

CHAPTER XXIII.

1816.

THE LIBERATOR WAS NOT THE AUTHOR OF THE MURDER OF THE MONKS OF CARONI—HE
CROSSES THE ORINOCO AND JOINS PIAR—LETTERS OF BOLIVAR IN FRONT OF ANGOSTURA—
HE ISSUES AT SAN FELIX THE DECREE UPON "COUNCILS OF WAR"—FEARS OF ANARCHY—
RISK OF CABACORINA—WONDERFUL DARING OF ANTONIO DIAZ—THE TAKING OF GUAYANA—
MORILLO AT MARGARITA—IMPONDERABLE VALOR OF THE MARGARITANS—EXECUTION OF
PIAR—DEFINITION OF THE COUNCIL OF STATE—OCCUPATIONS OF THE LIBERATOR.

BASED on the vulgar and slandering accusations of Diaz, and other royalist writers, Montenegro wrote that "the Liberator had been the indirect cause of the assassination of missionaries assembled in the convent of Carnacha, not in virtue of any express order to kill them, but the imprudence of having exclaimed, when informed of their arrest: why have they not killed them? "which expressions," he adds, "were sufficient to encourage the hatred professed against them by the aborigines, and for which, afterwards, Bolivar himself was sorry for having spoken in those terms."

Baralt, who wrote later on his history, repeats the same tale, copying from Montenegro.

One and the other suppose that the death of the fathers took place after the first interviews of Bolivar with Piar at Guayana.

Torrente has also painted the doleful picture of the murder of the missionaries of Caroni in the most gloomy colors, and this inexorable man, who would have with pleasure thrown the responsibility on the Liberator, does not even mention his name, complying in this with justice; he blames Piar, and affirms that the executors were "the savage negroes of Guarico and Santo Domingo, who came in the second expedition from Jacmel.

It is worthy of notice, that the most constant and sanguinary enemy of Bolivar does not impute to him an act which is brought forth to the world to accuse him of it, by his friends Montenegro and Baralt. I will say frankly, these gentlemen, the first above all, wrote on foreign authority, what he heard from the enemies when he fought amongst them; without regarding that the ear is the second door of truth, and the principal one of lie. He received the news of the events at a distance, and always painted in the colors of the hateful passion. So that it is not strange that he should have written false imputations, which the Spaniards themselves do not repeat.

Neither did the Liberator ever pronounce the indiscreet expression quoted by Montenegro, nor was he ever sorry for having uttered it. Piar gave no order to murder Catalan Monks of Caroni, nor were they the negroes of Hayti (as

there were none in the campaign of the Orinoco) who killed them, nor did the act take place at the date which is given to it.

And thus is history written! . . .

Since the end of the year 1816, Piar had operated successfully in the province of Guayana, and in the middle of January, 1817, he had arrived before Angostura. He attempted, unsuccessfully, an assault against the city, and returned to his quarters, unable to repeat it.

So considerable was his loss!

It then entered his mind to occupy the vast missions of Caroni, abundant in cattle, horses, and other articles which he would need and of which the enemy provided themselves. He then marched without delay, with part of his army; and in spite of some resistance he took, little by little, the celebrated establishments of the Catalan monks. Piar entered the town of Upata the 17th February, and immediately assembled in the convent of Carusche (not Carache) twenty-two missionaries, who were spread through the towns, depriving them of all influence and administrative functions. On this the Indians, who despised to death these priests, supported the side of the independents, and enlisted in our ranks.

Piar knew every day more and more the importance of the territory of Caroni; the warehouse and granary of the necessary provisions, and he determined to preserve it at all risks. This fundamental reason gave place to the glorious combat of San Felix; a brilliant victory, which had the happiest results for our cause. On that bloody day more than 500 royalists died, and the brigadier himself, Don Miguel de Latorre, chief of the Spanish forces, owed his life to the obscurity of the night and the swiftness of his horse. Amongst the prisoners were counted seventy-five chiefs and officers, including the Governor Ceruti; and allowing himself to be led off by the vindictive irritation with which the patriots and Spaniards were animated, Piar ordered 800 European prisoners to be killed, only pardoning the creoles. The booty of arms, ammunition, uniforms, and even money, placed Piar and his army in a state which they never had experienced.

On the second of May Bolivar joined the forces he met at Chaparro with those of Piar; and the monks of Caroni still lived!

Morillo also succeeded in forming a junction with Aldama at Chaparro, and passed in review 6,000 men. Upon which the forces of Canterac, of whom we have spoken, arrived, and two corvettes of war, the "Descubierta" and the "Diamanta."

The Liberator was operating against Angostura; and he feared (and he feared with reason) that the enemy would attack him on the rear.

In a situation so full of perils, it seemed prudent to the chief of staff, General Carlos Soublette, to remove all the guarded Capuchins in Carusche to an interior town of the missions, named Divina Pastora, a removal to be executed in case of an attack from the royalists.

He ordered it so, and in this there was nothing reprehensible.

But the passions of those times closed the gates of pity and reconciliation, and when least authorized, more fiery was their impetus. The two officers to whose charge were confided the religious Capuchins killed them, giving the execution to the very Indians who hated them so much.

When this news arrived to the ears of the Liberator, he instantly wrote a letter to Piar, conceived in the most energetic terms, requiring him to account for

this act. The Colonel Pedro Briceño Mendes was at that time Secretary of Piar, and it was him who wrote, denying the imputation involved in the words of Bolívar. Piar regretted the event, and said to the Liberator that measures would be taken to judge the authors of the death of the priests.

Montenegro, and those who have followed him, have not read, certainly, the interesting document, which is in page 297 of volume XVIII. of the "Documents relative to the Public Life of the Liberator." It is an official reply of the Bishop of Popayan, the Right Reverend D. Salvador Jimenez. The slanderer Obando, having written from Timbio, accusing Bolívar of the death of the Capuchins of Guayana, whom he called "Carthusians," the Right Reverend Jimenez replied, "that far from it being Bolívar who had ordered the execution of the Capuchins, he had severely reprovved that act, sending his aid-de-camp Freites to inform General Piar, Colonel Jacinto Lara and his aid, Monzon, who were the authors of this terrible scene, that they would lose all the opinion of Venezuela."

And now that these gentlemen have not wished to read such an important document, they could have spoken even ten minutes with Freites, who still lives, a venerable old man, defender of the truth and honor, as he was before that of the independence of his country; brother of the illustrious General Freites, and inseparable companion of Bolívar, as he was at that epoch his aid-de-camp. Thus they could have known the truth, and have evaded a false accusation against innocence.

The document of the Bishop Jimenez, published in the gazettes of 1838, and afterwards collected amongst the "documents relative to the life of the Liberator," indispensably came to the ears of Lara and Monzon, who did not nor could not contradict it; and will it be just to charge the Liberator with the responsibility of acts which he never authorized, and which, on the contrary, he energetically reprovved?

