

eighty of the United States was unequivocally recognized by Spain as extending from sea to sea; while Texas, *de jure* as well as *de facto*, was henceforward to be regarded as an integral part of the kingdom of New Spain.

CHAPTER II

MEXICO ACHIEVES HER INDEPENDENCE

THE ratifications of the Florida treaty were exchanged by the American Secretary of State and the Spanish minister at Washington on the twenty-second of February, 1821. Two days later, at the little town of Iguala, half-way between the city of Mexico and Acapulco, an event occurred which put an end, within a few weeks, to three centuries of Spanish rule. A body of about twenty-five hundred troops belonging to the government, and commanded by Colonel Agustin de Iturbide, issued a proclamation dated February 24, 1821, and later known as the plan of Iguala, in which they declared themselves in favor of Mexican independence under a constitutional monarchy.

The movement thus inaugurated by Iturbide's command ended, after some early reverses, by sweeping the whole country—but it was only the culmination of a long struggle which, under several leaders and for diverse objects, had been going on for more than twelve years. In its general features it was similar to the other contests begun, almost at the same moment, in the several Spanish colonies of Central and South America. In each case the first cause of the uprising was not a desire for independence or a hostility to Spanish rule, but an eager purpose to prevent Napoleon from seizing the colonies as he had seized Spain. The popular motive at first was purely patriotic and anti-French. That the movement later on inevitably became separatist and anti-Spanish was due to strong underlying causes which had no part in the original outbreaks.

It was on June 6, 1808, that Napoleon placed his brother Joseph on the throne of Spain. As soon as the news reached Mexico a unanimous sentiment of resistance to the usurpa-

tion became manifest; and when a French vessel arrived at Vera Cruz, bringing despatches from Joseph, she was fired upon by the castle of San Juan de Ulúa, was allowed to enter only under a flag of truce, and the despatches she brought were publicly burned.

Nor was there then the slightest difference of opinion as to the recognition of Ferdinand VII as King of Spain and the continuance in office of the viceroy as his representative. A meeting of the principal persons in the city of Mexico, called by the viceroy of New Spain, adopted a formal declaration to this effect;¹ but the discussions of this gathering developed serious differences of opinion as to the course to be pursued for the future. It was not doubted that during the King's captivity "the Sovereignty is represented by the nation, to accomplish in his name what may be most convenient";² but the dispute turned upon the question *which nation*—Spain or Mexico—was to act in the King's name. One group, consisting principally of native-born Mexicans, desired that a local *junta* should be summoned by the viceroy to represent the captive King and govern in his name until he was restored. The other group, consisting principally of natives of Europe and merchants with European connections, desired to recognize the authority of the temporary anti-French government then forming in Spain.

An end was soon put to this unsettled debate. Before daylight on September 15, 1808, the viceroy, who was believed to be intending to summon a Mexican congress, was seized by the royalists, deposed, and deported to Cadiz. The senior officer of the army succeeded to his place, and later a new Spanish viceroy was appointed by the *junta central*, which then sat at Seville and represented what was left of the Spanish government.

The peninsular authorities were thus put in complete control of the affairs of Mexico, and for two years their power was not openly contested. But the discussions to which

¹ Aug. 9, 1808.

² Address of municipality of Mexico to viceroy, Aug. 5, 1808, in Romero's *Mexico and the United States*, 294.

the crisis in Spain had necessarily given rise, and the violence offered to the person of a viceroy suspected of leanings toward Mexican independence, could not fail to give occasion for popular discontent. Sooner or later, discussion was certain to result in armed revolt against Spanish domination.

The "patient sufferance" of the Spanish colonies had been tested by a despotism to which the history of their northern neighbors offered no parallel. Mexico could not complain that the assent of the sovereign had been refused to laws passed by her legislature, for no legislature had ever existed. But she had the most abundant reason for joining in the other grievances which the Philadelphia Declaration of Independence had set forth. Her King had endeavored to prevent the population of the territory; he had obstructed the administration of justice; he had made judges dependent on his will alone; he had erected a multitude of offices and sent swarms of officers to harass the people and eat out their substance; he had kept among them in times of peace standing armies and ships of war; he had cut off their trade with all parts of the world; he had imposed taxes upon them without their consent. All these things, and more, the Spanish colonies had endured.

