

CHAPTER II.

State of the Revolution after the death of Hidalgo—General Don José Maria Morelos—Capture of Oaxaca and Acapulco—Formation of a Congress and Constitution—Manifesto of the Junta of Zultepec—Defeat at Valladolid—General Matamoros taken prisoner, and shot—Capture of Morelos, at Tepecuacuilco—His death—Arrival of the Congress at Tehuacan—General Observations.

THE flame of civil war had, by this time, spread itself over a great part of the kingdom; and, notwithstanding the disasters of Hidalgo, the exterminating decrees of the viceroy, and the anathemas of the church, the cause of liberty was rapidly gaining proselytes.

Many of the officers, who had escaped from the fatal action of the bridge of Calderon, retired to the several provinces, where they raised considerable bodies of Creoles and Indians, and soon astonished the royalists by their valourous exploits. With slings and clubs, they gained many important victories, and thus were enabled to procure fire-arms.

The Cadiz regency, at the end of November, 1811, despatched a body of European troops to Mexico. These, however, were soon destroyed, by the partisan warfare carried on by the Mexicans.

The patriots gained battle after battle, but the total want of concerted plans, and the deficiency of arms and munitions of war, rendered their successes of mere temporary consequence, and only gave them an influence over the country within their immediate range. This influence, however, was daily enlarging, and at length the great intendancies of Guanajuato, Valladolid, Guadalajara, Zacatecas, and parts of those of La Puebla, Vera Cruz, Mexico, and San Luis Potosi, were so far under the controul of the patriots, that the royalists were penned up in their few fortified cities, and could not move beyond their walls, but with large armies and trains of artillery. The royalists, notwithstanding, possessed many very important and decided advantages over the patriots. They acted in unison. The European Spaniards, and their Creole adherents, were under the direction of a government firmly established for centuries, which now bent all its energies in the same direction; they had men among them of military instruction, were

in possession of nearly every musquet and cannon, and all the requisites of war in the kingdom; their finances were conducted by system; their governors were adepts in the intrigues of the old world; and, lastly, they kept open, and maintained an external communication, by which they were abundantly supplied with men, arms, munitions of war, clothing, and every requisite, from abroad.

The patriots, on the other hand, were disunited, and spread over a vast space of territory. Without any form of government, that deserved the name, there was no source whence regular orders could emanate; and each provincial chief, or commandant, acted as his judgment or interest counselled. They were miserably ignorant of the military art, and, as before stated, deficient in arms and munitions of war. Their finances were under no regulation; however great the wealth that fell into their hands, it was soon squandered, instead of being employed in a manner beneficial to the nation. They were, besides, totally cut off from foreign intercourse. Many of their leaders were unlettered men, and, although brave and frank, were yet perpetually liable to be deceived by the finesse and duplicity of their opponents.

With all these great disadvantages on the side

of the patriots, it cannot be so surprising that they did not succeed, as that they should have proceeded so far as they actually had done, at the time when that distinguished patriot, *Don José Maria Morelos*, became the supreme military chief of the republic. This man was a priest, of excellent private character, and much better informed than Hidalgo, but entirely unacquainted with military science. He began his career, by forming a body of men in the western part of the province of Valladolid in the Tierra Caliente, along the coast of the Pacific ocean. His standard was joined by many distinguished Creoles, and by numbers of deserters from the European troops. He had some tolerable officers, and at length succeeded, by great perseverance and activity, in equipping and partially arming a body of seven thousand men. They were well clothed; and good discipline was established among them. They were enthusiastically attached to their commander, and sincerely devoted to the freedom of their country; so that Morelos had the satisfaction to see all his orders obeyed with alacrity and cheerfulness. With this force of seven thousand men, Morelos not only paralyzed the movements of the Spaniards, but alarmed them infinitely more than Hidalgo had done

with his heterogeneous mass of one hundred and ten thousand.

Morelos sent a division of his army into the rich province of *Oaxaca*, whose capital soon fell into his hands, together with immense wealth. The population of *Oaxaca* received him with open arms, and thousands joined his army. Having accomplished his views on *Oaxaca*, he invested the strong city and castle of *Acapulco*, which he reduced, after a siege of *fifteen months*. Such was the cramped and distracted situation of the royalists at that time, that they could not command a force sufficient to attempt the relieving of *Acapulco*; and, indeed, several Spanish officers have expressed their opinions to the writer, that the most critical epoch of the revolution was just after Morelos had captured *Acapulco*. At that period, several other chiefs were operating in various parts of the kingdom, and distracting the movements of the royalists in every direction. Don *Guadalupe Victoria* had secured the strong holds in the province of *Vera Cruz*. Don *Manuel Teran* had a respectable force in the province of *Puebla*. *Osourno*, with another division, was spreading terror and confusion in the province of *Mexico*; while *Dr. Coss*, a priest, the *Rayons*, *Bustamante*, *Liceaga*, and

other brave officers, occupied a great part of the provinces of *Guanaxuato*, *Valladolid*, *Zacatecas*, and *Guadalajara*, with considerable divisions.