The story of Montenegro somewhat resembles the unhappy event of St. Thomas of Canterbury, who was assassinated by some fanatics because they heard the King Henry II. of England, who said spitefully: "Among all my knights and nobles have I not one who would rid me of this shaveling?" But history is not a fabulous narration, nor is it written, searching similar designs which in reality have never existed. If it is the witness of times and the messenger of antiquity, it is necessary that it should impart severely to each one his reward or punishment, his praise or censure. No one, however great he may be, should escape the responsibility before the terrible judgment of history; but we do not exact the obligation of excusing himself, to whom the imputation of the act which is investigated is not ascribed.

The military and political events were massed in such an abundant epoch, impeded the merited chastisement of the culpable; and this circumstance, according to Restrepo, is "a misfortune for the honor of the Liberator." It would have been so, undoubtedly, in another time in which legal authority was more respected and the passions less excited, that the sentences of justice could have been fulfilled. To express well an upright and proper judgment, it is necessary to place ourselves in imagination in the position of the affairs which are being judged; to know the degree of the exaltation of the minds, the reigning thought, the particular circumstances or conditions of the moment. . . . The Liberator did not excuse the excesses of the delinquent will, but on the contrary he inquired into the case, reprovving it with the purpose of punishing it. Why

then has it to be a stain for his honor, that it should remain unpunished, if the swift current of events scattered the men, created new accidents, the minds preoccupied by diverse affairs? Necessity disculpates that remission, which was more on account of the time, than in the sentence.

The truth of this unhappy episode being proved, it was consistent to unite again the broken thread of the events.

The Liberator, with skill and great daring, crossed the Orinoco with the army above the mouth of the Pao, as has been said. But in that point there was no road, and it was necessary to cut one through the dense forest, in which the troops advanced in proportion, that before the road was being opened. Without provisions, pressed by hunger, they cooked horse-meat for food, when happily, the Colonel Tomas Montilla arrived with succors sent by Piar. They followed the right bank of the river Aro until they joined the troops of Piar, who was pressing the siege of Angostura.

The junction took place at 9 o'clock on the morning of the 2d of May; and Bolivar was solemnly acknowledged as supreme chief of the Republic of Venezuela.

The happy thought of conducting the independent forces on the other side of the Orinoco saved them from the destruction of Morillo, who, with a superior army, would have crushed them. Now in the vast forests of Guayana, causing the cry of liberty to re-echo, they shall give the Republic a base of operations, which the royalists will never succeed in destroying.

Whilst the Liberator was thus planning the foundations of the government under the authority of a sole magistrate, fully empowered, such as was convenient in those moments of action and union, Marino, who was at Cariaco, acted in a scandalous farce, which gave the measure of the most absurd extravagances.

The act happened in this manner:

About the middle of April, Deacon D. José Cortés de Madariaga suddenly appeared at Carupano, escaped from the prisons of Cêuta, as we already know. Without any knowledge of what had transpired during his captivity, this fiery man believed that affairs were in the same state as when he had left Venezuela against his will. He issued a manifesto, in which, prescindng from the state of war in which the country was plunged, and from the threats of Morillo, he recommended the formation of a representative government, emanated from national election, and proscribed the military authorities which the revolution had formed, as pernicious elements of despotism. He afterwards proceeded to Cariaco, and put himself in accord with Marino; always siding with novelties, and even found support (who would believe it?) in men like Zea, the lawyer Diego B. Urbaneja, Brion, and others of sound judgment and quiet reasoning. In consequence of such warm suggestions of Cortés, Marino convoked a congress, which was inaugurated the 8th of May at San Felipe de Carisco, and which was composed of only TEN members, as only a few towns and villages had exercised the right of suffrage. In presence of this *diminutive* congress (thus was the farce named), presided over by the Sr. Francisco Javier Maiz, our Marino appeared in uniform and said:

"Citizens! Never had I experienced the satisfaction equal to that I feel in this moment on beholding you assembled to treat on the measures most efficacious to affirm the salvation of the country, in the critical political circumstances which have induced our illustrious countryman, D. José Cortés Madariaga, to assume the supreme command. In his name, then, I have the honor to address you as second in command."

After a few political reflections, wanting in seriousness as the foregoing exordium, Madariaga, who was not a man to consent any one to speak in his name, spoke and said: "Animated by sentiments of friendship, and adhesion towards the Venezuelans and their noble countrymen, particularly since 1812, I shall pass in silence the series of catastrophes which have carried off so many illustrious persons of all ages and sexes, who by their services had contributed to the greatness of the country, and who have perished in the war maintained against us by the enemies of the Republic. But, informed in my painful captivity that the moment had arrived when America should rise in all dignity, to proclaim her rights to the face of the world, I hastened to return to this soil, to communicate to my countrymen the convictions that cause me to hope that the independence of Venezuela will be secured during the present year, and strengthened by respectable exterior relations, worthy of this precious portion of the globe. I abstain, from motives of delicacy, to make certain reflections of great importance, which I have already communicated in my last correspondence to the Supreme Chief of the Republic, to General Mariño, and to the Admiral Luis Brion, who are now present. In conclusion, I recommend anew the imperious necessity of the establishment of a regular government." *

With this object in view, Mariño resigned the rank of, and had the gay idea of formally resigning in the name of the Liberator Simon Bolivar; "it being of no value to him whether this one would or not approve or reprove his conduct."

The *little Congress* accepted the resignations, and believing itself to be invested with the national faculties, it named for the performance of the executive power the General Fernando Toro (who had retired to Trinidad), the Colonel Francisco Javier Maiz, and General Simon Bolivar. As suppliants were elected, Zea, Cortes Madariaga and the Colonel Diego Vallenilla; notifying that Zea and Madariaga were to enter immediately into office in the absence of Toro and Bolivar. Other nominations were also made in the judicial branch; it appointed the city of Asuncion, in Margarita, as the provisional capital of the Republic; the employees were sworn, and it was dissolved the following day (9th of May). The enemy was approaching.

Before adjourning, and as if in recompense of the sacrifice made by Mariño, in resigning the rank of second in command of the army, he was named by the Congress as Superior Chief of the arms.

My readers will clearly perceive that this had not the least shade of duration or truth. The objects of the promoters of the Congress had been, not to recognize Bolivar; but Bolivar was the independence, and to disown him, was equivalent to abandoning all hope of liberty. Besides which, Bolivar was a man of such gigantic mind; a composition of such diverse elements; there were in him so many virtues, so much greatness, and so much moderation, so much genius and so much strength; he had learned or divined so many things in the intercourse of men, and in the management of affairs, that he was all in war and all in policy. Nothing could be done without him; thus, then, the farce of the Congress had no result, and very soon the insignificant measures of Carisco were forgotten. Notwithstanding this, Mariño sent a communication to Urdaneta, who was commanding at Cumanacoa some forces, soliciting his acknowledgment of the measures of the Congress; but Urdaneta refused it. The same was done by the Major Geronimo Sucre, and both with the Major Francisco Portero,

* American State Papers, Vol. IV., p. 177.

the Colonel Antonio Sucre and thirty officers more, not only refused to acknowledge Marino as *Generalissimo*, but they marched away to Guayana to join Bolivar, in spite of the entreaties of this one, and his endeavors to dissuade them from their purpose, and oblige them to remain.

