

CHAPTER XXV.

1817 AND 1818.

CONCRETE IDEAS OF MARSHAL GROUCHY ON THE CAUSE OF THE ROYALIST VICTORIES—LABORS OF BOLIVAR TO CREATE THE REPUBLICAN OPINION—IN THIS HE HAS NO EXAMPLE IN HISTORY—PARR—BOLIVAR LEAVES ANGOSTURA—DEFEAT OF SARAZA AT LA HOGARA—THE LIBERATOR RETURNS TO ANGOSTURA—HE FORMS A NEW ARMY AND REASCENDS THE ORINOCO—HIS INTERVIEW WITH PARR AT CAJARAL—HE PROCEEDS TO SAN FERNANDO—WELL-FOUNDED HOPES AT THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR 1818.

MARSHAL GROUCHY, judging with wonderful effect on the events of South America, wrote from Philadelphia in an interesting letter:

"The independence of America will undoubtedly triumph; it seems, notwithstanding, that in its establishment and consolidation it meets greater obstacles than those imagined by many. These are by all means brought forth for the disunion of the inhabitants. . . . The misfortunes experienced by the numerous armies of the independents have been weakly supported by the mass of the inhabitants of the country in which the war is carried on. If it was not thus, eighty thousand insurgents joined almost all together before the walls of Mexico, would they have been dispersed by a few thousands of Spanish soldiers? Venezuela and New Granada, would they have been subjected to the yoke by eight thousand royalists? Chili subdued, and Bolivar have suffered the last reverses?*

Marshal Grouchy was right, and I have already said it, one of the greatest merits of the Liberator was that of having created in Colombia the opinion which did not exist, and known to inspire in the indolent masses, and well-formed in their stagnancy and slavery, by cause of the unhappiness of those times, the vehement desire of being free. How could a people without initiative or patriotism, and who ignored independence, combat to reconquer national dignity? Nor how endeavor to shake off the galling yoke, when religious ideas, so strong in themselves, were an invincible obstacle opposed to its accomplishment. Let my readers imagine to themselves a people plunged in the most deplorable ignorance, without any idea, even of the first notions of politics and individual right; who held slavery as an heir-loom, and who had for three hundred years only listened in their homes, in the church, everywhere, to advices of obedience and submission. Imagine a people who could not read, because instruction was impeded by law and the Holy Inquisition; who never saw foreigners, who understood no other idiom besides their own, and who on all solemnities,

* Letter of General Grouchy upon the organization of the war in South America, written at Philadelphia on the 1st of September, 1818, and addressed to the patriots of Chili.

and even in all the less important acts of common life, listened to the pastor declaiming from the evangelical tribune: "What fate would await you if you should stray one line from the obedience of the sovereign? what would you be without your mild and beloved monarch? Nothing—less than nothing; the anger of Heaven would have plunged you in the horrible abysses of misery and despair; because God does not leave unpunished (and a frightful punishment) the infidelity against His anointed. Thus, then, my beloved brethren, continue to live peacefully under the beneficial shadow of the throne; think only of obeying the orders of the king; see in the person of the monarch the image of the God we adore. *Kings reign in the place of God; the power they exercise belongs to Him.* . . . Licentiousness and impiety have wished to persuade the people that obedience to the sovereign is debatable. An error condemned by the University of Sorbonne, and more extensively by the Council of Toledo, principally the sixth, composed of forty-seven bishops, amongst them a St. Eugenio. The Council said: "He who breaks his fidelity to the king shall be excommunicated in the presence of God the Father, and expelled from the Catholic Church, and be held as condemned in the future judgment, to the devil and his angels. Anathema (*Maranatha*)—lost at the coming of the Lord. And if he were a priest, he shall not be absolved only at the last moment of life"* . . . A people who learnt such maxims by memory in the Catechism; who listened to them inculcated by the minister of religion, by the man charged to preserve the dogmas, and to propagate moral and useful truths to society; what could they do? Is it believed that these life impressions are null; these customs, these ideas transmitted from generation to generation, and which by force of time arrive to be, to say so, rooted in the utmost recesses of the hearts of all? Bolivar and his few-followers pretended to change the order of things, and along with it the inveterate habits, erroneous beliefs, the servile dispositions of the minds . . . and they undertook a work of Titans. When independence was mentioned, the mass of the people did not understand what was said—when they began to penetrate its meaning, the earthquake, the convulsions of nature, came to inspire hatred towards that idea, which they were made to look upon as reproved by God by manifest signs of his anger. How untiring, then, must not the persuasion have been, and how eloquent the word to be able to overcome such a solid, permanent resistance! In this point, Bolivar is a prodigy, and the history of the world does not present a similar example . . . Washington ignored these labors, and we do not know if he could have overcome them, ruling the almost unanimous opinion of his country. On the contrary, the States of the American Union had already for a long time enjoyed and possessed in their domestic affairs the privileges of a republic. There, monarchy was known only from afar, across the seas, as a name . . . The citizens of that society (whatever may have been the state of their fortune and the grade of their enlightenment) all were in favor of a self-government—the republican government. The colonies were rapidly increasing in population, in wealth, in interior strength, in exterior importance. Instead of obscure institutions and incapable scarcely of maintaining their own life, a people was being

