high office. If precedent is of any value in Mexico there is certainly no reason why the right of any of the later presidents should be questioned.

The first president of Mexico under the Constitution was the famous revolutionary General Gaudalupe Victoria, inaugurated in October, 1824. His real name was Felix Fernandez, his political or historical name having been adopted out of respect for the

great religious patron of Mexico, Our Lady of Guadalupe (thus acquiring for himself religious prestige), and in reference to the success that had attended all the battles in which he was engaged throughout the Revolution. He was an excellent man, despite his appearance in history under an *alias*. In proof of the honesty of his administration it is related of him that he died poor, shortly after the close of his term of office, leaving his widow to the nation's care. He was permitted to complete his full term of office, — wherein his administration is unique. His vice-president was Gen. Nicolas Bravo, who was not fully in accord with his chief, as we shall see. It was by no means a peaceful term. The President was called upon to put down two revolutions. The first was headed by Padre Arenas, a Dominican friar, and was designed to re-establish Spanish rule. Its leaders were summarily dealt with. The second was headed by a man named Montaña, and involved in it was no less a person than the Vice-President, Nicolas Bravo. It had for its objects the expulsion of the Spanish residents of Mexico, the recall of the ambassador from the United States, the removal of Manuel Gomez Pedraza, the Min-

ister of War and virtual chief of the cabinet, and the extinction of Freemasonry, which was a powerful factor in politics. The revolution was put down by troops under General Guerrero, and resulted in the banishment of Bravo and other distinguished personages.

It was in the first presidential term that the Spanish government lost its last foothold in America. It had up to this time maintained a garrison in San Juan de Ulua, off Vera Cruz. It abandoned this position in 1825. It was in that year that the republic received the recognition of England and the United States.

The principal parties taking part in the election of 1828 were the *Yorkinos* and the *Escoceses*. The first was composed of the adherents of the York rites, and the Federalists, who called themselves "high liberals." The others called themselves moderates, conservatives, and centralists, and comprised the adherents of the Scottish rites. Freemasonry had played an active part in the drama of Independence, but there was an evident schism in Freemasonry, while the whole order was under the ban of the adherents of the Church. The *Escoceses*, aided by the Spanish residents, elected their candidate for the presidency,

Gen. Manuel Gomez Pedraza; but the *Yorkinos* made an appeal, first to the legislature, and failing there, then to that most powerful factor in Mexican politics, — *arms*. This changed the whole course of Mexican history, and from that time until 1846 the succession of presidents was not dependent upon elections. Gen. Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna inspired a revolution in Perote which soon spread to the capital. The city was sacked and a terrible scene of carnage ensued, from which the President-elect, Pedraza, saved himself by flight. It was amid such scenes as these that the term of Guadalupe Victoria expired. On the 12th of January, 1829, Congress declared the election of Pedraza null and void, and elected Gen. Vicente Guerrero the candidate of the *Yorkinos*, or high liberals, president, with Gen. Anastasio Bustamente, vice-president.

The old revolutionary hero, Guerrero, now for a short time at the head of the government, found himself once more in conflict with the Spanish. The Spanish residents of the country had taken such a prominent and influential part in the politics of Mexico (and were besides of the *Escoceses* or conservative party) that Congress decided in March, 1829,

that the Spaniards must go. They were accordingly expelled from the country. This precipitated a long-meditated scheme on the part of Spain, who still entertained the idea that it was possible to regain her lost provinces in America by conquest. With that end in view a squadron was prepared in Habana and sent out to Mexico. In July, 1829, about 4,000 men debarked near Tampico and proceeded to capture that city on the 4th of August. Thereupon Gen. Santa Anna, without awaiting orders from the government, fitted out an expedition, and after a series of skirmishes and a few pitched battles, being joined by Gen. Manuel Mier y Teran, with regular forces of the republic, gained a decided victory, and drove the Spanish to their ships on the 11th of September, and they returned to Cuba. It was not until 1836 that Spain recognized the independence of Mexico, though she made no further attempts at conquest.

Scarcely had the Spanish invaders been repulsed when Guerrero found himself opposed by the officers of his own administration. The Vice-President, Gen. Bustamente, had been in command of a force of reserves in Jalapa in the campaign against the Spanish, and upon the retiring of the invaders

“pronounced” against the government, setting forth the *Plan de Jalapa*. Guerrero set out with an army from the capital in December, 1829, to put down this rebellion, leaving the administration of affairs in the hands of Don José Maria de Bocanegra, as acting-president. Guerrero was over-trustful of Bocanegra and his influence with the troops at the capital. No sooner had he left the city than he discovered that he had enemies behind him as well as before him, and that both Bustamente and Bocanegra were powerful leaders. His troops deserted him for Bocanegra, and he abandoned his expedition and went into the South; and thus, in less than a year, his presidency came to an end. Bocanegra maintained himself even a shorter time, for Bustamente succeeded in reaching the capital; but pending the full establishment of his government, the President of the Supreme Court of Justice, Don Pedro Velez, took charge of the office, associating with himself Gen. Luis Quintana and the historian, Don Lucas Alaman. Though this governing board accomplished little, the names of the constituents are placed in the list of Mexican presidents as succeeding Bocanegra.

