

Although, in 1866, the allies had assembled an army of some fifty thousand men, López continued taking the offensive until, as the number and determination of his adversaries increased, he was compelled to retreat into his own country. Here he and his Indian legions levied terrific toll upon the lives of their enemies who pressed onward, up or down the rivers and through tropical swamps and forests. Inch by inch he contested their entry upon Paraguayan soil. When the able-bodied men gave out, old men, boys, women, and girls fought on with stubborn fury, and died before they would surrender. The wounded escaped if they could, or, cursing their captors, tore off their bandages and bled to death. Disease wrought awful havoc in all the armies engaged; yet the struggle continued until flesh and blood could endure no more. Flying before his pursuers into the wilds of the north and frantically dragging along with him masses of fugitive men, women, and children, whom he remorselessly shot, or starved to death, or left to perish of exhaustion, López turned finally at bay, and, on March 1, 1870, was felled by the lance of a cavalrman. He had sworn to die for his country and he did, though his country might perish with him.

No land in modern times has ever reached a

point so near annihilation as Paraguay. Added to the utter ruin of its industries and the devastation of its fields, dwellings, and towns, hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children had perished. Indeed, the horrors that had befallen it might well have led the allies to ask themselves whether it was worth while to destroy a country in order to change its rulers. Five years before López came into power the population of Paraguay had been reckoned at something between 800,000 and 1,400,000 — so unreliable were census returns in those days. In 1873 it was estimated at about 230,000, of whom women over fifteen years of age outnumbered the men nearly four to one. Loose polygamy was the inevitable consequence, and women became the breadwinners. Even today in this country the excess of females over males is very great. All in all, it is not strange that Paraguay should be called the “Niobe among nations.”

Unlike many nations of Spanish America in which a more or less anticlerical régime was in the ascendant, Ecuador fell under a sort of theocracy. Here appeared one of the strangest characters in a story already full of extraordinary personages — Gabriel García Moreno, who became President of

that republic in 1861. In some respects the counterpart of Francia of Paraguay, in others both a medieval mystic and an enlightened ruler of modern type, he was a man of remarkable intellect, constructive ability, earnest patriotism, and disinterested zeal for orderliness and progress. On his presidential sash were inscribed the words: "My Power in the Constitution"; but his real power lay in himself and in the system which he implanted.

García Moreno had a varied career. He had been a student of chemistry and other natural sciences. He had spent his youth in exile in Europe, where he prepared himself for his subsequent career as a journalist and a university professor. Through it all he had been an active participant in public affairs. Grim of countenance, austere in bearing, violent of temper, relentless in severity, he was a devoted believer in the Roman Catholic faith and in this Church as the sole effective basis upon which a state could be founded or social and political regeneration could be assured. In order to render effective his concept of what a nation ought to be, García Moreno introduced and upheld in all rigidity an administration the like of which had been known hardly anywhere since the Middle Ages. He recalled the Jesuits, established schools

of the "Brothers of the Christian Doctrine," and made education a matter wholly under ecclesiastical control. He forbade heretical worship, called the country the "Republic of the Sacred Heart," and entered into a concordat with the Pope under which the Church in Ecuador became more subject to the will of the supreme pontiff than western Europe had been in the days of Innocent III.

Liberals in and outside of Ecuador tried feebly to shake off this masterful theocracy, for the friendship which García Moreno displayed toward the diplomatic representatives of the Catholic powers of Europe, notably those of Spain and France, excited the neighboring republics. Colombia, indeed, sent an army to liberate the "brother democrats of Ecuador from the rule of Professor García Moreno," but the mass of the people stood loyally by their President. For this astounding obedience to an administration apparently so unrelated to modern ideas, the ecclesiastical domination was not solely or even chiefly responsible. In more ways than one García Moreno, the professor President, was a statesman of vision and deed. He put down brigandage and lawlessness; reformed the finances; erected hospitals; promoted education; and encouraged the study of natural science.

Even his salary he gave over to public improvements. His successors in the presidential office found it impossible to govern the country without García Moreno. Elected for a third term to carry on his curious policy of conservatism and reaction blended with modern advancement, he fell by the hand of an assassin in 1875. But the system which he had done so much to establish in Ecuador survived him for many years.

Although Brazil did not escape the evils of insurrection which retarded the growth of nearly all of its neighbors, none of its numerous commotions shook the stability of the nation to a perilous degree. By 1850 all danger of revolution had vanished. The country began to enter upon a career of peace and progress under a régime which combined broadly the federal organization of the United States with the form of a constitutional monarchy. Brazil enjoyed one of the few enlightened despotisms in South America. Adopting at the outset the parliamentary system, the Emperor Pedro II chose his ministers from among the liberals or conservatives, as one party or the other might possess a majority in the lower house of the Congress. Though the legislative power of the



nation was enjoyed almost entirely by the planters and their associates who formed the dominant social class, individual liberty was fully guaranteed, and even freedom of conscience and of the press was allowed. Negro slavery, though tolerated, was not expressly recognized.

