

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

1819.

FORMATION OF THE CONGRESS OF ANGOSTURA—ITS INSTALLMENT—REMARKABLE DISCOURSE OF THE LIBERATOR—SURRENDER OF HIS RANK AS GENERAL—CONFIRMATION OF THE MILITARY RANKS—DISCOURSE OF THE SR. SEA—ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION—LABORS OF THE CONGRESS—LETTER OF COLONEL HAMILTON TO THE DUKE OF SUSSEX—BOLIVAR SETS OUT FOR THE APURE—JUDGMENT UPON THE POLITICAL IDEAS OF THE LIBERATOR.

IN accordance with the Regulation formed by the Council of the State for the elections of the deputies to the Congress of Angostura, thirty-five Representatives should assemble in that city on the 1st January, 1819; including with these, those of the province of Casanare. And it was disposed that those from the other provinces of New Granada should come successively, at the time that these should enter under the dominion of liberty.

This thought was derived from Bolivar; as he wished to form a nation from the people of New Granada and Venezuela, and he believed that in this manner they were incorporated by fact.

Notwithstanding, the installment of the body could not take place on the appointed day, by the absence of several deputies; and, when the Liberator arrived at Angostura (7th of February), those of Margarita, Barinas and Cumana had not yet come. "They delay too much," wrote Bolivar to a friend, "and I fear that the first may have suffered some misfortune in the navigation, as they should have been here by January. If the others should come, the body will be installed as soon as there are two-thirds."

Bolivar longed for the assembly of Congress, to put an end at once to the military and necessarily absolute government, with which he was charged, and to give to the liberated territory a certain appearance as a nation, procuring for it a representative body that should constitute it.

By the 15th of February there were in the capital twenty-six deputies for Caracas, Barcelona, Cumana, Barinas, Guayana, and Margarita, who were:

*For Caracas*:—Dr. Juan German Roscio, Dr. Luis Tomas Peraza, Ldo. José España, Onofre Basalo, Francisco Antonio Zea.

*For Barcelona*:—Coronel Francisco Parejo, Coronel Eduardo A. Hurtado, Ldo. Diego B. Urbaneja, Ldo. Ramon Garcia Cádiz, Diego Antonio Alcalá.

*For Cumana*:—The General-in-Chief Santiago Marino, Brigadier-General Tomas Montilla, Dr. Juan Martinez, Colonel Diego Vallenilla.

*For Barinas*:—Pbro. Dr. Ramon Ignacio Mendez, Colonel Miguel Guerrero, General of Division R. Urdaneta, Dr. Antonio Mario Briceno.

*For Guayana*:—Eusebio Afanador, Juan Vicente Cardoso, Quartermaster-General F. Peñalver, Brigadier-General Pedro Leon Torrea.

*For Margarita :—*Ldo. Gaspar Marcano, Dr. Manuel Palacio, Ldo. Domingo Alzuru, José de Jesus Guevara."\*

The electors having been acknowledged as according in all things to the Regulation, the Liberator fixed 11 A. M. of the day for the installment of the Assembly.

A salute of artillery at sunset and a general illumination announced on the 14th the solemnity of the following day.

At sunrise, another salute of cannon was fired. At half-past ten, the deputies assembled in the hall of the Government House destined for their sessions, and the staff, the Governor of the city, and the Commandant General of the province, chiefs and officers in the house of the Supreme Chief, to accompany him to such an august ceremony; three cannons announced the march of the retinue, and the deputies came out to receive the Liberator at the doors of the palace. A numerous detachment, who occupied the front, made him military honors.

Mr. B. Irvine, of the United States, one of the merchants most well-deserving of the independence, in representation of the rest, was invited to this solemn act, and placed between the governor of the Bishopric and the principal military chiefs. The concourse of strangers and citizens was numerous.

The first session of Congress was an imposing act, full of gravity and respect, able to feed the patriotism of a thousand ages. What a generous ardor inflamed the breasts of those worthy men! What just hopes! What magnanimous purposes!

Happy and memorable day! of glory, splendor and joy!

The Liberator, placed in the principal position, pronounced a long discourse; rich in style, and full of beautiful pictures, fluent, easy, and disembarassed; a discourse that was fascinating, and which was afterwards read with admiration. All in it is majestic, all grave, worthy of the glory of the Republic, which was being fledged amongst unfading laurels. The gracefulness of the body of the Liberator, the fire of his eyes, the majesty of his countenance, the elegance of his gesture, contributed, undoubtedly, to captivate the audience, who, intoxicated with enthusiasm and hope, interrupted him at each step with frenetic and prolonged applauses. The fiery word of BOLIVAR, his force, his electric eye, communicated conviction to the assembly, and this would be agitated as if impelled by a magic movement, or would remain profoundly silent as if petrified and struck by lightning. It is that Bolivar the conqueror, the hero, the Colombian Hannibal, was also the Demosthenes, the Pericles of the Andes, full of eloquence, whose imposing and delicate expression, magnificent and harmonious, had an irresistible witchery.

#### SPEECH OF GENERAL BOLIVAR TO THE CONGRESS OF VENEZUELA.

GENTLEMEN:

I account myself one of the beings most favored by Divine Providence, in having the honor of reuniting the representatives of Venezuela in this august Congress; the only source of legitimate authority, the deposit of the sovereign will, and the arbiter of the nation's fate.

