

## SECTION IV.

REVOLUTION FROM 1820 TO 1824, INCLUDING  
ITURBIDE'S RISE AND FALL.

IN giving the opinion mentioned at the close of the preceding chapter, Apōdācā showed himself to be much less intimately acquainted than his predecessor with the character of the contest, in which Spain, and her Colonies, were engaged. Nothing could be more fallacious than the appearances to which he trusted. The country was exhausted, but not subdued; and during the suspension of hostilities, upon which his hopes were founded, the principles of the Insurrection were daily gaining ground. The great support of Spain, during the early part of the contest, had been the Creole troops, who had embarked in her cause with a zeal for which it is difficult to account, as the military profession, under the old system, was not exempt from the disadvantages to which other professions were liable, no Creole being allowed to hold any important command. But means had been found to conciliate the

army at the critical moment,\* and, up to 1820, it continued faithful to the cause which it at first espoused. During the war, the officers had little leisure for reflecting upon the rights of the question, and it even became a sort of *esprit de corps* with them to designate the Insurgents as banditti; to whom none of the privileges of ordinary warfare were to be extended. Their men, when once blooded, followed blindly those whom they were accustomed to obey; and the severities which they exercised upon their Creole countrymen, and which were retaliated upon themselves whenever the fortune of the field allowed it, left but little opportunity for any approximation of opinions. But, when the heat of the contest had subsided, things assumed a very different aspect: crowds of Insurgents, who had accepted the *indulto*, were allowed to mingle with the troops, and many were even admitted as recruits into the Creole regiments: each of these men formed proselytes amongst his comrades, while the officers were attacked, not merely by argument, but by all the seductions of the female sex, who have been, throughout America, the warmest advocates of Independence. They were taught that it was to them that their country looked for freedom; that they alone had prevented its attainment at a much earlier period; and that

\* *Vide* Cállējā's Letter, several passages of which prove how much the importance of this was felt. (Appendix.)

it was their duty to repair an error, which a mistaken notion of honour had induced them to commit.

A feeling of this nature was gaining ground when the re-establishment of the Constitution in Spain, by the very army that was destined to rivet the chains of America, gave to the partisans of the Independent cause an additional advantage. Although the liberty of the press was not established, still, freedom of communication could not be prevented. The events of 1812 seemed to be repeated; the elections threw the minds of the people again into a ferment, which, from the restricted powers of the Viceroy, it was almost impossible to allay; and, in addition to this, the Old Spaniards were divided amongst themselves. Many were sincere Constitutionalists, while others were as sincerely attached to the old system. In Mexico, as in the Mother country, these parties broke out into open hostility. The Viceroy Apodaca, who probably thought *que c'étoit son metier à lui d'être royaliste*, although he took the oath to the Constitution, lost no opportunity of favouring the party opposed to it; and took advantage of the decrees of the Cortes respecting Church property, to form an alliance with the great Dignitaries of the church in the Capital, in conjunction with whom, it is believed to have been his intention to proclaim a return to the old system, as the only means of saving the country from ruin, and religion from contamination.

Don Agustin de Iturbide was the person chosen to carry this plan into execution; and, to all appearance, it would have been impossible to select a fitter instrument. He was a Creole born, and could therefore address the Mexicans as his countrymen; while, from the brilliancy of his military career, he was almost sure to be followed by the army. In addition to this, he was much esteemed by the high clergy, having been employed, for some time, in expiating the excesses of his former life, by a rigid course of penance and mortification, in the College of the Professa in the Capital.

It is difficult in speaking of events so very recent as Iturbide's rise and fall, to arrive at the exact truth, particularly, where every thing is distorted by party-colouring; the following facts, however, seem to be universally admitted respecting the career of this extraordinary man. He was of a respectable, but by no means a wealthy family, of the Province of Valladolid; and, at the commencement of the Revolution, was serving as lieutenant in a regiment of Provincial Militia. Distinguished by a fine person, a most captivating address, and polished manners, as well as by a daring and ambitious spirit, he was amongst the first of those, who dipped in the plans for shaking off the yoke of Spain, in which the years 1808, and 1809, abounded. Of the termination of his connexion with the first Insurgents, two very different stories are told. He