* These words are derived from a sermon of the Rev. Francisco Javier Sosa; but the same are found in those of the presbyter Salvador Garcia de Ortigoza, and in the doctrinal controversies and sermons of all the clergy before our revolution, and of the same who unfortunately were in it, with very rare exceptions.

formed whose enterprises, commerce, agriculture, and relations were taking a place in the world. Besides which, the metropolis did not have the perverse will of oppressing this people; it sometimes incommoded and even offended them, without thinking. By a rare chance, all conspired in favor of the colonies. Their cause was just, their strength great. In them, on their own soil, all concurred to encourage them; in Europe, powerful allies were preparing to assist them, and England, in the court, in the Parliament, they had friends and supports. Around Washington were Franklin, Adams, Hamilton, Jefferson, Madison, Jay, Henry, Mason, Greene, Knox, Morris, Pinckney, Clinton, Trumbull, Rutledge. . . I could not mention them all, because in the moment in which independence was proclaimed, there was in each province, and almost in every town, men, respected by their fellow-citizens, proved in the defence of public liberties, influential by their riches, talent, and character; faithful to the old truths and followers of the new lights; sensible to the light of civilization and attached to the simplicity of customs; of a brave heart and an unassuming spirit; rare men, who relied in a great measure on humanity, and who gave all for the liberty and glory of their country.* But Bolivar, what had he of all this? What European power aided or favored him? And in the interior, how many were those who loved the republic? What were the supports offered him? By duty, more than for pleasure, impelled by destiny and confiding in the eternal truth of things, the Liberator undertook the portentous work of redeeming America, and to secure its precious independence! . . . What a vast enterprise! Perhaps he did not think of the rude tempests which awaited him, nor foresee the painful proofs reserved for him by destiny; he did not imagine that he had to commence by creating a people, and to convert those multitudes into intelligent societies capable of an active political life; but be this what it may, it is certain that eradicating the vicious traditions, struggling with the past, regenerating all, replacing time by his persuasion in its certain labor, Bolivar succeeded in divorcing opinion from the royalist cause, and to create in a colonial people, the right of individuality of the citizen, the freedom of all and each one; he succeeded in clearing the way for all productive forces, for all faculties; in preparing social equality, the solidity of interests, the fraternity of all the Americans, the holy alliance of oppressed people! . . . and along with this, constituting the national power! and conquering hostile armies! and washing out the insult of three centuries of slavery, in fifteen years of immortal achievements and unfading glory . . .

Truly history has nothing more extraordinary to offer in all the course of its annals than this great combat delivered in the second half of the New World between absolutism, aided by all the moral powers of the earth; meeting on all sides friends and followers, and liberty reduced to the strength of one man alone.

But that man was Bolivar! . . .

. . . . Nil majus generator ipso,
Nec viget quidquam simile aut secundum.

(HORAT., l. I, od. XII.)

To be just, I should confess that, in this change and favorable variety of opinion, the cruelties of the Spanish chiefs had a great part, who, tired out by

* Read the valuable work of Guizot, entitled: "Fondation de la République des Etats-Unis d'Amérique.

their hateful persecutions the patience of the people, and caused them to feel that the perils of the revolution, and even war itself, with its devastations and bloody sacrifices, were preferable to that humble situation, in which the tyrant became more sanguinary, when most prostrate was the colonists. The iniquitous confiscations, the bloody proscriptions, the murders, the insatiable rapacity, the insolent bufftings. . . . raised revengers; all, who had generous and worthy feelings, became an enemy. These simple and indolent masses, who, at the commencement of the war, seemed not to feel the bonds by which they were imprisoned, and live contented in their obeisance, afterwards formed able armies who routed everywhere the Spanish hosts, and BOLIVAR found warriors wherever there were men! . . .

Let us follow the relation in the order of events.

After the taking of Angostura, the Liberator thought of immediately invading Caracas, and with this end in view, he ordered General Zaraza to observe the enemy at Orituco and Calabozo, holding himself prepared to rejoin the army which Bolivar was to lead in person.

This plan required for its desired success, that the independent forces should draw the attention of the enemy to Barinas, and General José Antonio Páez charged himself to co-operate to the exit of the campaign, performing this part of the operations.