Clay, in a famous speech, put the comparison in the fewest possible words:

"Our revolution," he said, "was mainly directed against the mere theory of tyranny. We had suffered comparatively but little; we had, in some respects, been kindly treated; but our intrepid and intelligent fathers saw, in the usurpation of the power to levy an inconsiderable tax, the long train of oppressive acts that were to follow. They rose, they breasted the storm; they achieved our freedom. Spanish America for centuries has been doomed to the practical effects of an odious tyranny. If we were justified, she is more than justified."¹

But, in addition to the feeling of hostility to a remote and oppressive government, there was also an instinctive though somewhat illogical hatred of the Spaniards themselves.

¹ Speech in the House of Representatives, March 24, 1818; Colton's *Clay*, V, 142.

Not the Indians only, but the whites born in the colonies as well, grew up to detest the natives of Old Spain. The condescending superiority of the inhabitants of the mother country and their determination to exploit the colonies for their own exclusive benefit, was a phenomenon not peculiar to Spain; but the sullen and suspicious nature of the Indians, and the inherited pride of the whites gave a peculiar bitterness to the resentment of the colonists which found a parallel only in the feeling of the Irish natives and settlers toward their English neighbors.

Nevertheless, it was not until 1810 that Mexico actually took up arms in the cause of independence. A long-meditated conspiracy was forced to premature action by some discovery of its plans, and suddenly, on Sunday, September 16, Miguel Hidalgo, the parish priest of the town of Dolores, near Guanajuato, roused his people to revolt. Urged from the pulpit, actuated by the hope of plunder, with the cry of "Down with the evil government, death to the Spaniards," and under the banner of Our Lady of Guadalupe, thousands from the countryside flocked to Hidalgo's support.

Their cry for liberty was the "Grito de Dolores," and it echoed loudly through the central provinces of New Spain. The towns of Celaya, Guanajuato, and Valladolid (Morelia) fell into the hands of the insurgents. The city of Mexico itself was threatened, but Hidalgo feared that his undisciplined and tumultuous mass of followers—which is said to have numbered no less than eighty thousand men—would prove unequal to the task of capturing the capital. Retreating from the neighborhood of the city northward and westward, his forces captured and sacked the important towns of Guadalajara, San Blas, Zacatecas, and San Luis Potosí.

The government had, however, been concentrating its troops, and by the beginning of the year 1811 was able to put a well-equipped force in the field under the command of Calleja, an experienced and intelligent officer. On the seventeenth of January, 1811, at the head of about six thousand men, he met and routed the main body of the insurgents at the bridge of Calderon, although they outnumbered

him at least ten to one. The captured towns were quickly recovered. On March 21 Hidalgo and his principal associates were captured, and, in accordance with the usual custom, within a short time were all punctually shot.

The destruction of the main organized force—if an ill-armed and undisciplined crowd of Indians could be so called—did not by any means end the revolution. There was thenceforward little that could be described as regular warfare, but there was nothing that could be regarded as even remotely resembling peace. There can be little question that a large proportion of the people of Mexico—including the people of European descent—ardently desired to put an end to the rule of the Spanish monarchy.¹ The execution of their leader did not terminate the insurrection. After Hidalgo, Morelos, and after Morelos other leaders came forward at the head of revolutionary bands more or less numerous. Some of these bodies had in some sense a military organization and captured and plundered towns and *haciendas*. Others were mere bands of brigands. In either case, it was all but impossible for any regular military force to suppress them. When the flames of rebellion were extinguished in one part of the kingdom they would break out in another. The larger towns could be garrisoned and securely held, but, as the viceroy of New Spain officially reported,

"An infinity of smaller towns are left, unavoidably, at the mercy of the banditti; the roads are ours only as long as a division is passing over them; and the insurgents, who are infinitely superior to us in number, are masters of the largest proportion of the cultivated lands; the consequence is that trade is at an end; agriculture languishes; the mines are abandoned; all our resources exhausted; the troops wearied out; the loyal discouraged; the rich in dismay; in short, misery increases daily, and the state is in danger."²

To a certain extent the revolution reflected the varying fortunes of the Peninsular War. The original outbreak of

¹ Representation of the Audiencia to the Spanish Cortes, Nov. 18, 1813; translation in Ward's *Mexico*, I, 498.