On his part, the Liberator disowned, as he should, the assembly of Cariaco; and Morillo, who, instead of marching against Guayana, had adopted the absurd idea of setting out against Cumana and Margarita, completed by his presence the dissolution of these fumes of discord and anarchy. Brion received orders from the Liberator to penetrate with his fleet into the Orinoco, and he hastened to fulfill them, notwithstanding having been, by weakness, a member of the Congress; carrying, in order to reduce Guayana, the only thing needed by Bolivar; that is to say, the fleet.

Cortes Madariaga himself, the turbulent contriver of this farce, did not remain on the continent, and by November he was already at Kingston, Jamaica, from whence he intended to go to Chili, his country, according to a letter he wrote to the General Bernardo O'Higgins, and which can be read amongst the documents of the biography of that illustrious general; but this voyage was not realized.

From La Mesa, in front of Angostura, the Liberator wrote to the refugees of the Antilles (the middle of May), "the arrival of the Admiral with his fleet to the mouths of the Orinoco will soon place in our power the two Guyanas, which I had resolved to assault, and which attack I have suspended, because by this assistance, we are certain to triumph at once by land and sea." And communicating them news of importance to encourage their hopes, he informed them that the Generals Zaraza and Monagas were harassing the enemy by surprises and hostilities in the provinces of Barcelona and Caracas, and that the situation was bettering daily, in spite of reverses. General Marino," he continued, "has a brilliant army at Cumaná. The victory obtained by General Piar at San Felix is the most brilliant success as yet reached by our arms in Venezuela. Now, more than ever, should we confide in fortune, now that we have begun the restoration of Venezuela by where we should, by the Orinoco and by the Plains."

This letter is remarkable in more than one respect.

The Liberator speaks enthusiastically of the glories of Piar. The innate uprightness of his mind did not permit him to fall to the imperfections and vices of paltry envy, nor to the anxieties and jealousies of common rivalry. He speaks of the brilliant army of Marino, as if it was under his orders. This is prudence. So early had the lights of the soul begun in Bolivar, that as yet young, he manifested the first fruits of discretion, and was accredited for his reflection and solidity! The defection of Marino was a passing freak, a false step, which was not worthy of notice. Bolivar knew that a mistaken resolution does not induce obligation, and he hoped the Eastern chieftain would return on his steps from the moment he would discover the error of his undertaking.

During these days our gunboats, under the command of Colonel Armario, surprised the naval dock of the island of Fajardo, taking a gunboat, a sloop, two schooners, twenty-seven cannon and other warlike effects, and the Liberator became more and more convinced that *the most important operation was the possession of the river, by which the occupation of the two Guyanas was infallible.*

He thus wrote to General Soubllets.

On the 27th of May he set out from San Miguel, for Old Guayana, with the

view of carefully examining the forts and to see what operations could be undertaken. "I have not determined," he wrote to the same chief, whom we have just named, "if I shall march rapidly to Upata or these headquarters, to lead the army in person; in any manner, you should all be ready, as if about to march."

On the 30th he occupied new positions, in order to blockade the forts of Old Guayana, and always in expectation of Brion, to whom he directed the most urgent appeals, he fixed his headquarters at San Felix. Thus he left blockaded the above-mentioned forts. His right, composed in greater part of cavalry, besieged Angostura; his centre occupied San Miguel and Caroni.

At San Felix the Liberator issued the famous decree of "Councils of War," fixing the manner of discovering and resolving military cases (7th of June). This ordinance was necessary, to establish a general order of judgment that should be observed in all the armies and garrisons of the republic, and so that the criminal military cases should be decided in a brief and simple manner. With it ceased the arbitrariness of private cases, the diverse ways and strange and illegal proceedings.

The Liberator recommended in the last article that the judgments should be rendered as brief as possible, *without infringing on this account on the formalities that make them just*. Such an advice seems at first view unnecessary; but it is always fruitful, from the very moment that formalities are considered as the guarantees of truth, the positive base of justice, and the great barrier against the arbitrariness of the judge.

At San Felix the Liberator received a letter from Brion, notifying him of his departure from Pampatar on the 31st of May, with the fleet of his command and the flying squadron led by the brave Margaritan Antonio Diaz, and that he would post himself at Guarapiche. With this and the news that Morillo was marching against Margarita, he dedicated himself to activate the operations, to liberate Guayana before the return of the Spaniards from that island.

On fulfilling these peremptory labors he beheld himself in the severe necessity of quenching the fire which every moment was being ignited by the sparks of anarchy coming from Cumaná. The event of Cariaco found sympathy in Piar and other chiefs who longed for absolute command and immediate progress. Arismendi endeavored to collect some officers of high rank to form another government, in contraposition to that residing at Margarita. Impelled by a generous purpose, this chief could have perhaps produced vast evils, dividing the republic in two parties. The Liberator wrote immediately to General Pedro Briceño Mendez, who was the secretary of Piar, saying to him that he had been informed by second hands what was going on. "These are follies to lose us," he added; "and why such a change? The army obeys me; Monagas, Rojas and Zaraza esteem and hold me as a miracle of fortune for the republic. After this, and even now, each one will believe himself to have right to be commander-in-chief. Every one has a right and desire to command; and as is shown by history, there has not been in the world an election made by soldiers, which has not been decided with arms and at the cost of much blood. Represent this to Piar; and if it is not sufficient we may await frightful evils of all classes."

Fortunately affairs then went no farther, thanks to the enemy, whose threats exacted union on our part, and the absolute renouncement of all passions and rashness.

The Liberator knowing the great talents of Arismendi, his watchfulness for the

country, his active and industrious genius, he confided to him the construction of batteries, and the organization of the flying squadrons which were to harass the Spaniards on the river, and to join the fleet of Brion. With only a few shipwrights and ordinary carpenters, surmounting all the difficulties offered by the want of necessary elements, they were able to launch three or four gunboats, which were commanded by Captain Rodriguez.

Brion appeared in the Orinoco.

The Liberator ordered the small vessels he had armed in war to proceed to join the fleet of the Admiral. The operation was hazardous, because our gunboats, built far up the river, were to pass through the midst of the hostile fleet which blockaded the Orinoco. Nine vessels passed on the night of the 2d of July (unseen), but two were forced to return, the Spaniards now being alarmed. The royalist fleet, which was superior, pursued ours, which was forced to take refuge in the bayou of Casacoima on the right bank of the river.