himself asserts that he was disgusted with their projects, and refused to take any share in their execution, although they offered him the rank of Lieutenant-general as the price of his co-operation; while the Insurgents affirm that these were the conditions *proposed* by Iturbide, and *rejected* by them, because they conceived that it was setting too high a price upon the services of a man, so young, and so little distinguished, as he then was. However this may be, it is certain that all communication between them was broken off in disgust, and that Iturbide joined the troops, which were assembled by the Viceroy Venegas for the defence of Mexico, in 1810, and distinguished himself in the action of Lās Crūcēs, under the orders of Trūxillo. From that moment his rise was rapid: his activity and knowledge of the country recommended him for every dangerous expedition; and in these he was almost uniformly successful. As a Guerrilla chief he displayed great military talent; and, when entrusted with more important commands, he inflicted two of the most severe blows that the Insurgent cause sustained, in the battles of Vāllādōlid, and Pūrūārān, (where Morelos's great army was destroyed, and Mātāmōrōs taken,) and mainly contributed to the triumph of the Spanish arms. As he himself states, he never failed but in the attack upon the fort of Cōpōrō, in 1815, upon which occasion he volunteered his services, and led the party that was destined for the

assault. He was afterwards appointed to an independent command in the Baxio, (an honour which few Creoles had obtained before him;) but there, as during the course of his previous career, he tarnished the lustre of his military exploits by giving loose to the violence of the most unbridled passions. Few even of the Spanish Commandants equalled him in cruelty: his prisoners were seldom, if ever spared, and a dispatch of his is still extant, addressed to the Viceroy, after an action at Sālvātīerrā, dated Good Friday, 1814, in which he tells him that, "*in honour of the day*, he had just ordered three hundred excommunicated wretches to be shot!"

This dispatch has been declared by Iturbide's partisans to be apocryphal; but the original exists in the archives of the Viceroyalty. All, therefore, that can be said is, that these detestable executions, in cold blood, were but too much in consonance with the barbarous spirit of the time; and that, although it is impossible now to determine with which party they originated, they were almost universally practised by both. These were not, however, the only causes of complaint against Iturbide; his rapacity and extortions in his government led to such numerous representations against him, that he was recalled, in 1816, to Mexico, where an inquiry was instituted into his conduct, which was, however, stifled, because the malversations of which he had been guilty extended, more or less, to the whole

army, which was, consequently, disposed to make common cause with Iturbide, in repelling an attack so dangerous to all.\*

From this time Iturbide remained unemployed until the year 1820, at the close of which Apodaca had recourse to him, as I have already stated, as the fittest agent for carrying into execution his plans for the overthrow of the Constitution, and offered him the command of a small body of troops upon the Western coast, at the head of which he was to proclaim the re-establishment of the absolute authority of the King.

Iturbide accepted the commission, but with intentions very different from those with which it was conferred upon him. He had had leisure, during the four years which he had passed in retirement, to reflect upon the state of Mexico, and to convince himself of the facility with which the authority of Spain might be shaken off, if the Creole troops could be brought to co-operate with the old Insurgents in the attempt. The European troops in the country consisted only of eleven Spanish Expeditionary regiments; and these, though supported by from seventy to eighty thousand old Spaniards, disseminated through the different Provinces, could not oppose any sort of resistance to seven Veteran and seventeen Provincial regiments of Natives, aided by

\* Vide some passages of a correspondence between the Archbishop of Puebla and the Viceroy Calleja given in the Appendix, Letter E.

the great mass of the population of the country, which had given ample proofs of its devotion to the Independent cause during the earlier stages of the Revolution. The only difficulty was to bring the two parties to act in concert; and this Iturbide endeavoured to effect by the famous plan of *Ígüälá*, of which I believe him to have been the sole author, although it has been attributed, by his enemies, to the Spanish party in the capital.

But the desire shown throughout it to conciliate the European Spaniards, by guaranteeing to such as chose to remain in the country a full participation in all the rights and privileges of native Mexicans, and even allowing them to retain possession of such public employments as they might hold at the time of joining his (Iturbide's) party, was a feeling not unnatural in a man, who had passed his whole life in the service of Spain, and who regarded as friends, and comrades, those from whom his countrymen had suffered most. Nor was it impolitic, in another sense, as it weakened the motives which the Spaniards would otherwise have had for resistance, and thus smoothed the way for the adoption of those great political changes, which it was destined to introduce. Where life and property are at stake, a man must needs risk every thing in their defence; but the case is different where the question at issue is reduced to a question of *right* between two Governments; and there can be no doubt, that every European, who was induced by the mild spirit of the