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\* Later on, three of the five deputies for Casanare concurred to the Congress: Zca, Colonel José Maria Vergara and Lieutenant-Colonel Vicente Uribe. The Don José Maria Salazar and the Colonel Antonio Morales did not assist at the assembly.

In delivering back to the representatives of the people the supreme power intrusted to me, I satisfy the desires of my own heart, and calm the wishes of my fellow-citizens and of future generations, who hope everything from your wisdom, rectitude, and prudence. In fulfilling this delightful duty, I free myself from the boundless authority which oppresses me, and also from the unlimited responsibility which weighs on my feeble hands.

An imperative necessity, united to a strongly expressed desire on the part of the people, could have alone induced me to assume the dreadful and dangerous charge of *dictator, supreme chief of the republic*. Now, however, I respire in returning the authority, which, with so great risk, difficulty, and toil, I have maintained amidst as horrible calamities as ever afflicted a social body.

In the epoch during which I presided over the republic, it was not merely a political storm that raged, in a sanguinary war, in a time of popular anarchy; but the tempest of the desert, a whirlwind of every disorganized element, the bursting of an infernal torrent, that overwhelmed the land of Venezuela. A man! and such a man as I am! what bounds, what resistance, could he oppose to such furious devastation? Amidst that sea of woes and afflictions, I was nothing more than the miserable sport of the revolutionary hurricane, driven to and fro like the wild bird of the ocean. I could do neither good nor evil; an irresistible power, above all human control, directed the march of our fortunes; and for me to pretend to have been the prime mover of the events which have taken place would be unjust, and would be attaching to myself an importance I do not merit. Do you desire to know the sources from which those occurrences took their rise, and the origin of our present situation? Consult the annals of Spain, of America, and of Venezuela; examine the laws of the Indies, the conduct of your ancient governors, the influence of religion, and of foreign dominion; observe the first acts of the republican government, the ferocity of our enemies, and the national character. I again repeat, that I cannot consider myself more than the mere instrument of the great causes which have acted on our country. My life, my conduct, and all my actions, public and private, are however before the people; and, representatives, it is your duty to judge them. I submit to your impartial decision the manner in which I have executed my command, and nothing will I add to excuse—I have already said enough as an apology. Should I merit your approbation, I shall have acquired the sublime title of a *good citizen*, preferred by me to that of *Liberator*, bestowed on me by Venezuela, to that of *Pacifcator*, given by Cundinamarca, and to all others the universe could confer.

Legislators! I deposit in your hands the supreme command of Venezuela, and it is now your high duty to consecrate yourselves to the felicity of the republic. In your hands rests the balance of our destiny, and the means of our glory. You will confirm the decrees which establish our liberty.

The supreme chief of the republic is, at this moment, nothing more than a simple citizen; and such he wishes to remain until his latest hour. He will, however, serve with the armies of Venezuela as long as an army treads her soil.

Our country contains within her bosom many deserving sons capable of directing her. Talents, virtue, experience, and whatever is requisite for the good government of free men, are the patrimony, both of many who represent the people in this august assembly, and of others without its walls. Citizens are to be found, who, at all times, have given proofs of their valor in encountering dangers, of their prudence in eschewing them, and in short of the art of governing them—

elves, and governing others. These illustrious personages do undoubtedly merit the suffrages of the congress, and to receive in charge that government which I, with so much cordiality and sincerity, have just renounced forever.

The continuation of authority in the same individual has frequently proved the termination of democratical governments. Repeated elections are essential in popular systems; for nothing is so dangerous as to suffer power to remain a long time vested in one citizen; the people accustomed to obey, and he to command, give rise to usurpation and tyranny. A strict jealousy is the guarantee of republican liberty; and the citizens of Venezuela ought to fear, with the greatest justice, that the same magistrate, who has governed them for a length of time, may do so forever.

I trust that, from this my act of adherence to the liberty of my country, I may aspire to the glory of being reckoned one of her most faithful lovers.

Permit me, sirs, with the frankness of a true republican, to lay before you a respectful outline of the project of a constitution, which I take the liberty of offering, in testimony of the sincerity and candor of my sentiments. As the safety of all is concerned, I venture to believe that I possess a right of being heard by the representatives of the people. I am well aware that your wisdom has no need of counselors, and I am moreover aware that my project may appear erroneous and impracticable; but, sirs, accept with kindness this work, which is, I do assure you, rather a tribute of my sincere submission to the congress than the production of presumptuous levity. Your installation moreover constituting the creation of a political body, and, as may be said, even the creation of a whole community, surrounded by all the inconveniences which the most singular and difficult situation can present, the cry of one citizen may, perhaps, point out the presence of hidden danger.

Casting a glance on the past, we shall see what is the basis of the republic of Venezuela.

The separation of America from the Spanish monarchy resembles the state of the Roman empire, when that enormous mass fell to pieces in the midst of the ancient world. Every dismemberment then formed an independent nation, conformable to its situation and interests; but with the difference, that those associations returned to their original principle. We do not retain vestiges of what we were in other times; we are not Europeans, we are not Indians; but a middle race, betwixt the aborigines and the Spaniards. Americans by birth, and Europeans in rights, we are placed in the extraordinary predicament of disputing with the natives our privilege of possession, and of maintaining ourselves in the country which gave us birth, against the efforts of the original invaders; and thus our situation is the more extraordinary and complicated.

Our lot, moreover, has ever been purely passive; our political existence has ever been nugatory; and we, therefore, encounter greater difficulties in establishing our liberties, having hitherto been in a lower degree of degradation than even servitude, and being not only robbed of our freedom, but not suffering an active and domineering tyranny, which would have excited feelings of indignation.