The Liberator with forethought had caused a detachment to march out to assist the vessels in case they were attacked, and not satisfied with that, he went in person to await the result (4th of July). The enemy, being informed, or guessing the purpose of Bolivar, had landed on their part a little above the mouth of the Caño, executing their operation without being noticed, and by this the detachment was balked in the rear. Bolivar was with Generals Arismendi, Pedro Leon Torres, Soublotte, Jacinto Lara, Briceño Mendez, and other chiefs, at some distance from the army, and it was natural that the Spaniards should meet them before this. The surprise was great, as much as imminent the peril. They only saw the enemy when they fired on them. Leon Torres and two others had time and presence of mind to mount their horses and escape. Bolivar and the others, confused, threw themselves into a creek, hiding in an arm of the Orinoco. They saved themselves there, certainly miraculously, the enemy being able to finish with them, hunting them like ducks. Some shots made by our soldiers, on hearing those of the enemy, detained them; they re-embarked, having obtained no other result than that of putting in jeopardy the lives of our chiefs.

It is related that the Liberator believed it to be so impossible to escape, that he arrived to the extreme of disengaging his throat and preparing a knife to kill himself before falling into the hands of the enemy.

It could have been so, and besides, Restrepo affirms it. Notwithstanding the only two witnesses whom I have been able to consult, Generals Carlos Soublotte and Miguel Arismendi, aid-de-camp to the Liberator, do not remember such a thing, nor do they consider it proper of the great soul of Bolivar.

Impavidum ferient ruinae!

Be it what it may, it is unquestionable that the imprudence with which the Liberator risked his life, without taking proper precautions, and as if by a boyish inexperience, could have been of fatal results for him and for the republic. In these small actions of war, or partial encounters, on which, says Polybius, cannot depend the fate of the war, the one in command should always be distant. Hannibal seems to me in all manner a perfect leader, adds the historian; but that in which he should be most admired is that, during so many years of war and through so many diverse circumstances, he succeeded, by his ability in partial encounters, to cause the enemy to fall in his wiles, and this one could not make him fall in so many and great field battles. This precaution is wisdom.

As long as the chief is safe, and on foot, although the whole army may have perished, fortune can still offer a thousand occasions to repair the ruins of this or that disaster. But when he falls, the army remains like a ship without a pilot; and even should accident cause the soldiers to triumph, such a victory would be of little importance, as the hopes of each are placed in the chief.*

Fruitless were the movements of Bolivar on that day, because, finally, the Spanish fleet, penetrating the caño of Casacoima, took our gunboats, the crews escaping to the shore.

The Liberator passed the night with his companions on the lake near to the spot where he had nearly met an inglorious death. Unperturbed by the fatality by which he had just been threatened, he spoke to them enthusiastically and full of inspiration on his future campaigns, which should liberate Cundinamarca and Quito, and that afterwards proceeding to Peru, to the land of the sun he should carry triumphantly to the Potosí, the banner of redemption. Such ideas which constituted the base of the holy mission with which Bolivar felt himself invested, seemed then the phantasies of a diseased imagination, and so extravagant, that Captain Martel, who was listening, said to another of the companions, "It is now that we are lost. The Liberator is raving."

With the loss of our gunboats, there did not remain a single one of the vessels which Bolivar had caused to be built, and on the construction of which Arismendi had displayed so much care! but Brion was on the Orinoco with five brigs and two schooners under his immediate orders, and five gunboats led by Diaz, and which were scouring the caño of Macares. It happened then, that as the Spaniards were seeking our flying squadrons with sixteen gunboats, they surprised two near the navy yard of Vleja Guayana, and favored by the wind and the strong current of the river, they succeeded in capturing them, putting the whole crew to death, with the exception of a few who managed to save themselves miraculously. Antonio Diaz, on being informed of the disaster, sought the enemy with the three small vessels he had remaining, and full of audacity, boarding now one, now the other, executing prodigies of valor, and killing pitilessly all who fell into his hands, he recovered his two gunboats, took two more from the enemy, and sunk five others. The royalists fled, and their loss would have been complete if Diaz could have pursued them.

A glorious combat! whose success amazed the enemy, and in which the Margaritan Diaz displayed a valor which can scarcely be believed!

The navigation of the Orinoco was open. Brion, with his vessels, ascended to Casacoima, where Bolivar went to meet him. What joy! what a moment of indescribable joy! That fortunate event secured the prompt result of the siege of Angostura.

To protect the fleet, which was still inferior to the royalist, the Liberator ordered a fort to be erected, which he named *Brion*. Captain Pasioni, as engineer, directed it, under the orders of Arismendi. All the carpenters, blacksmiths, furnaces, and other necessary objects, were collected, and the work went on with such activity that soon batteries capable of defending the point were raised.

The letters which in those days the Liberator wrote to General Soublotte from Casacoima, reveal his forethought and the great care he showed to the least thing. Orders to place the cattle in the mountain by the road of Altagracia, if the enemy threatened to take them; orders to confiscate all the wax for the

* Polybius, Book X., 83.

fleet; orders to collect navy and artillery officers; to judge Lieutenant Defaurneau for crimes against military obedience; to ameliorate the service of the Indians of Puga; to pursue the deserted blacksmiths; orders to occupy the forts and to take the skins necessary for the wool which was wanting for the service of the artillery; orders to salt the meat, and to procure beasts of burden; to continue the labors on the dock at San Miguel. And this: building vessels! erecting forts! besieging the city of Angostura! during the Spanish power!

What a wonderful and valuable mind is that of the man to whom is given the power to apply in all his undertakings, even in the most severe permitted to human nature, a capacity superior to his purpose!

The news of the presence of Brion in the Orinoco, and the loss of the combat of Pagallaa, determined the Spanish General Miguel de Latorre to evacuate the city of Angostura and the forts of Old Guayana.

After the victory of San Felix, which was so decisive for the patriots, the royalist chief flew precipitately to inclose himself in the city of Angostura, which rules the Orinoco. He relied, perhaps, on land reinforcements, which he did not receive, to maintain himself; and awaiting them in vain, he arrived to the degree of being forced to eat the most filthy animals. At last, convinced of the rashness of holding out any longer, he evacuated the city on the 17th of July, 1817, going with Governor Don Lorenzo Fitzgerald, the public officers, the garrison, and a few persons addicted to the cause of the king, to the British island of Granada.*

Bernudez, who directed the siege, entered the capital of Guayana, and he was the first who within her walls gave the cry of, *Viva la Independencia!*

The Spaniards lost by Guayana the most important military position of Venezuela, including Calabozo and San Carlos. The Liberator reputed this achievement as the most fortunate for the patriots. "This province," he wrote to the Marquis of Toro, at Trinidad, "is a main point: very proper to be defended, and more yet to offend. We take the rear of the enemy from here to Santa Fé, and we possess an immense territory on one and the other shore of the Orinoco, Apure, Meta and Aranca. Besides, we possess cattle and horses; and as now for the present the struggle is reduced to the maintainment of the territory, and to prolong the campaign, he who succeeds the most in this advantage shall be the victor."