If Morelos had concentrated his forces in the province of *Oaxaca*, and fortified the important passes in the mountains of the *Misteca*, which constitute the only keys to its entrance; if he had directed his attention to the preservation of the strong city of *Acapulco*, and opened the ports of *Oaxaca*, on the *Pacific ocean*, to foreign commerce; and if he had sent a division of his army, through the province of *Oaxaca*, to the eastward of *Vera Cruz*, and had taken possession of all the country at the bottom of the *Gulf of Mexico*, particularly of the *fine port of Guasacualco*, and had promoted a trade with the *United States*, and the *British Colonies*, so as to have procured from abroad, arms, munitions of war, and clothing for his troops; then indeed would the *Mexican revolution* have assumed another aspect, and, in all human probability, would have speedily triumphed. The forces of *Morelos*, at that time, were amply sufficient to have executed those objects; and the funds he had at his disposal, after the capture of *Oaxaca*, would have enabled him to pay for

all that was required from abroad, for the use of his army.

Upwards of one thousand seroons of cochineal, and two millions of dollars in specie, were obtained by the capture of Oaxaca; but these immense resources were soon annihilated in scenes of dissipation, or by the bad management of those to whom was entrusted the national treasury.

The royalists may now very justly say, they were saved by the ignorance of Morelos, or his inattention to all those essential matters; in fact, he had become too sanguine of success, and conceived he should soon be able to march to the city of Mexico; presuming, that when he had reduced the capital, the city of Vera Cruz and all the other seaports would fall, as a matter of course.

Morelos, in the midst of his military successes, appeared more anxious for the welfare of his country, than to display the character of a military chieftain. He was the first to propose and promote the formation of a civil government, and thereby gave an unequivocal proof of his patriotism. He frequently acknowledged, to his intimate friends, that he wished to divide a responsibility, to which he

felt himself unequal. With these views, he convened a congress. It was composed of forty members, from the different provinces. Don *José Maria Liceaga* was elected president. A constitution was framed at Apatzingan, in the province of Valladolid, and accepted and sworn to throughout all the provinces which had taken up arms in favour of the republic. Whatever may be the defects of that constitution, it certainly displays more wisdom than could have been expected from men brought up as the framers of it had been, and situated as they then were.

The first important act of this legislative body was, to present to their European brethren a manifesto, stating the causes which had compelled them to take up arms. They reiterated their desire for peace, upon the basis of representation and justice, and on those terms they offered to lay down their arms. This manifesto was energetic and just, but breathed throughout a spirit of conciliation; it repeated the sentiments that had been expressed to the viceroy in 1812, by the patriotic junta of Zultepec, and in substance was as follows.

Principles, on which, as a basis, the patriots are ready to sign an armistice for the suspension of hostilities, and to enter into a treaty with the royalists.

“*First.* The sovereignty resides in the mass of the nation.

“*Second.* Spain and America are integral parts of the same monarchy, subject to the same king, but respectively equal, and without any relative dependence and subordination on either part.

“*Third.* America, in her state of fidelity, has more right to convoke the Cortes, and call together representatives of the few patriots of Spain, already infected with disloyalty, than Spain has to call over deputies from America, by means of whom we can never be worthily represented.

“*Fourth.* During the absence of the king, the inhabitants of the Peninsula have no right to appropriate to themselves the sovereign power, and represent it in these dominions.

“*Fifth.* All the authorities emanating from this origin are null.

“*Sixth.* For the American nation to conspire against them, by refusing to sub-

mit to an arbitrary power, is no more than using its own rights.

“*Seventh.* This, far from being a crime of high treason, is a service worthy of the king's gratitude, and a proof of patriotism, which his majesty would approve, if he were on the spot.

“*Eighth.* After what has occurred in the Peninsula, as well as in this country, since the overthrow of the throne, the American nation has a right to require a guarantee for its security; and this can be no other than putting into execution the right which it has, of keeping these dominions for their legitimate sovereign singly, and without the intervention of any European people.”

On these incontrovertible principles, the following just pretensions are founded:—

“*First.* That the Europeans resign the command of the armed force into the hands of a national congress independent of Spain, representing Ferdinand VII. and capable of securing his rights in these dominions.

“*Second.* That the Europeans remain in the class of citizens, under the protection of the laws, without being injured in their persons, families, or property.