Permit me to explain this paradox. In the exercise of authorized absolute power there are no limits; the will of the despot is the supreme law, arbitrarily executed by inferiors who participate in the organized oppression in proportion to the authority they hold; being intrusted with all functions, civil, political, military, and religious. America received all from Spain, was without the prac-

ties and exercise of an active tyranny, and was not permitted to share in the administration of her domestic concerns and interior arrangements.

This abject state of depression rendered it impossible for us to be acquainted with the course of public affairs, and as little did we enjoy the personal consequence and respect which the show of authority commands in the eyes of the people, and which is of such importance in great revolutions. I say again, that we were abstracted and absent from the world in everything having a reference to the science of government. The people of America, bound with the triple yoke of ignorance, tyranny, and vice, could not acquire either knowledge, power, or virtue.

Pupils of such pernicious masters, the lessons we received, and the examples we followed, were the most destructive. We were governed more by deceit and treachery than by force, and were degraded more by vice than by superstition. Slavery is the daughter of darkness, and an ignorant person is generally the blind instrument of his own ruin; ambition and intrigue take advantage of the credulity and inexperience of men totally unacquainted with every principle of political and civil economy; the uninformed adopt as realities what are mere illusions; they mistake licentiousness for liberty, treachery for patriotism, and revenge for justice.

A corrupt people, should it gain its liberty, soon loses it again; for in vain are the lights of experience exercised in showing that happiness consists in the practice of virtue, and that the government of laws is more powerful than that of tyrants, because they are more inflexible, and all ought to submit to their wholesome severity; that good morals, and not force, constitute the pillars of the law, and that the exercise of justice is the exercise of liberty.

Thus, legislators, your undertaking is so much the more laborious, as you have to do with men corrupted by the illusions of error, and by noxious incitements. Liberty, says Rousseau, is a succulent food, but difficult of digestion. Our weak and feeble fellow-citizens will have to increase in strength of mind in a very great degree, before they get the length of being able to digest the wholesome aliment of freedom. With members benumbed by fetters, and eyesight weakened by the darkness of dungeons, are they capable of marching with firm steps towards the august temple of Liberty? Are they capable of supporting its splendid rays, or breathing freely the pure ether that reigns there?

Legislators! Consider well the object of your election; bear ever in mind that you are about to form fundamental regulations for an incipient people, which, if you proportionate the basis of the structure to what may be expected, may rise to that pitch of elevation pointed out by nature. If the tutelary genius of Venezuela does not direct your choice, and inspire you with the prudence and expertness necessary for selecting the nature and form of government you are about to adopt for the happiness of the people, if you do not fix aright, depend on it, slavery will be the result.

The records of other days present us with an immense variety of governments. Bring to your recollection the nations which have figured most conspicuously in the history of the world, and with affliction will you remark that almost the whole earth has been, and is, the victim of its governments. You will find many systems for governing men, but most for oppressing them; and had not the custom of seeing the human race led by the pastors of the people diminished the horror of so revolting a spectacle, we should be shocked in observing our docile species feeding on the surface of the globe, like the cattle of the field,

destined for the use of their cruel masters. Nature certainly endows us at our birth with an inclination to liberty; but, whether arising from altho. or some other source, it is a positive fact, that she remains still and quiet under the trammels which may be imposed on her. In contemplating her in this state of prostitution, it would appear that we have reason to be persuaded, that the majority of mankind considers as true that humiliating maxim, that it is more difficult to maintain the equilibrium of liberty than to sustain the weight of tyranny. Would to God that this maxim, so contrary to nature, were false! Would to God that this maxim had not been sanctioned by the indolence of mankind with respect to their most sacred rights!

Many ancient and modern nations have shaken off oppression, but few of them have known how to enjoy a few precious moments of freedom. Very soon have they returned to their former political vices; for the people more frequently than the government bring on tyranny. The habit of submission renders them insensible to the charms of honor and national prosperity, and leads them to regard with insensibility the glory of being free under the protection of laws dictated by their own will. The history of the world proclaims this dreadful truth.

Democracy, in my opinion, is alone susceptible of complete liberty; but what democratical government ever united at the same time power, prosperity, and permanency? and, on the contrary, have we not seen aristocracy and monarchy establish great and powerful empires for ages and ages? What government is more ancient than that of China? What republic has exceeded in duration those of Sparta and Venice? Did not the Roman empire conquer the world? Did not monarchy exist in France for fourteen centuries? What state is more powerful than Great Britain? The governments, however, of those nations were either aristocratical or monarchic.

Notwithstanding such painful reflections, my mind is filled with joy at the great progress made by our republic in its glorious career; loving what is useful, animated by what is just, and aspiring to what is perfect. Venezuela, on separating from Spain, recovered her independence and liberty, her equality and her national sovereignty. Constituting herself into a democratical republic, she proscribed monarchy, distinctions, nobility, charters, and privileges: she declared the rights of man, the liberty of acting, thinking, speaking, and writing. Those facts, so eminently liberal, cannot be sufficiently admired for the purity which gave them birth. The first congress of Venezuela fixed in indelible characters in the annals of our legislation, the majesty of the people as properly expressed in the social act as the fittest to form the happiness of the nation. Every feeling of my mind is required to appreciate duly the supereminent good contained in that immortal code of our rights and laws. But, at the same time, how shall I express myself? Shall I dare to profane with my censure the sacred tables of our laws? There are sentiments which cannot remain quiet in the breast of the man that loves his country, and which, however attempted to be concealed, agitate by their violence, and which an imperious force obliges him to disclose. It grieves me to think that the government of Venezuela requires reform; and, although many illustrious citizens think as I do, all do not possess sufficient boldness to state publicly their opinion in favor of the adoption of new principles; and this consideration has led me to be the first in introducing a subject of the greatest importance, although, in doing so, there is an excessive audacity, in pretending to give advice to the counselors of the nation.