² Calleja to the Minister of War, Aug. 18, 1814; *ibid.*, 519.

Hidalgo was undoubtedly encouraged by the fact that the Spanish troops and their allies had everywhere been beaten by the French. The news of Vimeira and Talavera, of the return of Joseph to Madrid, of the disastrous retreat of the British, of the death of Sir John Moore at Corunna, of the surrender of Saragossa—all must have penetrated even as far as Dolores before the day when the cry of independence was raised in its church. And, on the other hand, when Wellington had retaken Ciudad Rodrigo and stormed Badajos; when, in October, 1813, the allied English and Spanish forces had entered France itself and the soil of the Peninsula was at length delivered from invasion, the prospects of a successful revolt in Mexico must have seemed unquestionably dim.

As soon as the Spanish authorities began to be relieved of the pressure of the French invasion they undertook to strengthen their Mexican garrison. As early as January, 1812, two Spanish battalions were landed—the first troops that had been sent from Spain since the troubles began¹—and thenceforward the conflagration, although still flickering in various quarters, was gradually extinguished.

At the same time political conditions in Spain passed through several novel phases. During the period from 1808 to 1814 the government was carried on by self-constituted and provisional bodies, formed originally to resist the foreign invasion as best they could, and to support the cause of Ferdinand VII. Provisional juntas were first formed, then a *junta central*, then the constituent Cortes, which adopted and proclaimed the Constitution of 1812. The self-government thus necessarily imposed upon Spain had brought forward many men whom an absolute government would never have discovered, and the Constitution they framed reflected fully the more modern political ideas of France and England. It declared that the Spanish nation was free and independent, and not the patrimony of any family or individual; and that the sovereignty resided in the nation, which alone possessed the right of establishing its own fundamental laws. The gov-

¹ Alaman, *Historia de Méjico*, II, 469.

ernment was to be a limited hereditary monarchy, governed by the King and the Cortes. The King was to have merely a suspensive veto over the acts of the Cortes, and could do no more than execute such laws as should be duly passed. The privileges of the clergy and the nobility, the hereditary jurisdictions, the seigniorial rights were swept away. No man should thereafter be deprived of life or liberty but by the judgment of a court of competent jurisdiction. The liberty of the press was to be secure. The white residents of the colonies were to have all the rights of Spaniards. Any man of African descent might be admitted to citizenship provided he was the legitimate offspring of free parents, was married to a free woman, and carried on within the Spanish dominions, by means of his own capital, some profession, employment, or useful trade. The basis of representation in the Cortes was to be the same in the colonies as in Spain itself.¹

Under this Constitution Mexico would have been entitled to some thirty-seven deputies, and if the liberal plans could have been fairly carried into execution Mexico might have remained loyal. But before any elections under the new Constitution were held Ferdinand had been released from his French prison, and had entered upon a rigidly reactionary policy. Almost his first step was a refusal to accept the Constitution, accompanied by a declaration that all the acts of the Cortes were void. Many of its leading members were arrested and sentenced by administrative order to long terms of imprisonment. The King's purpose was to restore the detested monarchy of 1808, and to make himself as absolute as Charles V or Philip II. The old council of Castile, the Inquisition, the privileges of the nobility and clergy, were restored; the convents were again filled with monks; the Jesuits, banished by Charles III, were brought back. In the words of a writer unfriendly to the liberal cause:

“Everything that had existed six years before was re-established, all the abuses which experience had shown to exist, all the recognized vices, all the notorious dangers,—and they were re-established, not provisionally to avoid a vexatious interregnum, but definitely, abso-

¹ See text in Dublan y Lozano, I, 349-379.

lutely, as a thing stable and perpetual, as an institution, as an element in the constitution of the State."¹

But the restoration of the old order of things, however distasteful to Mexican liberals, certainly seemed to insure a strong government of the colonies. Calleja, who had been promoted to be viceroy, had to a great extent destroyed the revolutionary forces by the beginning of the year 1816; and it was even said that the only reason why his success was not altogether complete was because he had a pecuniary interest in the continuance of the war.² His successor, Apodaca, who arrived in August, 1816, swept cleaner, and by the end of 1819 the whole of Mexico was very nearly "pacified." Two or three leaders in remote mountainous districts still held out, but the viceroy could fairly congratulate himself that everything like organized resistance was at an end, when events occurred in the Peninsula itself which destroyed all prospect of continued Spanish domination.