These words are worthy of remark, because they give the measure of the sagacity and military perspicacity of the Liberator.

About this time Morillo was dashing his numerous and warlike hordes against indomitable Margarita, and he dashed them in vain!

Bolivar searched a base of military operations for the exercise of his warlike virtues, and the fulfillment of the grand acts which liberated America. Morillo, rude, persisting in error, because he had began to err, he secured constancy to

* The behavior of the last governor of Guayana, Don Lorenzo Fitzgerald, was humane and gentlemanly, and on account of this he deserved the order given by Admiral Brion, on the 9th of July, so that, in case he should fall prisoner, he should be treated "with the consideration due to a republican chief." Always, on all occasions, our forefathers manifested liberality and nobleness, even in those very days when war was most cruel, and when the Spanish chiefs and officers gave more motives for retaliation.

him to continue, and he lost in an island the flower of his army, being forced finally to abandon it, never to return!

Margarita was the tomb of that brilliant army of the expedition. The brave islanders, deadly enemies of Spanish tyranny, and determined to live in freedom in their New SPARTA, fought with amazing impetuosity. Morillo represented them to the king as "giants, fighting like tigers, and throwing themselves before the fire and the bayonet with a courage of which there is no example amongst the best troops of the world!"*

He sent to Madrid the original of the reply he received from General Francisco Esteban Janez, when he had intimated to him the surrender of the island, and ended in saying to the king: May your Majesty judge!†

Blind with fury, Morillo, wishing to chastise so much bravery, was preparing to involve the island in horrible plans of devastation and ruin, when he received the news of the occupation of Guayana by Bolivar, taking possession of the capital evacuated by La Torre and Fitz-Gerald. On the same day the Captain-General of Caracas, Don Juan Bautista Pardo, communicated the progresses made by *the insurgents in all directions*, and the situation of affairs was represented to Morillo as so critical that he immediately prepared to return to the continent. He gave orders to Aldama to leave Barcelona, massacring first several individuals who had sheltered themselves under his pardon (which was a feast for Aldama); he destroyed the fortifications of Juan Griego, he executed frightful atrocities, and came to La Guayra with his forces and seven hundred wounded. Already on board he ordered to be killed some persons pardoned, whose lives had been assured to them by Montenegro. The Spanish schooners "Morillo" and "Felicidad" were the places of execution for those unfortunate beings, whose crime was to be Americans and to love independence.

The occupation of Angostura by the patriots gave great uneasiness to Morillo. There, he said, Bolivar is preparing himself for an undertaking of great moment and result. The Liberator had said, *the restoration of Venezuela*; and it could be in effect. If so many misfortunes, so many defeats, were insufficient to cause the independents to slacken in their purposes, what will it be now, masters of Guayana, covered with laurels at San Felix, fortunately constant at Margarita, victors at Apure?

* See the Gacetas of Madrid, the end of January, 1818.

† As I have not until now seen this reply of our General Gomez published, I produce it here, with more pleasure as I consider it worthy of being placed with the most precious documents of our country's history.

"To His Excellency General D. Pablo Morillo:

"The Spartans of Colombia have seen with wonder the unhoped-for parley Y. E. has sent them.

"The Spartans of Colombia are not frightened by the presence of the formidable army under the order of Y. E.

"The Spartans of Colombia will fight until death; and if Y. E. should be the victor, he will only be master of the ashes and mournful vestiges left of our constancy and valor. By this your tyrannical ambition shall be satisfied, but never by ruling the defenders of New Sparta.

"FRANCISCO ESTEBAN GOMEZ.

"Secretary: JOSE MARIA GUERRA.

"Headquarters of Asuncion, July 31st, 1817."

Unfortunately, the Liberator, who had just opened his soul to joy, receiving the favors of fortune, had also at the same time to lament its bitterness, seeing himself in the cruel necessity to arrest the progresses of a rebellion, attempted by Piar, and which threatened to plunge the republic in all kinds of evils.

The absurd measures of the Congress of Cariaco, as I have already said, found sympathies at Guayana. Piar, a leader full of vanity, who could not tolerate any chief, nor that Bolivar himself should command him, beheld them with pleasure. He imagined that he could obtain from Mariño the supreme command of the army of Guayana. His recent victories on the banks of the Juncal, and at San Felix, where he showed himself to be as brave as he was skillful, swelled his pride, and he began to imagine that he was capable of the direction of the war and the supreme exercise of the authority. Bolivar, who esteemed his merit, notwithstanding that he knew the haughtiness of his character, and his irritable vanity, ascended him to General-in-chief, and treated him as a friend. When the farce of Cariaco took place, he spoke to him with detention, and with that treasure of reasons, some more urgent than others, which the Liberator always had at hand. Piar came to San Felix, the monument of his glory, where the Liberator had his headquarters, and seemingly in agreement he retired; but in connivance with other chiefs, he endeavored to gain some over, so that a council should be established at Guayana which would limit the supreme authority of Bolivar, and he expressed disrespectful and double-meaning words, which revealed the secret uneasiness that devoured him. Bolivar wrote to him in a friendly spirit, and with his usual ability he caused such a project to be hushed, only giving him to understand that he was aware of it. A few advices and reprehensions were sufficient to dissipate that cloud. But Piar, weak-minded, and already too far on the road of ambition, closed his ears to all purpose of obedience and discipline, and as the fortune of the supreme chief was a torture to the bad feeling which possessed him, he resolved to leave the army and to plot resolutely to destroy the Liberator, and with him the republic. He pretended to be sick, and solicited pressingly a permit to go to cure himself outside of the territory. He said first to Curacao, his country; afterwards to Barbadoes or Trinidad. Bolivar refused him, either because he thought Piar to be necessary to the army, or because, advised of his secret disgust, he should not wish to increase it, giving him pretexts to complain of ingratitude or disservice. At the time that Piar feigned his sickness, and was doing all in his power to obtain the permission of leaving the army, he complained of the Liberator; he suffered impatiently his authority, and excited the jealousies of Mariño, of Bermudez, of Arismendi and others, saying that their important services were not properly appreciated, because they wounded the self-pride of Bolivar. He, finally fatigued by the endeavors of Piar to obtain his departure, gave to him, against his will, on the 30th of June, at San Miguel, the solicited permit, naming General Bermudez to replace him.