The more I admire the excellency of the federal constitution of Venezuela, the more am I convinced of the impossibility of applying it to our situation, and, according to my way of thinking, it is a miracle that its model in North America has existed with so much prosperity, and not been thrown into confusion on the first appearance of danger or embarrassment. Notwithstanding which, that people is a singular example of political virtue and moral rectitude: liberty has been its cradle, it has grown up in liberty, and is maintained by pure liberty. I will add, that that people is unique in the history of the human race, and repeat that it is a prodigy that a system so weak and complicated, as the federal should have existed under so difficult and delicate circumstances as those which have occurred. However, whatever the case may be as to the government, I must say of the American people, that the idea never entered my mind of assimilating the situation and nature of two nations so distinct as the Anglo and Spanish American. Would it not be extremely difficult to apply to Spain the political, civil, and religious code of Great Britain! It would be even more difficult to adopt in Venezuela the laws of North America. Does not the *Spirit of Laws* say, that laws ought to be suited to the people making them, and that it is a very great chance that those of one nation will suit another! That the laws ought to bear relation to the physical state of the country, to its climate, to the quality of its soil, to its situation, to its extent, and to the manner of life of its inhabitants; having reference to the degree of liberty the constitution can support, to the religion of the people, to their inclinations, riches, number, commerce, customs, and morals.

I now present the code which, according to my way of thinking, we ought to adopt.

The constitution of Venezuela, although founded on the most perfect principles, differed widely from that of America in an essential point, and without doubt the most important. The congress of Venezuela, like that of America, participates in some of the attributes of the executive power. But we go further, and subdivide it by committing it to a collective body, and are consequently subject to the inconvenience of making the existence of the government periodical, of suspending and of dissolving it whenever the members separate. Our triumvirate is void, as one may say, of unity, duration, and personal responsibility; it is at times destitute of action, it is without perpetual life, real uniformity, and immediate responsibility; and a government which does not possess continuance may be denominated a nullity. Although the powers of the President of the United States are limited by excessive restrictions, he exercises by himself alone all the functions of authority granted him by the constitution; and there can be no doubt that his administration must be more uniform, constant, and truly proper, than that of a power divided amongst various individuals, the composition of which cannot but be monstrous.

The judicial power in Venezuela is similar to that in America; indefinite in duration, temporary and not perpetual, and it enjoys all the independence necessary.

The first congress, in its federal constitution, consulted rather the spirits of the different provinces than the solid idea of establishing an indivisible and concentrated republic. There sat our legislators, under the influence of provincials, carried away with the dazzling appearance of the happiness of North America, thinking that the blessings she enjoyed were owing exclusively to the form of government, and not to the character of the people. And, in fact, the

example of the United States, with its progressive prosperity, was too flattering not to have been followed. Who could resist the glorious attraction of the full and absolute enjoyment of sovereignty, independence, and liberty? Who could resist the admiration and esteem inspired by an intelligent government, which unites at the same moment public and private rights, which forms by general consent the supreme law of individuals? Who can resist the dominion of a beneficent government, which, with an able, active, and powerful hand, directs, at all times and in all cases, all its efforts towards that social perfection which ought to be the end of all human institutions? However beautiful this magnificent federative system might appear, and in fact be, Venezuela could not enjoy it immediately on shaking off her chains; we were not prepared for so great a good; good as well as evil causes death when sudden and excessive; our moral constitution did not yet possess the benefits of a government completely representative, and which is so sublime when it can be adopted by a republic of saints.

Representatives of the People! You are convened to confirm or repeal whatever may appear to you proper to be preserved, reformed, or expunged, in our social compact. It is your duty to correct the work of our first legislators, and I would say, that to you it belongs to cover a portion of the beauties contained in our political code; for all hearts are not formed for admiring every beauty, nor all eyes capable of supporting the celestial blaze of perfection. The book of the apostles, the doctrine of Jesus, the divine writings, sent by a gracious Providence to better mankind, so sublime and so holy, would kindle an ocean of flame at Constantinople, and the whole of Asia would fiercely burn, were the book of peace to be imposed at once as the code of religion, laws, and customs.

Permit me to call the attention of the congress to a matter which may be of vital importance. Bear in mind that our population is neither European nor American, but is rather a compound of African and American than of European origin; because even Spain herself is not strictly European, from her African blood, institutions, and character. It is impossible to point out with propriety to what human family we belong. The greater part of the aborigines have been annihilated, the European has mixed with the American and with the African, and the latter has mixed also with the Indian and the European. All children of the same mother, our fathers various in origin and in blood, are strangers, and differ all in figure and form from each other.