The King was not simply engaged in making war on his rebellious subjects in Mexico. All South and Central America was in revolt, and in most parts the revolutionists were successful. In Buenos Ayres an independent government had existed *de facto* since May, 1810. In Chile the war had been carried on with varying results, but on the whole the Spaniards had been generally unsuccessful. In Venezuela and New Granada Bolivar had established independence. It was only in the West India islands and Peru, where (as in Mexico) there were powerful commercial interests, great mining interests, and an extraordinarily rich church, that the Spanish government had been able to sustain itself.

This far-flung battle-line called for great expenditures of men and money. The drafts on the army for colonial service were heavy, and the mortality among the troops was known to be excessive. It was indeed asserted that out of forty thousand men who had been sent to America not one had returned.³

¹ Martignac, *L'Espagne et ses Révolutions*.

² Bancroft, *History of Mexico*, IV, 645.

³ De Pradt, *Rév. Actuelle de l'Espagne*, 78.

But the army had other causes of discontent. The officers had, many of them, imbibed liberal ideas during the six years of Ferdinand's captivity. The men were unpaid, ill clothed, and ill fed. The medical service was notoriously inefficient. Mutiny after mutiny had broken out in the period between 1814 and 1820, and although put down without serious difficulty the government had had abundant warning of the dangerous spirit which existed.

It was obviously the part of wisdom to keep the army scattered throughout Spain in small detachments, and to avoid designating, until the last moment, the forces destined for colonial service. Instead, the government committed the folly of collecting a large expeditionary force at Cadiz months before transports were ready. There were extraordinary delays in getting any ships at all, and those finally secured were universally believed to be unfit for sea. For a year this army had no other occupation than to watch the rotten and fever-infected ships on which it was to embark, and to listen to hideous tales of disease and death. In such a combination of circumstances—the destitution of the troops, the general public discontent, the tedious waiting for transportation, the torturing fear of inglorious death from tropical disease—a mutiny was inevitable.

On the first day of January, 1820, it broke out under the leadership of Riego, a battalion commander. At the head of a few men he surprised the head-quarters of the army, captured the commanding general and his staff, and was soon joined by the rest of the troops. The movement at first was not successful, but the contagion spread. In widely distant points of Spain one body of troops after another "pronounced" in favor of the Constitution of 1812. Ferdinand, in the face of the defection of his army, was utterly powerless, and on March 9, 1820, he abandoned the cause of reaction and solemnly and publicly took an oath to support the Constitution.

The success of Riego's revolt put an end to any expectations that Spain could, with her own resources, recover her colonies. When a Spanish army refused to act against them

their independence was virtually secured. Peru and Mexico and Cuba were indeed still in possession of the Spanish authorities, and by wise and timely concessions it might perhaps still have been possible to establish autonomous local governments and to preserve them as in some sort a part of the Spanish empire. But the policy of even the reformed government did not tend to conciliation. Impotent as it was, it declined to recognize accomplished facts.

The determining cause of the final revolt in Mexico was, however, not the oppressive, but the liberal spirit of the new rulers of Spain. The Cortes elected in accordance with the Constitution of 1812 met in July, 1820, and at once took up the desperate financial situation. Unpopular and oppressive taxes were reduced, and the deficit was made good by suppressing religious orders and confiscating a part of the property of the church. These measures instantly alarmed the Mexican clergy, and under the leadership of the highest ecclesiastics the conspiracy was formed which resulted in Iturbide's proclamation of the plan of Iguala, the first article of which was that the religion of New Spain should be "the Roman Catholic Apostolic, without tolerating any other."¹

Iturbide's prospects seemed at first unfavorable, but the cause of independence was soon joined by officers of high rank in various parts of the country. By the beginning of July, 1821, the greater part of New Spain was in the hands of the insurgents, although the cities of Mexico, Acapulco, and Vera Cruz, with the important fortresses of Perote and San Juan de Ulúa, still remained loyal to Spain.