Hardly had Piar obtained his permit than he left, but not for Trinidad, nor to Curacao, as he had said, but to the town of Upata, where he began to develop his treacherous projects. He spoke ignominiously of the Liberator, purporting to ruin his credit, calling him a *coward* and *ambitious*; he promoted division amongst the chiefs, naming some "free," and others "serfs" (these last naturally were subordinate to the authority of Bolivar); he excited the soldiers to disobedience, and, what is worse, he revived in the army the rivalry of colors, inflaming unquenchable hatred between the races. At the occupation of Angaitara,

Piar went there, and each time more irritated and blind; he interested the self-pride of Bermudez; he wrote to various colored chiefs, inducing them to disown the authority of Bolivar, and to establish the Republic of free and equal men, which this one hated, all in accordance to the atrocious and absurd plan he had conceived.

It is certain, that if the free population and the army had been less firm in their ideas, they would perhaps have been ungrateful to their Liberator; but Bolivar now inspired so much respect and admiration, that the confused undertaking of Piar could obtain the approbation of none. The obedience to Bolivar was a worship.

The Liberator, informed of what was going on, did not wish, notwithstanding, to appear to understand the subversive plots of Piar, and he wrote to him amicably, calling him to occupy his rank in the army.

Piar did not reply, continuing in his criminal work.

Then the Liberator ordered General Bermudez to intimate to him the order to present himself at Casacoima (headquarters), and in case of disobedience, to remit him under safe arrest; and he wrote to General Soublette to notify the commandants of the roads of Caruschi along that line, to watch the conduct of Piar, and to impede him from taking any other direction which did not lead to the headquarters.

Piar, on knowing this, escaped to Maturin. He there communicated with Mariño; he continued in his intrigues, and began to collect soldiers to resist.

The situation was rendered extremely perilous by the audacity and pride of Piar, and by the delicate springs he had touched to gain proselytes. "Piar was a strong and audacious man," writes Baralt; "he was irritated, and he meditated to use arms of a destructive nature. Men equally ambitious and restless, equally ignorant and untamable, equally hostile to all restraint and discipline, could well have, carried away by the example, the fame of the chief and his genial propensities, united themselves to the undertaking, and raised the banner of insubordination; the soldiers, addicted to Piar, who had conducted them to victory, and commanded by chiefs of his same class, did not give much guarantee of obedience and loyalty. People there was none; the misery was frightful; it, with the pestilence produced by the siege of Angostura, depressed the spirits of the people and the troops. In this situation, propitious for the triumph of any novelty which should lead to change the order of existing affairs, what were the auxiliaries of Bolivar? Some few chiefs addicted in good faith to his person, friends of order, and sufficiently learned to see in his preservation the best hope of health. Let us see, withal, what he did.

"His first measure was, to place the division named as Piar under the orders of Urdaneta in old Guayana, authorizing him to keep it in the strictest discipline, and to form judgment against any person who should show himself in favor of the projects newly discovered. Afterwards, he convoked all the generals and chiefs of the army to a council of war, in which his authority was acknowledged in the clearest and most solemn manner. Immediately, he destined Cedeno and other chiefs, from amongst the same that Piar had endeavored to seduce, so that with a column of cavalry they should follow and arrest him. He wrote on all sides; he sent commissioners everywhere; he flattered some chiefs; in others (certainly those most to be feared and suspected), he placed an entire confidence; and finally, opposing to such imminent peril a proportionate resistance, he encouraged his friends, he caused his enemies to fear, and he proved to all that he was worthy of the post he occupied.

"This prudent conduct had the desired effect, and Piar, abandoned by all, proceeded to Aragua de Cumana, seeking the protection of the discontented, addicted to Marino. Cedeño and the commandants Juan Francisco Sánchez and Juan Antonio Mina, charged with his arrest, found him in that town, escorted by a numerous body of cavalry, under the orders of the intrepid Francisco Carmano; but this one seeing the orders of the Liberator, did not make any resistance, and Piar was arrested on the spot and conducted to Angostura with all the attentions due to his rank and misfortune. The trial afterwards commenced and substantiated; a council of war was assembled of general officers in the apartment of the Admiral Brion, its president; the judges were the Brigadier-Generals Pedro Leon Torres and José Antonio Anzoátegui, the Colonels José Ucroz and José María Carreño, and the lieutenant-colonels Judas Tadeo Pitango and Francisco Conde; the judge advocate, the General Carlos Soublette; his council, the Colonel Francisco Galindo. The tribunal, according to the minutes of the trial, gave its sentence the 15th of October, 1817, condemning him unanimously to death, with military degradation, for the crimes of disobedience, sedition, conspiracy and desertion. The supreme chief confirmed it in its first part, but not in the second, and on the following day, in the evening, and in presence of the whole army, Piar received death with the same calmness and intrepidity which he had always manifested in all times and on all occasions.

"Such was the unfortunate end to which Piar saw himself led by his proud and restless nature, and by the presumption of his services truly celebrated in the war of the independence. His death, for all that may be said by some miserable competitors of Bolívar, who have wished to convert themselves into echoes of the royalists, was justly and legally imposed. The men who denounced to Bolívar his projects, showing his letter, had served under his orders, belonged to his division and were his friends; such were Cedeño and his secretary the Lieutenant-Colonel José Manuel Olivares, Sanchez, the Colonel Manuel Salcedo and others; amongst those who composed the council of war, Brion, his countryman, should have had, and did really have for him more than one motive of sympathy, or at least consideration. Torres and Anzoátegui had been elevated to the rank of generals by him, after the battle of San Félix; these, the rest, the judge advocate, were men of truth, of valor and conscience, incapable of committing a base assassination; the execution was final in public, executed by his own soldiers, and these at the same time commanded by chiefs who, like Bermudez, did not have the least interest in sanctioning with their approbation or silence that terrible warning, if it had been unjust."

The Liberator, on the day following the death of Piar, issued a proclamation, in which he said to the soldiers of the Liberating army:

"Soldiers! Yesterday has been a day of pain for my heart. General Piar was executed for his crimes of high treason, conspiracy and desertion. A just and legal tribunal has pronounced the sentence against that unfortunate citizen, who, intoxicated by the favors of fortune and to satiate his ambition, pretended to bury the country amongst its ruins. General Piar really had done important services to the Republic, and although the course of his conduct had always been mutinous, his services were bountifully rewarded by the government of Venezuela."

Nothing was left to be desired to a chief who had obtained the highest grades of the army. The second authority of the Republic, which was vacant

by the fact, by the disidence of General Mariño, was to be conferred on him before his rebellion, but this general, who only aspired to the supreme command, formed a purpose the most atrocious that can be conceived by the most perverted mind. Not only had Piar intended civil war, but also anarchy, and the most inhuman sacrifice of his own companions and brethren."

"Soldiers! You know it. Equality, liberty, and independence are our motto. Has not humanity recovered her rights by our laws? Have not our arms broken the chains of the slaves? Has not the hateful difference of classes and colors been abolished forever? Have not the national moneys been ordered to be divided among you? Do not fortune and glory await you? Are not your merits abundantly rewarded, or at least justly? What then did General Piar want for you? Are you not equal, free, independent, happy and honored? Could Piar obtain for you greater wealth? No, no, no. The tomb was being opened by Piar with his own hands, to bury in it the life, the wealth, the honor of the brave defenders of the liberty of Venezuela, their children, wives and fathers.