All the citizens of Venezuela enjoy by the constitution a political equality; and if that equality had not been a dogma in Athens, in France, and in America, we ought to confirm the principle, in order to correct the difference which may apparently exist. Legislators! my opinion is, that the fundamental principle of our system depends immediately and solely on equality being established and practiced in Venezuela. That men are all born with equal rights to the benefits of society, has been sanctioned by almost all the sages of every age; as has also, that all men are not born with equal capacities for the attainment of every rank; as all ought to practice virtue, and all do not so; all ought to be brave, and all are not so; all ought to possess talents, and all do not. From this arises the real distinction observed amongst individuals of the most liberally established society.

If the principle of political equality be generally acknowledged, not less so is that of physical and moral inequality. It would be an illusion, an absurdity, to suppose the contrary. Nature makes men equal in genius, temperament,

strength, and character. Laws correct that difference, by placing the individual in society, where education, industry, arts, sciences, and virtues, give a fictitious equality properly called political and social. The union of all classes in one state is eminently beneficial, and in which diversity is multiplied in proportion to the propagation of the species. By it alone has discord been torn up by the roots, and many jealousies, follies, and prejudices avoided.

Our diversity of origin requires a most powerful pulse, and a delicate manner for managing so heterogeneous a body; as its complicated composition may be dislocated, divided, and dissolved by the slightest change.

The most perfect system of government is that which produces the greatest degree of happiness, of social security, and political stability.

By the laws dictated by the first congress, we have reason to hope that felicity will be the portion of Venezuela; and from you we may flatter ourselves that security and stability will render that felicity perpetual.

To you it belongs to resolve the problem, in what manner, after having broken the fetters of our former oppressors, we may accomplish the wonderful feat of preventing the remains of our grievous chains being turned into the arms of licentiousness. The relics of Spanish dominion will continue a long time before we can completely destroy them; our atmosphere is impregnated with the contagion of despotism, and neither the flame of war, nor the specific of our salutary laws, has purified the air we breathe. Our hands are indeed free, but our hearts are still suffering from the effects of servitude. Man, in losing his liberty, says Homer, loses half his spirit.

A republican government has been, is, and ought to be, that of Venezuela; its basis ought to be the sovereignty of the people, the division of power, civil liberty, the prohibition of slavery, and the abolition of monarchy and privileges. We want equality, for recasting, as one may say, men, political opinions, and public customs. Throwing our sight over the vast field we have to examine, let us fix our attention on the dangers we ought to avoid, and let history guide us in our career.

Athens presents us with the most brilliant example of an absolute democracy, and at the same time is a melancholy proof of the extreme weakness of that kind of government. The wisest legislator of Greece did not see his republic last ten years, and underwent the humiliation of acknowledging the insufficiency of an absolute democracy for governing any kind of society, not even the most cultivated, moral, and limited, because it shines only with flashes of liberty. Let us acknowledge then that Solon has undeceived the world, and shown how difficult it is to govern men by simple laws.

The republic of Sparta, which appeared a chimerical invention, produced more real effects than the ingenious work of Solon: glory, virtue, morality, and consequently national happiness, were the result of the legislature of Lycurgus. Although two kings in one state were like two monsters to devour it, Sparta suffered but little from that double royalty, and Athens enjoyed the most splendid lot under an absolute sovereignty, free elections of magistrates frequently renewed, mild, wise, and politic laws. Pisistratus, an usurper and a despot, did more good to Athens than her laws; and Pericles, although an usurper likewise, was the most useful citizen.

The republic of Thebes existed only during the lives of Pelopidas and Epaminondas; for it is men, and not principles, that form governments. However wise codes, systems, and statutes may be, they have but little influence on

society; it is virtuous, patriotic, and enlightened men that constitute republics.

The Roman constitution was that which produced the greatest power and fortune to any people on earth: in it there was no exact distribution of power. The consuls, the senate, and the people, were legislators, magistrates, and judges; they all participated in all those offices. The executive, consisting of two consuls, had the same inconvenience as that of Sparta, and yet, notwithstanding its deformity, the republic did not suffer that mischievous discordance, which might be supposed inseparable from a magistracy consisting of two individuals, endowed equally with the powers of a monarch. A government whose sole inclination was war and conquest did not appear likely to establish the happiness of the people. A government monstrous in itself, and purely warlike, raised Rome to the highest pitch of virtue and glory, and formed of the world a Roman empire; proving to mankind the force of political virtues, and the trivial influence of institutions.

Passing from ancient to modern times, we find England and France deserving general attention, and giving impressive lessons in every species of government. The revolutions in those two great states, like brilliant meteors, have filled the world with so great a profusion of political light, that every thinking being has learned what are the rights and duties of man; in what the excellency of governments consists, and in what their vices; all know how to appreciate the intrinsic value of the theoretical speculations of modern philosophers and legislators. In short, this star in its brilliant course inflamed even the apathetic Spaniards, who also, entering the political whirlwind, gave ephemeral proofs of liberty, and have shown their incapacity of living under the mild dominion of the law, by returning, after a short blaze, to their original bondage.

Legislators! this is the proper time for repeating what the eloquent Volney says, in his dedication to the *Ruins of Palmyra*: "To the growing people of the Spanish Indies—to the generous chiefs who conduct them to liberty—may the errors and misfortunes of the old world teach wisdom and happiness to the new!" May they never lose themselves; but profit by the lessons of experience given in the schools of Greece, of Rome, of France, of England, and of America, and be instructed by them in the difficult science of establishing and preserving nations with proper, just, legitimate, and, above all, useful laws; never forgetting that the excellency of a government does not consist in its theory, form, or mechanism, but in being fitted to the nature and character of the people for which it was instituted.