Thanks to the political discretion and unusual personal qualities of "Dom Pedro," his popularity became more and more marked as the years went on. A patron of science and literature, a scholar rather than a ruler, a placid and somewhat eccentric philosopher, careless of the trappings of state, he devoted himself without stint to the public welfare. Shrewdly divining that the monarchical system might not survive much longer, he kept his realm pacified by a policy of conciliation. Pedro II even went so far as to call himself the best republican in the Empire. He might have said, with justice perhaps, that he was the best republican in the whole of Hispanic America. What he really accomplished was the successful exercise of a paternal autocracy of kindness and liberality over his subjects.

If more or less permanent dictators and occasional liberators were the order of the day in most

of the Spanish American republics, intermittent dictators and liberators dashed across the stage in Mexico from 1829 well on to the middle of the century. The other countries could show numerous instances in which the occupant of the chief magistracy held office to the close of his constitutional term; but Mexico could not show a single one! What Mexico furnished, instead, was a kaleidoscopic spectacle of successive presidents or dictators, an unstable array of self-styled "generals" without a presidential succession. There were no fewer than fifty such transient rulers in thirty-two years, with anywhere from one to six a year, with even the same incumbent twice in one year, or, in the case of the repetitious Santa Anna, nine times in twenty years — in spite of the fact that the constitutional term of office was four years. This was a record that made the most turbulent South American states seem, by comparison, lands of methodical regularity in the choice of their national executive. And as if this instability in the chief magistracy were not enough, the form of government in Mexico shifted violently from federal to centralized, and back again to federal. Mad struggles raged between partisan chieftains and their bands of *Escoceses* and *Yorkinos*, crying

out upon the "President" in power because of his undue influence upon the choice of a successor, backing their respective candidates if they lost, and waiting for a chance to oust them if they won.

This tumultuous epoch had scarcely begun when Spain in 1829 made a final attempt to recover her lost dominion in Mexico. Local quarrels were straightway dropped for two months until the invaders had surrendered. Thereupon the great landholders, who disliked the prevailing *Yorkino* régime for its democratic policies and for favoring the abolition of slavery, rallied to the aid of a "general" who issued a manifesto demanding an observance of the constitution and the laws! After Santa Anna, who was playing the rôle of a Mexican Warwick, had disposed of this aspirant, he switched blithely over to the *Escoceses*, reduced the federal system almost to a nullity, and in 1836 marched away to conquer the revolting Texans. But, instead, they conquered him and gained their independence, so that his reward was exile.

Now the *Escoceses* were free to promulgate a new constitution, to abolish the federal arrangement altogether, and to replace it by a strongly centralized government under which the individual States became mere administrative districts.

Hardly had this radical change been effected when in 1838 war broke out with France on account of the injuries which its nationals, among whom were certain pastry cooks, had suffered during the interminable commotions. Mexico was forced to pay a heavy indemnity; and Santa Anna, who had returned to fight the invader, was unfortunate enough to lose a leg in the struggle. This physical deprivation, however, did not interfere with that doughty hero's zest for tilting with other unquiet spirits who yearned to assure national regeneration by continuing to elevate and depose "presidents."

Another swing of the political pendulum had restored the federal system when again everything was overturned by the disastrous war with the United States. Once more Santa Anna returned, this time, however, to joust in vain with the "Yankee despoilers" who were destined to dismember Mexico and to annex two-thirds of its territory. Again Santa Anna was banished — to dream of a more favorable opportunity when he might become the savior of a country which had fallen into bankruptcy and impotence.

His opportunity came in 1853, when conservatives and clericals indulged the fatuous hope that he would both sustain their privileges and lift

Mexico out of its sore distress. Either their memories were short or else distance had cast a halo about his figure. At all events, he returned from exile and assumed, for the ninth and last time, a presidency which he intended to be something more than a mere dictatorship. Scorning the formality of a Congress, he had himself entitled "Most Serene Highness," as indicative of his ambition to become a monarch in name as well as in fact.

Royal or imperial designs had long since brought one military upstart to grief. They were now to cut Santa Anna's residence in Mexico similarly short. Eruptions of discontent broke out all over the country. Unable to make them subside, Santa Anna fell back upon an expedient which recalls practices elsewhere in Spanish America. He opened registries in which all citizens might record "freely" their approval or disapproval of his continuance in power. Though he obtained the huge majority of affirmative votes to be expected in such cases, he found that these pen-and-ink signatures were no more serviceable than his soldiers. Accordingly the dictator of many a day, fallen from his former estate of highness, decided to abandon his serenity also, and in 1854 fled the country — for its good and his own.