"Soldiers! Heaven watches for our well-being, and the government, which is your father, is vigilant in your behalf. Your chief, who is your companion in arms, and who is always at your head, has participated in your perils and privations, as also in your victories, confides in you; rely then in him, sure that he loves you more than if even he were your father or your son.

"SIMON BOLIVAR.

"Headquarters of Angostura, October 17th, 1817."

The effects of the energetic proceeding of the Liberator were great, immediate and salutary to the Republic. The troops were moralized, the authority remained firmer, all went on with the strictest discipline, friends and enemies confessing that discord and rivalries would have inevitably led the patriots to the ignominy of the scaffold which Morillo had erected everywhere.

"To strike off the overtopping ear of corn was the lesson of a wise man." This sentence was written in that epoch in a foreign periodical; but if not written in a hostile sense, it is not acceptable; because Bolivar did not strike the overtopping ear because it protruded, but because it inclosed in its bosom the most active poison.

The Liberator also ordered the arrest of Mariño, and confided its execution to General Bermudez, naming this one commanding-general of the province of Cumana. Fortunately, Mariño threw up his command and went over to Margarita, effacing by his absence the permanent motive of his culpability. Bermudez, recalling his former friendship with Mariño, interceded for him and obtained from Bolivar a promise not to pursue him.

Before the execution of Piar, and in accordance with the law of "the confiscation of Spanish property," issued on the 3d of September of that year, the Liberator promulgated the law for the repartition of the national property, amongst all the classes of the army of the republic, as a reward for the services of such virtuous defenders. (10th September.)

He afterwards created the Council of State in order to abdicate the supreme authority, and that the republic should be governed according to the basis of modern policy, whose main points are the division and balance of faculties. To this effect he assembled in the government palace at Angostura (10th November)

the patriots Brion, Zea, Soublette, Anzoategui, Montilla (Tomas), who was the governor of the city, Peñalver, Antonio Diaz, Conde, Olivares, Lecuna, and others; he pointed out to them the position of the republic, and that the executive power alone existing, it was indispensable to establish the legislative and judicial.

The speech by which the supreme chief opened the session is as follows :

“ When the people of Venezuela cast off the oppressive bonds which united them to Spain, their first object was to establish a constitution upon the basis of modern policy, whose main points are the division, and the balance of faculties. Then, proscribing the tyrannical institution of the Spanish monarchy, they adopted the republican system most suitable to justice; and from amongst the republican forms they chose the most liberal of all, the federal. The vicissitudes of war, which were so adverse to the Venezuelan arms, caused the republic and all its institutions to disappear. There remained no other vestige of our regeneration, than a few scattered relics of the defenders of the country, who, returning to New Granada and Guiria, re-established the independent government of Venezuela. The circumstances which accompanied this new reaction were such and so extraordinary, so rapid and impetuous the movements of the war, that it was at that moment impossible to give to the government the constitutional regularity which the laws of Congress had decreed in the first epoch. All the force, and to say better, all the violence of a military government was scarcely sufficient to check the devastating torrent of insurrection, anarchy and war. And what other constitution besides the dictatorial could be appropriate in such calamitous times? Such was the thought of all Venezuelans, and thus they hastened to submit themselves to this terrible but necessary administration. The examples of Rome were the consolation and guide of our fellow-citizens. . . .

“ The government of the republic having again disappeared, partial insurrections sustained, although precariously, its banners, but not its government, as this had been entirely extinguished. On the island of Margarita the march of the republic returned to take a regular form; but always with the military character, unfortunately annexed to the state of war. The third period of Venezuela had not presented until now so favorable a moment to place in safety from storms, the ark of our constitution.

“ I have longed for it, and I could say that I have lived hopelessly, as long as I have beheld my country without constitution, without laws, without tribunals, ruled by the will alone of the commanders, without any other guides than her flag, without any other principle than the destruction of the tyrants, and without any other system than that of independence and liberty. I have hastened, overcoming all obstacles, to give to my country the benefit of a moderate, just and legal government. If it is not, your worships will decide; my intention has been to establish it.

“ By the Assembly of Margarita of the 6th of May, 1816, the republic of Venezuela was decreed as one and indivisible. The people and the armies, who until now have fought for freedom, have sanctioned by the most solemn and unanimous acknowledgment this act, which at the same time that it united the States of Venezuela into one only, created and appointed an executive power under the title of supreme chief of the republic. Thus, there was only remaining the institution of the legislative body and the judiciary power.

“ The creation of the Council of State will perform the august functions of

the legislative power, not in all the latitude which corresponds to the sovereignty of this body, because it would be incompatible with extension and strength, which the executive power has received not only to liberate and pacify the territory, but also to create the entire body of the republic: a work which requires means proportionate to its magnitude, and all the powers that reside in the most concentrated government.

"The Council of State, as Y. E. shall see by its creation, is destined to fulfill in part the function of a legislative body. To it corresponds the initiative of the laws, rules, and institutions which in its wisdom should be necessary to the welfare of the republic. It shall be consulted by the executive power before executing the laws, rules, and institutions which the government decrees. In all arduous cases, the opinion of the State Council shall be heard, and its advice shall have the greatest influence in the deliberations of the supreme chief.

"The chief court of justice, which forms the third power of the sovereign body, has already been established, and its installation has not yet taken effect, because before it seemed to me necessary to consult the council upon such an important institution, its form and the functionaries who are to fill these eminent dignities.

"The chief court of justice is the first necessity of the republic. By it the rights of all shall be sheltered, and the property, the innocence, and the merits of the citizens shall not be injured by the arbitrariness of any military or civil chief: nor even of the supreme chief. The judiciary power of the chief court of justice enjoys all the independence conceded to it by the federal constitution of the Republic of Venezuela.

"The erection of a tribunal of commerce or consular body has taken place in favor of commercial affairs and the protection of agriculture, which requires so many and urgent measures. The erection of the consulate shall make known to Y. E. the nature of the beneficial body.

"The free provinces of Venezuela have received the regular organization which circumstances and the position of the enemy have permitted. At Barcelona the Brigadier-General Tadeo Monagas has been named governor and commandant general of that province, prescribing him the limits which it anteriorly had, the number and force of the military columns which should defend and pacify it. A civil governor is provisionally charged with the judicial power of that province, but under the immediate power of the chief court of justice. General Monagas has received detailed instructions for the preservation of the national property, the re-establishment of the civil order in all the province, and its organization.