Rome and Great Britain are the nations which have most excelled amongst the ancients and moderns. Both were born to command and be free, and yet neither had constitutions modeled in liberty's most brilliant form, but solid establishments; and on that account, therefore, I recommend to you, representatives, the study of the British constitution, which appears to be the one destined to produce the greatest possible effect on the people adopting it; but, perfect as it may be, I am very far, at the same time, from proposing a servile imitation of it. When I speak of the British constitution, I refer solely to the democratical part of it; and, in truth, it may be denominated a monarchy in system, in which is acknowledged the sovereignty of the people, the division and equilibrium of power, civil freedom, liberty of conscience and of the press, and everything that is sublime in politics. A greater degree of liberty cannot be enjoyed in any kind of republic, and it may indeed claim a high rank in

social order. I recommend that constitution as the best model to those who aspire to the enjoyments of the rights of man, and of all that political felicity compatible with our frail natures.

In nothing whatever would we change our fundamental laws, were we to adopt a legislative power similar to that of the British parliament. We have divided, as the Americans have done, the national representation into two houses, that of the representatives and the senate. The first is wisely composed; it enjoys all the privileges fitted for it, and is not susceptible of essential change; as the constitution has endowed it with the origin, form, and powers, required by the will of the people for being lawfully and competently represented.

If the senate, in place of being elective, were hereditary, it would, in my conception, be the basis, the bond, and the soul of the republic, and in political storms it would possess the functions of government, and would resist popular commotions. Attached to the government by the powerful excitement of its own preservation, it would ever oppose the attempts the people might make against the jurisdiction and authority of their magistrates. It must be confessed, that most men are ignorant of their true interests, and are continually attacking them in the hands of those to whom they are committed. The individual contends against the general mass, and the general mass against authority; and it is, therefore, necessary that a neutral body should exist in all governments, to protect the injured and disarm the offender. This neutral body, in order that it may be such, ought neither to derive its origin from the choice of the government, nor from that of the people, but in such wise that it may enjoy complete independence, neither fearing nor hoping anything from either of those sources of authority. An hereditary senate, as a part of the people, would participate in its interests, in its opinions, and in its spirit, and for that reason it is not to be presumed that an hereditary senate will separate from the interests of the people, and forget its legislative duties. The senators in Rome, and the peers in Britain, have proved themselves the firmest pillars in the glorious structure of civil and political liberty.

These senators will, for the first time, be elected by the congress, and their successors in the senate will occupy the principal attention of the government, which will cause them to be educated in a college especially set apart for the instruction of those future guardians and legislators of the country. They will be taught the arts, the sciences, and everything that can adorn the mind of a public man; from their earliest infancy they will be acquainted with the career destined them by Providence, and from their most tender years their souls will be elevated to the dignity awaiting them.

In no manner whatever would the creation of an hereditary senate be a violation of political equality: it is not a nobility I wish to establish; because that, as has been said by a celebrated republican, would be to destroy at once equality and liberty. It is an office for which candidates ought to be prepared, and is also an office requiring extensive knowledge, and proportionate means for attaining it.

In elections, everything ought not to be left to chance and hazard; for the public is easier deceived than nature perfected by art; and although it be a fact that these senators will not proceed from the womb of virtue, it is equally true that they will come forth endowed with a most finished education. The liberators of Venezuela are moreover entitled to hold forever a high rank in the republic which is indebted to them for existence, and I do believe that posterity

would observe with regret the extinction of the illustrious names of its first benefactors. I will say further, that it is for the public interest, that it is for the national honor, and that it is due from the gratitude of Venezuela, to preserve in honor to the latest posterity, a race of virtuous, prudent, and valiant men, who, overcoming every obstacle, have established the republic at the expense of the most heroic sacrifices; and if the people of Venezuela do not applaud and rejoice at the elevation of its benefactors, they are unworthy to be free, and never will be so.

An hereditary senate, I say again, will be the fundamental basis of the legislative power, and consequently the basis of the whole government. It will act equally as a counterpoise to the government and the people, and will be an intermediate authority to deaden the arrows which those perpetual rivals are constantly shooting at each other.

In all contests, the interposition of a third person becomes the means of reconciliation; and thus will the senate of Venezuela be the cement of the delicate edifice so liable to violent concussions. It will be the means of calming the fury and maintaining the harmony betwixt the members and the head of this political body. Nothing can corrupt a legislative body invested with the highest honors; dependent on itself alone, without fearing anything from the people, or expecting anything from the government, whose only object is to repress every tendency to evil, and encourage every attempt at good, and which is deeply interested in the existence of a society with which it shares adversity and prosperity.

It has been most justly remarked, that the British house of peers is invaluable to the nation, as forming a bulwark to the liberties of the people; and I dare add, that the senate of Venezuela will not only be a bulwark to liberty, but a help to render the republic perpetual.

The executive power in Great Britain is invested with all the sovereign authority fitted to it; but it is also circumscribed by a triple line of ditches, barriers, and palisades. The sovereign is indeed the head of the government, but his ministers and officers depend more on the laws than on his authority, because they are personally responsible, and from that responsibility not even royal authority can exempt them. He is commander-in-chief of the army and navy, he makes peace and declares war; but it is the parliament alone which votes annually the supplies. For neutralizing his power, the person of the king is inviolable and sacred; whilst his head is left free, his hands are bound. The sovereign of Britain has three formidable rivals: the cabinet, which is responsible to the people and to parliament; the house of peers, which protects the interests of the people, as representing the nobility of which it is composed; and the house of commons, the organ of the British public: as the judges are more-over responsible for the due fulfillment of the laws, they adhere strictly to them; and the administrators of the public money, being accountable not only for their own violation of duty, but even for what the government may do, guard against misapplication.