At the commencement of the year, when the unhappy General Piar sent the Colonel José Manuel Olivares to the Supreme Chief, to give him an account of the prosperous state of affairs on the borders of the Orinoco and Caroni, several chiefs who were descending the Opure joined themselves with the commissioner, led by the happy news that the Liberator had returned from the Cayos; one of them was the Colonel Santander. This one gave the Liberator minute details of the army and operations of Páez on the plains of Apure, and Bolivar seeing the importance of calling him and make use of the forces of the plains, operating in combination, he dispatched from Angostura the Colonels Manuel Manrique and Vicente Parejo, who presented themselves to General Páez at the farm of Yagual, where this one had placed his headquarters, and, after some conferences, his consent was obtained to concur with his troops to carry on the war under the direction of the Liberator as Supreme Chief, though Páez was left to operate with absolute independence and plentitude of power in the territory he ruled.

Páez was then young, of about twenty-eight years of age, of an agreeable aspect, active, robust, and of superior warlike talents. His soldiers were intrepid, but undisciplined; and he himself, although chief, and full of zealous stratagems to maintain his authority, ignored the military art, held no other title to make himself obeyed than that of his bravery and personal valor. Páez exercised influence amongst the Llaneros, and loved liberty. He already occupied a glorious page in the history of the independence, and was to occupy still more, because a high occasion awaited him of showing himself braver than any one. Since the years of 1818 and 1814, his name was known throughout Merida and Barinas as captain. The taking of Guasualito in 1815, and the action of "Mata de la Miel" in 1816, gave fame and great celebrity to his prowess; and, determined to encounter the army of Morillo and to liberate the Apure, leading respectable forces, who placed all their confidence in him, he heard, notwithstanding, without repugnance, the message of Manrique and

Parajo. These related that, in conversation, full of brotherly candor, Paes had said to them, with an air of satisfaction, that he had an army in the "Llanos" and another in his fame, already believing himself a very illustrious captain. And Manrique qualified these conceptions as born from the most reprehensible vanity. Perhaps it was nothing else than military arrogance, excusable amongst companions, and, more than all, in a young man caressed so much by fortune. What is certain is, that Paes bent himself without difficulty to carry on the war under the direction of the Liberator, and that on this, he acknowledged him as Supreme Chief of the Republic, it amounting to little the condition he placed of operating with full power, in the territory where he commanded, as this, by force was to be thus, at that epoch in which the Liberator alone proceeded to constitute a lasting and regulated government, and knew the importance of general authority and a common and uniform obligation.

To what point Paes contributed to the exit of the great work of our regeneration, we shall see in the course of this work.

Bolívar was preparing for the campaign, and whilst he sent arms, ammunition and good officers to Zaraza, and engrossed the ranks of this one with bodies of troops, who marched out under the orders of the General Pedro Leon Torres, Morillo, anxious, and full of fear, caused the mass of his forces to collect at Calshozo. He did not penetrate the design of the Liberator, but he understood the importance of simultaneously attacking Paes at Apure and Zaraza, in the plains of Caracas. He departed then from the capital, and placed his headquarters in the centre of the plains.

Of the five divisions which composed the royalist armies, and which should operate against the patriots, the first was commanded by the Brigadier-General D. Miguel de Latorre, encamped in the towns of Calvario and Sombrero, and with his regiments of Castile and the Union, with his hussars of Ferdinand VII. and the squadron of lancers of the country, he threatened Zaraza, who was then encamped on the farm of Belen. The Liberator confided greatly in the activity and experimented bravery of this guerrilla, one of the most famous amongst the independents; however, he knew that he had no military education, and that he only possessed intrepidity and loyalty. He determined then to go and command in person the action, which was being prepared by Latorre, carrying with him 1,500 men to increase the division of Zaraza. He embarked on the Orinoco the 29th of November and ascended the river up to the port of Cadenales, on the left shore, and about thirty leagues from Angostura. From thence, he sent to say to Zaraza, by the Colonel Montecoca, to evade the combat, always retreating from the enemy till he should effect his incorporation; and that this would take place at Rio-Olara.

It seems, unfortunately, that Zaraza understood Santa Olara, a river which joins the Manapire between Caicara and Chaguaramas. Bolívar arrived on the 4th of December at San Diego de Cabutica, and there his mind was deeply wounded by the fatal news of the total defeat of Zaraza in the bloody battle of Hogasa.

Zaraza had forgotten the reiterated advices of the Liberator; and, believing himself to be superior in force to Latorre, not only did he not evade the action, but he sought it. This time, discipline was victorious over numbers, and the result was, that we left on the field 1,200 killed, 1,000 muskets, cannons, more than 1,000 horses, flags, and other articles of war. The defeat was complete; and Latorre, although wounded in the thigh, had the pleasure of being victorious at little cost.

Bolívar, on knowing the disaster of Hogaza, countermarched to Angostura, crossing the Orinoco at Soledad.