plan of Īgũālă, to regard Iturbide's insurrection in this light, diminished the list of opponents, whom he would otherwise have had to encounter. I have given the whole of this plan, which consists of twenty-four Articles, in the Appendix, (Letter F.) Many of its provisions are excellent, particularly those by which all distinctions of Caste were abolished (Article 11), and an end put to the despotism of Military Commandants (Article 23), who were deprived of the power of inflicting capital punishments, which they had so long, and so shamefully, abused.\* But it was an illusion to suppose that any intimate union could be effected, where the passions had been reciprocally excited by so long a series of inveterate hostility. Creoles might forgive Creoles for the part which they had taken in the preceding struggle; but Spaniards, never: and from the first, the basis of "Union," which was one of the three Guarantees proposed by the plan of Īgũālă, was wanting. The idea itself was singular. Iturbide, conceiving that Independence, the Maintenance of the Catholic Religion, and Union, were the three great objects which he ought to hold in view, denominated them, "*the three Guarantees*;" and the troops who agreed to uphold them, "*the Army of the three Guarantees*." As a proof of his own prin-

\* This power was latterly used almost entirely as a means of extorting money, to which every petty Commandant had recourse, by occasionally threatening with martial law the richest persons in his district.

ciples, by the first Article of his plan, the Independence of the nation was declared; by the second, its religion fixed; and by the eighth, the crown offered to His Majesty Ferdinand VII., and, in case of his refusal, to the Infants Don Carlos and Don Francisco de Paula, provided any one of them would consent to occupy the throne in person. Such was the project, which was proclaimed on the 24th of February, 1821, at the little town of Īgũālă, (on the road to Acapulco,) where Iturbide had then his head-quarters. His whole force, at the time, did not exceed eight hundred men, and of these, though all, at first, took the oath of fidelity to the plan of Igualala, many deserted when they found that it was not received by the country at large with the enthusiasm that was expected. There was a moment when Iturbide's progress might, undoubtedly, have been checked; but it was lost by the indecision of the Viceroy, who hesitated to put himself at the head of a force, which he had concentrated for the defence of the Capital. The Europeans, alarmed at this delay, deposed him, (as they had done Iturrigaray, in 1808,) and placed Don Francisco Növěllă, an officer of artillery, at the head of affairs: but the authority of the new Viceroy was not generally recognized, and Iturbide was enabled by this schism in the Capital, to prosecute his own plans without interruption in the Interior. After seizing a Conducta of a million of dollars, which had been sent to Acapulco by the Manilla Company, he effected a

junction with General Guerrero, who had maintained his position on the river Zăcătŭlă, unsubdued by the forces which had been successively detached against him, but who did not hesitate to place himself under Iturbide's orders, as soon as he knew that the Independence of the country was his object. From this moment his success was certain. On his route to the Baxio, towards which, as a central position, he directed his march, he was joined by all the survivors of the first Insurrection, as well as by detachments of Creole troops. Men and officers flocked to his standard, in such numbers as to set all fear of opposition at defiance. The Clergy and the People were equally decided in his favour. The most distant Districts sent in their adhesion to the cause, and wherever he appeared in person, nothing could equal the enthusiasm displayed. Few have enjoyed a more intoxicating triumph than Iturbide;—few have been called, with more sincerity, the saviour of their country; and none have offered a more striking example of the instability of popular favour, and of the precarious tenure of those honours, which great revolutions sometimes give. While the tide of success lasted, nothing could arrest his progress: before the month of July, the whole country recognized his authority, with the exception of the Capital, in which Novella had shut himself up, with all the European troops. Iturbide had reached Quĕrĕtărŏ, on his road to Mexico, which he was about to invest, when he received intelligence of the

arrival, at Veracruz, of the new Constitutional Viceroy and Political Chief, Don Juan O'Donoju, who, at such a crisis, was, of course, unable to advance beyond the walls of the fortress. Iturbide, with his usual talent, hastened to turn this circumstance to account: at an interview with the Viceroy, whom he allowed to advance for the purpose as far as the town of Cŏrdŏvă, he proposed to him the adoption, by treaty, of the plan of Īgŭălă, as the only means of securing the lives and property of his countrymen established in Mexico, and of fixing the right to the throne on the House of Bourbon. With these terms O'Dŏnŏjŭ complied. In the name of the King, his Master, he recognized the Independence of Mexico, and gave up the Capital to the army of the Three Guarantees, which took possession of it, without effusion of blood, on the 27th of September, 1821. Novella, and such of his troops as chose to quit the Mexican territory, were allowed to do so, and the expenses of their voyage to the Havanna defrayed. Civilians were treated with similar indulgence, and their private property most strictly respected. O'Donoju, himself, was empowered to watch over the observance of the articles of the treaty favourable to his countrymen, as one of the members of the Junta, which was to be entrusted with the direction of affairs, until the King's decision could be known: while a Congress was to be assembled, to fix the bounds, which were to be prescribed to the Royal Authority.