The more the nature of the executive power in Britain is examined, the more will you be inclined to think it the most perfect model for either a monarchy, an aristocracy, or a democracy. In Venezuela, let the executive power be exercised by a president, appointed by the people or their representatives, and we shall then have taken a long stride towards national felicity.

Whoever the citizen may be that may fill that situation, he will be supported

by the constitution; authorized to do good, he cannot do evil, for, submitting to the laws, his ministers will co-operate with him; and should he, on the contrary, attempt to infringe them, his own ministers will leave him insulated in the midst of the republic, and will even impeach him to the senate. The ministers being responsible for such offences as may be committed, are the persons that govern; and it is not the least advantage of the system, that those more immediately exercising the functions of the executive power take an interesting and active part in the deliberations of the government, and consider their duties as personal.

It may happen that the president may not be a man of great talents or virtues, and notwithstanding the want of those essential qualities, he may still perform the duties of his situation in a satisfactory manner; because, in such case, the ministry, doing everything itself, bears the burden of the state. However exorbitant the authority of executive power in Great Britain may appear, it would not perhaps be too great in the republic of Venezuela. Here the congress has bound both the hands and heads of the magistrates, and has assumed a portion of the executive functions, contrary to the maxim of Montesquieu, who says, that a representative body ought not to take upon itself any active principle; it ought to make laws, and see those executed which it does make. Nothing is so dangerous to a people as a weak executive; and if it has been deemed necessary to endow it with so many attributes in a monarchy, how infinitely more indispensable would it be in a republic! Let us fix our attention on this difference, and we shall find that the equilibrium of power ought to be distributed in two ways. In a republic, the executive ought to be the strongest, because everything conspires against it; and, on the other hand, in a monarchy, the legislative ought to be the most powerful, as everything unites in favor of the sovereign. The veneration which people bear for a regal magistracy is a proof of its influence in augmenting the superstitious respect paid to that species of authority. The splendor of the throne, crown, and purple, the formidable support given by the nobility, the immense riches acquired by generations of the same dynasty, and the fraternal protection afforded by kings to each other, are considerable advantages militating in favor of royal authority, and render it almost unlimited. Those very advantages are a reason why a republican magistrate should be endowed with greater power than that possessed by a constitutional prince.

A republican magistrate is an insulated individual in the midst of society, intrusted with the duty of curbing the impetus of the people towards licentiousness, and the propensity of judges and administrators to an abuse of the laws. Such a one, with regard to the legislative body, the senate, and the people, is a single individual resisting the combined attack of the opinions, the interests, and the passions of society, which, according to what Carnot says, is constantly striving betwixt the desire of governing and that of not being subject to any authority. He is, in short, one athlete opposed to a multitude of others. The only corrective to such weakness is a vigorous and suitable resistance to the opposition made to the executive power by the legislative body and people of a republic. If the executive do not possess the means of exercising all the authority properly placed at its disposal, it becomes null, and the government expires, leaving anarchy, usurpation, and tyranny, as its heirs and successors.

Let the whole system of government, therefore, be strengthened, and the equilibrium established in such a manner, that it cannot be overturned, nor its re-

finement becomes a cause of decay. As no form of government is so weak as a democracy, its constitution ought to be as solid as possible, and its institutions conducive to stability. If such be not the case, we may reckon on having only a government on trial, and not a permanent system; and on having a wavering, tumultuous, and anarchical community, and not a social establishment, in which happiness, peace, and justice reign.

Legislators! let us not be presumptuous, but moderate in our pretensions. It is by no means likely that we can do what has never yet been accomplished by any of the human race, what the greatest and wisest nations have never effected. Undefined liberty and absolute democracy are the rocks on which republican hopes and expectations have been wrecked.

Take a view of the republics of antiquity, of those of modern times, and of those rising into existence, and you will find, that almost all have been frustrated in their attempts. The men, who aim at legitimate institutions and social perfection, are undoubtedly deserving of every praise; but who can say that mankind possess complete wisdom, or that they practice all the virtues which the union of power and justice imperatively demand? Angels, and not men, can alone exist free, peaceable, and happy, in the exercise of sovereign power.

Whilst the people of Venezuela exercise the rights they lawfully enjoy, let us moderate the excessive pretensions which an incompetent form of government might suggest, and let us give up that federal system which does not suit us, let us get clear of the triumvirate executive power, and concentrate it in one president, and let us commit to him sufficient authority to enable him to resist the inconveniences arising from our recent situation, from the state of warfare we have been suffering under, and from the kind of foreign and domestic enemies we have had to deal with, and with whom we shall still have to contend for a length of time. Let the legislative power resign the attributes belonging to the executive, and acquire nevertheless fresh consistency, and fresh influence in the equilibrium of authority. Let the courts of justice be reformed by the permanency and independence of the judges, by the establishment of juries, and of civil and criminal codes, not dictated by antiquated nor by conquering kings, but by the voice of nature, by the cry of justice, and by the genius of wisdom.