Once at the capital of Guayana, and without hiding from any one the defeat, he proclaimed martial law, and, displaying that activity, rich in resources, he soon succeeded in replacing the loss that the Republic had suffered by the inexcusable disobedience of Zaraza. His wish was to assist Páez, threatened by Morillo, and now placed in greater peril by the preponderance of Latorre. He sent Urdaneta to Páez with the purpose of combining operations and clearing the mouth of the Apure; he ordered that which was necessary for the campaign, and embarked with 2,000 men, which he had drawn as if by enchantment, and carrying twenty-nine vessels, who commenced to ascend the Orinoco on the 31st of December.

When Morillo received at San Antonio of Apurito, the news of the victory of Latorre at Hogaza, he flew immediately to Calabozo. These forced marches of the Commander-in-Chief surprised everybody. What was he thinking of? What was he going to do at that city, the emporium of the plains? To prepare for a more active campaign; for acts which no talents could foresee, but which were unfaultry; because *Bolívar victorious, follows a well-known road, he said. Sustaining loss, it is impossible to find out where he will fall, more than ever active and formidable.*

And thus, in effect, it happened.

The divisions of Mougas and Tórras were ordered by the Liberator to pass over to the right bank, to continue marching by land to Guicará. Zaraza was ordered to follow to the river Caura. Cedeño, with his force, was posted at Tigre. All the army united at Urbana, on the Upper Orinoco, the 22d of January, 1818, and on the 31st, precisely one month since leaving Angostura, Bolívar joined Páez at Caujara, from whence they both marched to San Juan de Payara, where the headquarters were situated.

The patriots, full of pleasure and wonder, saw this long and perilous operation ended.

The Liberator inflamed by his presence the minds of the "Llaneros" of Páez; and this last, accredited as a brave and good patriot, then took more courage, and remitted amongst the fervors of enthusiasm, the secret profession of disobedience.

The Liberator remained six days at San Juan de Payara, organizing the army, remounting the cavalry, and giving repose to all. From thence, he marched to San Fernando; his breast filled with the most pleasing hopes. The campaign of 1818 promised Bolívar great results. *In this year, he frequently repeated, Venezuela shall see her cruel conquerors surrender or perish.* The disasters and past displeasures, and the defeat of Cedeño at "La Hogaza," which was complete, did not affect him. In a certain manner, he had succeeded in repairing the loss, and an interior light caused him to see the independence already secured. Such was his confidence! Ducoudray, Mérida, and other enemies of the Liberator, censure in him this confidence, as it was, they said, unfounded and perilous. What pleasure to bite the hands of all! Many causes concurred to improve this security in the elevated mind of Bolívar. . . . The man of the Cayos; the one of the expedition of Ocumare, which Morillo qualified as "folly" and piratical expedition, is master of an immense territory provided with subsistences; he is master of a navigable river, and his troops go to operate in combination with those of the plains, who had obtained brilliant victories over

the powerful Spanish phalanxes. . . . The Republic was no longer vagrant; its capital was Angostura (this is the same which is now called *Ciudad Bolívar*). There, the banners of Liberty floated; the magistrates of Colombia were united, and Bolívar had given a centre to the cause, force to the government, stimulus to valor, honor and prizes to services. Had he or not reason to express confidence in the final result of his enterprise? It is not certain that military prosperities be those which alone can give base to confidence, as the success of arms depends on a thousand accidents and circumstances which it is impossible to foresee. Latorre had triumphed at "La Hogaza," a battle fought unadvisedly; but the patriots were no longer a band of rival and disordered guerrillas, each one fighting at his discretion. The inestimable good of unity begun to be felt and appreciated; there were now bands which bound the wills; an intelligent power which directed their efforts; a supreme authority, acknowledged even in the hearts of the plains, which led the valor of the defenders of the country, and which destroyed the obstacles opposed by despotism, to the emancipating idea and the noble aspiration of self-existence. These irrefragable proofs of progress, were they not sufficient to justify the confidence of the Liberator? And, with these present, can any one qualify him as *presumptuous*, or *rash*? "America will expel her tyrants!" This thought infused strength and elevated the heart of Bolívar; and so penetrated was he of it, that, writing to the Governor of Barbadoes, he said, with full conviction: *If Morillo still exists in Venezuela, he owes this precarious fortune to the want on our part of military elements. But now we have them, and very soon he will no longer date his lying dispatches from Venezuela.*

Et sermo illius potestate plenus erat.

And his words were full of power. . . .

"Clouds and winds which are not followed by rain, is the boastful youth," says the Scriptures; but dart, and sword, and sharp arrow is that which fulfills the promised. Bolívar promised, and fulfilled. Morillo did not date many months more from Venezuela his *lying dispatches*; and, pierced by the dart of the glory of his antagonist, he retired to Spain, as we shall see ahead, leaving stretched on the fields of Venezuela the army he had brought to humiliate her.

Fields of liberty! Places of glory.