On July 30, however, a new viceroy, General O'Donojú, landed at Vera Cruz, where he found himself besieged, and unable, for want of an adequate force, to proceed to his capital. His first attempt to stay the progress of events was to issue a proclamation urging the people to await the action of the Spanish Cortes, which, he asserted, would unquestionably grant them autonomy; but as autonomy seemed already pretty well assured as a fact, and as O'Donojú's

¹ See the text in Alaman, V; App. 8-13.

jurisdiction could only be exercised over the space commanded by the guns of the ship on which he had come over, he determined to treat with the insurgents.

Three days after his arrival he opened negotiations,¹ which resulted in his receiving a safe conduct from the revolutionary leaders, allowing him to come into the interior as far as the town of Cordova. There he met with Iturbide. No time was lost in coming to an agreement, for O'Donojú had become convinced that instant action was essential if the lives and property of the natives of Spain then in Mexico were to be spared. Within forty-eight hours after their meeting he signed, with Iturbide, a paper which came to be called the treaty of Cordova.²

This paper, which was dated August 24, 1821, provided, in substance, that the independence of Mexico should be recognized by Spain; that the form of government should be a constitutional monarchy, under the style of the Mexican Empire; that the crown should be offered to the male members of the Spanish royal family in succession; and that on the failure of them all to accept, then to such person as the Mexican Cortes might designate. A provisional junta was to be formed at once, O'Donojú and Iturbide being members.

O'Donojú's action, which was probably quite unwarranted by his instructions, had the effect of putting an end to all conflict. The Spanish troops in the city of Mexico, while declining to recognize the validity of the treaty of Cordova, were willing to obey O'Donojú's orders to march out, and subsequently to embark for Spain.

Shortly after Acapulco and Perote surrendered to Iturbide, and the Spanish commander at Vera Cruz retired, with his entire force, to the castle of San Juan de Ulúa, which then remained the sole relic of Spanish rule in Mexico.³

On September 28, 1821, a provisional junta of thirty-six members nominated by Iturbide met in the city of Mexico and appointed him, together with O'Donojú and three

¹ Santa Anna, *Mi Historia*, 6 (García, *Documentos Inéditos ó Muy Raros*, II).

² See the text in full in Dublan y Lozano, I, 548-550.

³ It continued in the possession of Spain until Nov. 18, 1825.

other persons, regents of the empire, to govern until an Emperor was selected. A plan was also formulated for the creation of a Congress of two houses, and December 24 was fixed as the date for the preliminary elections. In the meantime the junta busied itself with internal legislation and authorized the appointment of diplomatic agents in South America, the United States, England, and Rome. No attempt was made to enter into diplomatic relations with any of the other continental powers of Europe—not even Spain.

On February 24, 1822, the first anniversary of the plan of Iguala, the Congress met, and at once entered upon a series of angry controversies with Iturbide. O'Donojú had died some months before, and Iturbide had been made not only president of the regents, but general-in-chief of the army with the title of Most Serene Highness. The break finally came when Congress passed measures for a reduction of the army and for prohibiting any member of the regency from holding military command. A convenient mutiny broke out in the barracks of the city of Mexico on May 19, 1822, and by a terrified Congress Iturbide was hurriedly proclaimed Emperor under the title of Agustín I.

While Mexico was thus turbulently engaged in settling her own affairs, the liberal government of Spain was angrily protesting against being excluded from any share in the business. As soon as O'Donojú's surrender was made known the Cortes, by a decree of February 13, 1822, repudiated his action, authorized the appointment of commissioners to all the revolted colonies to hear and receive their proposals, and directed that all foreign governments should be notified that recognition of any of the new governments would be regarded as an act of hostility;¹ but these measures of conciliation never came to anything—so far, at least, as Mexico was concerned.

¹ *Colección de Decretos . . . Expedidos por las Cortes*, VIII, 272. The exact language as to the treaty of Cordova is as follows: "Se declaran ilegítimos y nulos en sus efectos para el Gobierno español y sus súbditos el llamado tratado de Cordoba celebrado entre el General O'Donojú y el Gefe de los disidentes de Nueva España D. Agustín de Iturbide, lo mismo que otro cualquiera acto y estipulación," etc.

The plan of Iguala and the treaty of Cordova had contemplated offering the Mexican crown to the several male members of the Spanish royal family in turn; but as Spain had now refused to agree to the proposed arrangement, the Mexican Congress might be regarded as acting strictly within the terms of the programme when it elected Iturbide. It is true that the election was made hurriedly, under the threats of a mob, and by a doubtful vote; but the country accepted the result with satisfaction, or at least without open objection.