On the 1st of January, 1830, Gen. Anastasio Bustamente was inaugurated as president, — not without some shadow of right, it might be said; for in view of the virtual abdication of Guerrero, he was, as vice-president, entitled to succeed, — of course not examining too closely into the manner in which the vacancy in the presidency had occurred. The affairs of the country were principally administered by the Minister of Relations, or Secretary of State, Lucas Alaman. Congress was very accommodating, and passed enabling acts, declaring Guerrero's government extinct, and the succession of Bustamente legal.

In a brief season of peace the new government advanced many good measures. After that the usual number of revolutions broke out and were successively put down, and their leaders punished. One of these was headed by Guerrero, and was designed to restore him to power. The government took alarm at the promised success of his movements, and a dastardly plot was formed for the destruction of this gallant revolutionary chief. A Genoese captain of a brigantine was paid \$70,000 to carry out the scheme, and sailed for Acapulco, where Guerrero was staying. The unsuspecting Guerrero was in-

vited to dine on board the vessel, and accepted. After dinner he was made prisoner, taken by the vessel to Huatulco, and delivered into the hands of his enemies. He was subjected to the mockery of a trial, condemned, and on the 14th of February, 1831, was shot in the town of Cuilapa. His remains now rest in the *Panteon de San Fernando*, in the capital; and in the plaza of San Fernando stands a bronze statue of this heroic friend of the Mexican people.

It is not surprising that such a cruel and cowardly act as the slaying of Guerrero should hasten the downfall of the government which had inspired it. The execrations of the people fell most heavily upon Minister of War Don José Antonio Facio who was supposed to be responsible for the plot against his life. In January, 1832, Santa Anna headed a revolution in Vera Cruz in favor of the Conservatives; and though Bustamente personally led the troops against the insurgents, the latter gained one victory after another, and finally, in November, defeated Bustamente in Casa Blanca, and brought his administration to an inglorious end. Gen. Melchor Muzquiz was appointed acting-president by Congress on the 14th of August.

Meanwhile Gen. Manuel Gomez Pedraza had returned to the republic from his exile, and basing his claims upon his election in 1828, but more particularly upon the ascendancy gained by his partisans, the Conservatives, seated himself in the presidential chair on the 24th of December, 1832, and held office until a new election could be had. This election resulted in the choice of Gen. Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna as president. He at once evinced a tendency to assume dictatorial powers, and to complicate himself with the Church party. He was no less a keen observer of popular events than he was shrewd in intrigue and indomitable in conflict; and noting the fact that his acts were unpopular, he abandoned the presidency and retired to his hacienda of Mango de Clavo, on the road between Vera Cruz and Jalapa, leaving his Vice-President, Don Valentin Gomez Farias, to handle the reins of government and to bear the brunt of the popular odium aroused by his own acts.

Gomez Farias was a man of more than the average ability. He was a native of Guadalupe in 1781. He was largely self-taught, and was skilled in medicine and science. He sacrificed his fortune for the cause of Inde-

pendence, and organized a battalion in the army of Hidalgo. He was a deputy in the first Congress of the republic, and subsequently organized the State of Zacatecas. When left to bear the burden of the affairs of the nation at such a critical time, he instituted some very wise reforms, beginning with the University of which he was the head, excluding the clergy from teaching in educational institutions supported by national funds. He abolished the system of tithes for the support of ecclesiastical institutions (the first blow aimed at the Church, but afterwards annulled by Santa Anna, who was inclined to coquet with the Church); denied the right of civil courts to maintain the binding force of the monastic vow, thus leaving members of religious orders free to abandon their convents; expelled the Spanish refugees and monks who had flocked to Mexico from Guatemala and Central America; and consigned Bustamente to exile. He was called upon to put down an insurrection in May, 1833, which made Santa Anna a prisoner. But the indomitable schemer made his escape, presented himself in Puebla, organized resistance to the insurgents, and defeated them in Guanajuato.

The retirement of Santa Anna to his hacienda always augured some new political mischief in which he was to be the leader. It was in this case the plan called "Cuernavaca," whereby Santa Anna was to resume the presidency and assume the dictatorship. A so-called "Constitutional" Congress, installed on the 4th of January, 1835, and manipulated by Santa Anna, refused to recognize Farias, assumed the power to revise the Constitution of 1824, and selected a new president. Accordingly, on the 28th of January, 1835, Gen. Miguel Barragan became acting-president of the republic. The administration of Barragan brings to notice a series of events demanding especial attention, and leading to the independence of Texas and the material reduction of the territory of the Mexican republic. To this subject American histories have done scant justice. It is unfortunate that the opportunity here afforded is only to treat it in its bearings upon the history of Mexico. Before the Texans secured their independence another change occurred in the administration of the Mexican government. Acting-President Barragan died in February, 1836, of a fever, and Don José Justo Corro was appointed acting-president

in his place, holding the office until the 19th of April, 1837.

Texas claims scarcely any notice from the historians either of our country or of Mexico until the present century. In 1803 the United States purchased of France a large territory, known as Louisiana, and said to extend from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains, and from the British Possessions on the north to Mexico on the south. Some part, perhaps the whole, of what is now the State of Texas may have been included in this purchase; for Texas had been the subject of rival claims from the time when the French explorer, La Salle, descended the Mississippi River in 1684, and at its mouth took possession, in the name of his king, Louis XIV., of the entire region whence that mighty river derived its waters. Two years later he set out to explore the country, and French missionaries, following in his track westward, came in contact with Spanish missionaries advancing northward from the city of Mexico. In 1762 France gave up Louisiana to Spain; but forty years later, Spain returned it to Napoleon Bonaparte, then First Consul of France, and he without