"The general of division, José Francisco Bermúdez, named governor and commandant general of the province of Cumana, has been charged by the government with the noble object of pacifying the province and liberating the capital, for which he is to organize and discipline three or four battalions of infantry, and one or two squadrons of cavalry, as much to expel the Spaniards as to destroy the parties, which the dissidence of General Marino had produced in that province, applying his best attention to establish the order which party-spirit had allured there, and to protect agriculture, commerce and industry; behaving to the Cumanians with the moderation which is due to them for their fidelity to the cause of the independence.

"The invincible island of Margarita, which, under the shade of its laurels, could have rested in the repose procured by peace, has needed, in these last days,

all the cares of a paternal government. The victories of Margarita have drained her resources; thus, arms, ammunition, have been ordered for her succor, and the Admiral Brion is specially charged to perform this agreeable duty in favor of a people who deserve to be free, and need the protection of their brethren.

"The organization of the island of Margarita is the work of the well-deserving General Arismondi; and her chief at the present moment is the General Francisco Esteban Gomez.

"General Paez, who has saved the remnants of New Granada, holds, under the protection of the republican arms, the provinces of Barinas and Cumaná. Both have their political and civil governors, and such organizations as have been permitted by circumstances; but order, subordination, and good discipline reign there on all sides, and it does not seem that war agitates those beautiful provinces. They have acknowledged and sworn allegiance to the supreme authority, and their magistrates merit the confidence of the government.

"Guayana, liberated by the Venezuelan arms, my first care was to incorporate this province as an integral part to the Republic of Venezuela, and to order the erection of a municipal body. She has been divided in three departments, whose limits have been fixed according to the nature of the country, and her civil and military organization is vouched for, by the documents which I present to the consideration of Y. E.

"The general of division, Manuel Cedeño, is named governor and commandant general of the province of Guayana, and her defence is equally charged to him with ten squadrons of cavalry, two battalions of infantry, two companies of artillery, and the national guard.

"Since the second epoch of the Republic has been known, the necessity of fixing a centre of authority for foreign relations to receive consuls and foreign envoys, to begin to conclude commercial negotiations, to buy and contract for arms, ammunition, uniforms, and all classes of elements of war. But, above all, the most important object, that imperiously reclaimed the nomination of a council of government to perform provisionally the functions of the supreme chief, in case of death. The Republic shall suffer considerably; the council of government should not be established before I undertake the next campaign. For this, I congratulate myself with Y. E. for having procured this new support for the Republic.

"The soldiers of the liberating army were too much accredited to the rewards of the government, that they should be forgotten. Men who have passed through all perils, who have abandoned all their good, and who have suffered all evils, should not remain without the just premium which their abnegation, valor and virtue merited. I, then, in the name of the Republic, have ordered to be distributed all the national wealth amongst the defenders of the country. The law which prescribes the terms and class of this donation is the document which, with the greatest satisfaction, I have the honor of offering to the council. The reward of merit, the most august act of human power.

"The city of Angostura shall be provisionally the residence and capital of the government of Venezuela. The councils of the government and state, the chief court of justice, and the special committee for the repartition of the national vacancies amongst the soldiers of the liberating army, shall then remain.

"The religion of Jesus, which Congress decreed as the exclusive ruling one of the State, has greatly called my attention to the spiritual orphanage to which, unfortunately, we see ourselves reduced, compel us imperiously to convoke an

ecclesiastical convention, to which I am authorized, as the head of a Christian people, which can set apart nothing from the community of the Roman Church. This convocation, which is the fruit of my consultations with learned and pious ecclesiastics, shall fill with consolation the afflicted mind of the disciples of Jesus and of our religious fellow-citizens.

"MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL OF STATE !

"The installation of a body so respectable, and worthy of the confidence of the people, is a happy event for the nation. The government, which, in the midst of so many catastrophes, and alone amongst so many breakers, did not before rely on any support, shall now have as a guide a congregation of illustrious generals, magistrates, judges and administrators, and shall be in future protected, not only by an effective force, but sustained by the chief of all forces, public opinion. The popular consideration which the Council of State shall know how to inspire will be the firmest shield of the Government."

Immediately, the Liberator named the presidents and members of the sections of the Council in the following order :

State and Treasury : Zea, president ; Fernando Peñalver, José Maria Ossa and Vicente Lecuna, vocals.

Navy and War : Brion, president ; Cedeño T. Montilla, Pedro Hernandez and Francisco Conde, vocals.

Interior and Justice : Don Juan Martinez, president ; Luis Paraza, José España and Antonio José Betancourt, vocals.

Afterwards, the Liberator gave the reasons on which he based this election ; causing to be seen that the citizens who distinguished themselves in a career, who obtained in it the highest ranks, and who had performed them with glory in the critical circumstances of the Republic, were the most appropriate to prepare in each branch the labors of the Council, and to give the first impulse to its beneficial deliberations. He also manifested, that, although the vote of the Council was only consultive, because thus it was imperiously exacted by political position and military attitude of all the Republic, he wished that there should reign the most complete liberty in the debates and resolutions, and hoped that they would give him proofs of it in the examination of the decrees issued since the occupation of Guayana, which he offered to their deliberation.

The Supreme Chief ended the session, manifesting his satisfaction at seeing himself surrounded by the most illustrious friends of the country ; who, all animated by the same feelings and imbued with the same principles, concurred unanimously to support and maintain the government, giving it the powerful assistance of their knowledge, education and experience in great political and military operations : that now had arrived the case of undertaking to affirm at once the high destinies of Venezuela.

The disinterestedness of the Liberator is always worthy of the highest praise. Hardly had he taken possession of Angostura, and when circumstances would have led another to ask dictatorship and supreme command, Bolívar assembled a council, and came to submit himself to the vote of the fellow-citizens who composed it. He abdicated his unlimited power, and preferred to submit himself to the opinion of the majority, giving the example of a true patriot. His heart, well formed and free from ambition, caused him to prefer the solid glory

of overcoming himself, and to be to his country and fellow-citizens, not the terror, not the sovereign, not the first, but the father, the friend and the brother.

Up to the time of the institution of the Council of State, the Liberator, who administrated from the moment he came from the battle-field, had given, as is seen, a regular organization to the provinces; he had established a tribunal of commerce in favor of the prompt dispatch of the mercantile affairs; he had re-established order in Cumana; incorporated Guayana as an integral portion of the Republic, and constituted Angostura provisional capital and residence of the Government of Venezuela. In the midst of these civil arrangements, which offered the most important result, the Liberator labored incessantly, and with unexampled activity, in the military organization, recruiting soldiers, collecting horses, forming columns, disciplining, arming and clothing them. His Secretary, the Colonel José Gabriel Pérez, a person proper for dispatch and constant in work, saw himself fully occupied in those days, in which the Liberator, indefatigable, walked up and down as usual, dictating and reading at the same time, alluding to the war, to the administration, to the subsistence and to the navy, to justice and the cultivation of opinion and friendship.