Iturbide's first business was to establish an imperial court. He founded an order of Guadalupe. His father and mother, as well as his numerous sons and daughters, were created princes and princesses. And on the 21st day of July, 1822, he was duly crowned, in a shabby state, which was copied as closely as practicable from Isabey's designs in the *Livre du Sacre* prepared for Napoleon's coronation sixteen years before.

The career of the new Emperor was short and stormy. It was much easier to imitate Napoleon's coronation ceremonies than to copy his methods in dealing with the representatives of the people; as Iturbide soon discovered when he came in conflict with the Mexican Congress.

Within six weeks after his inauguration he caused fifteen of the deputies to be arrested on charges of conspiracy, and two months later he dissolved the Congress by a military force. In this he only followed Cromwell's example as well as Napoleon's; but he lacked one essential element of success which had enabled Cromwell and Napoleon to maintain themselves in the face of a hostile public opinion. He had not first made sure of the army. As a matter of fact, he seems not to have been especially popular in the army or out of it, and his extraordinary rise—which was not due to any marked military talents—undoubtedly excited many jealousies.

At any rate, early in 1823 a military revolution broke out, which was soon supported by a large part of the army, who pledged themselves to re-establish and support a na-

tional assembly. Iturbide's troops, almost in a body, deserted him and left the city of Mexico to join the insurgents and on the 19th of March his abdication was announced. He had reigned for just ten months.

The remainder of his career was almost as short and quite as disastrous as his reign. He left Mexico, went to Italy, and after spending a few weeks there, travelled overland to England, and thence sailed for Mexico. With a single companion he landed near Tampico; but his imitation of the return from Elba proved a complete fiasco. He was at once recognized, arrested, and shot. His execution took place July 18, 1824.

The abdication of Iturbide, coupled with the refusal of Spain to recognize the validity of O'Donojú's treaty of Cordova, left the government of Mexico in a state of utter confusion. The military insurgents who had succeeded in dethroning the Emperor had created a triumvirate and had reassembled the Congress which Iturbide had illegally dissolved; but the triumvirs and the Congress together were hopelessly unequal to the task of governing the country. It was obvious that they possessed no constitutional authority, and they were equally without any efficient organization for preserving order. After a short and highly unsatisfactory existence, the authorities felt compelled to convene a constituent Congress; and this body met November 7, 1823.

That the Constitution to be adopted should be republican in form was a foregone conclusion. The one fundamental point upon which opinions differed, and upon which there was a long discussion, was the point whether the republic should be federal or centralized. The former plan was demanded by the various local bodies throughout the country. It had also the advantage of being actually in force in the United States, and this was an example which the delegates generally were prepared to follow.

A more complete acquaintance with the nature of the compromises under which the Constitution of the United States had been framed might have led to the adoption of

a different system of government. The thirteen states, when their delegates assembled in 1787, had had a long history of practical autonomy. Except as they were loosely grouped through their dependence on the British crown, the North American colonies had been separate and self-contained units. War with France and British oppression had more than once brought them together; but they were even then thoroughly resolved on preserving their separate individuality and independence, and on resisting any encroachments by their neighbors. The articles of confederation had looked merely to a league of thirteen equal nations, and it was only the bitter experience of a protracted war and the humiliations of five years of inglorious and impotent peace that finally persuaded these reluctant sovereigns to surrender some of their authority to a common superior.

No such conditions, nor anything approaching them, had ever prevailed in Mexico. The government had always been highly centralized. New Spain was in fact as well as in name one kingdom. The several intendancies were nothing more than administrative divisions which represented no separate traditions and had no independent life. Before establishing a federal Constitution it was actually necessary to create the states which were then to come together into one.

The process of federation in the two countries was thus reversed. Mexico divided herself into separate states. In the American Union, the heretofore sovereign states fused themselves into a single nation. In the latter case, to use Freeman's phrase, federation meant uniting that which before had been disunited; in the former, it meant breaking up what before had been joined together.

These views were pressed on the constituent Congress with great clearness and vigor by Father Mier, a delegate who had lived for some years in England and had a good knowledge of English and American constitutional principles.¹ He also based his opposition on the incapacity of

¹ See a sketch of his life in Bancroft's *History of Mexico*, IV, 451.