It is my anxious wish that every part of the government and administration should acquire that degree of vigor, which can alone sustain a due equilibrium, not simply amongst the members of government, but even amongst the various ranks of which society is composed. It would not signify, were the springs of a political system to be relaxed, if that relaxation did not occasion the dissolution of the social body, and the ruin of those associated. The cries of the human race, in the fields of battle and in tumultuous assemblies, appeal to Heaven against those inconsiderate and blind legislators who have thought they could with impunity make trials of chimerical institutions. All the nations on earth have sought after liberty, some by arms and others by laws, passing alternately from anarchy to despotism, or from despotism to anarchy; but very few have been satisfied with moderate attainments, or adopted constitutions conformable to their means, nature, and circumstances.

Let us not attempt what is impossible, lest, by endeavoring to rise too high in the regions of liberty, we fall into the abyss of tyranny. From absolute liberty there is always a descent to absolute power, and the medium betwixt the two extremes is supreme social liberty. Abstract ideas give rise to the pernicious

scious idea of unlimited liberty. Let us so act that the power of the people be restrained within the limits pointed out by reason and interest; that the national will be curbed by a just authority; and that the civil and criminal legislation, analogous to our constitution, govern imperatively the judicial power; in which case an equilibrium will exist, and those differences and discords avoided which would embarrass the concerns of state, as well as that species of complication which shackles instead of uniting society.

To form a stable government, a national feeling is required, possessing an uniform inclination towards two principal points, regulating public will, and limiting public authority, the bounds of which are difficult to be assigned; but it may be supposed that the best rule for our direction is reciprocal restriction and concentration, so that there may be the least friction possible betwixt legitimate will and legitimate power.

Love of country, laws, and magistrates, ought to be the ruling passion in the breast of every republican. Venezuelans love their country, but not its laws, because they are bad, and the source of evil; and as little could they respect their magistrates, as the old ones were wicked, and the new ones are hardly known in the career they have commenced. If a sacred respect does not exist for country, laws, and constituted authorities, society is a state of confusion, an abyss, and a conflict of man with man, and of body with body.

To save our incipient republic from such a chaos, all our moral powers will be insufficient, unless we melt the whole people down into one mass; the composition of the government is a whole, the legislation is a whole, and national feeling is a whole. Unity, Unity, Unity, ought to be our device. The blood of our citizens is various, let us mix it to make it one; our constitution has divided authority, let us agree to unite it; our laws are the sad remains of all ancient and modern despotisms, let the monstrous structure be demolished, let it fall, and, withdrawing from its ruins, let us erect a temple to justice, and, under the auspices of its sacred influence, let us dictate a code of Venezuelan laws. Should we wish to consult records and models of legislation, Great Britain, France, and North America, present us with admirable ones.

Popular education ought to be the first care of the congress's paternal regard. Morals and knowledge are the cardinal points of a republic, and morals and knowledge are what we most want.

Let us take from Athens her Areopagus, and the guardians of customs and laws; let us take from Rome her censors and domestic tribunals, and, forming a holy alliance of those moral institutions, let us renew on earth the idea of a people not contented with being free and powerful, but which desires also to be virtuous.

Let us take from Sparta her austere establishments, and form from those three springs a reservoir of virtue.

Let us give our republic a fourth power, with authority to preside over the infancy and hearts of men, public spirit, good habits, and republican morality. Let us constitute this Areopagus to watch over the education of youth and national instruction, to purify whatever may be corrupt in the republic—to impeach ingratitude, egotism, lukewarmness in the country's cause, sloth, and idleness, and to pass judgment on the first germs of corruption and pernicious example.

We should correct manners with moral pain, the same as the law punishes crimes with corporal, not only what may offend, but what may ridicule; not

only what may assault, but what may weaken; and not only what may violate the constitution, but whatever may infringe on public decency.

The jurisdiction of this really sacred tribunal ought to be effective in everything regarding education and instruction, and only deliberative as to pains and punishments; and thus its annals and records, in which will be inscribed its acts and deliberations, and the moral principles and actions of citizens, will be the registers of virtue and vice: registers which the people will consult in their elections, the magistrates in their determinations, and the judges in their decisions. Such an institution, however chimerical it may appear, is infinitely easier to realize, than others of less utility to mankind established by some ancient and modern legislators.

Legislators! by the project of the constitution, which I respectfully submit to your consideration, you will discover the feeling by which it was dictated.

In proposing the division of our citizens into active and passive, I have endeavored to excite national prosperity by industry's two great springs, labor and knowledge. Stimulated by those two powerful causes, the greatest difficulties may be overcome, and men made respectable and happy.

In imposing equitable and prudent restrictions on the primary and electoral assemblies, the first barrier is opposed to popular licentiousness, and thereby those injurious and tumultuous meetings avoided, which at all times have given rise to prejudicial consequences in the election, and which have of course been entailed on the magistrates and the government, as the primordial act is generative of either the liberty or slavery of a people.

By increasing in the balance of power the weight of the congress, by the number of legislators and the nature of the senate, a fixed basis is bestowed on this primary body of the nation, and it is invested with great importance for the exercise of its sovereign functions.

In separating distinctly the executive from the legislative power, it is not intended to sow division betwixt those supreme authorities, but to unite them with those bonds of harmony which proceed from independence.

In investing the executive with a power and authority much exceeding what it hitherto possessed, it is by no means intended to enable a despot to tyrannize over the republic, but to prevent deliberative despotism becoming the immediate cause of a round of despotic changes, in which anarchy would be alternately replaced by oligarchy and monarchy.

In soliciting the independence of judges, the establishment of juries, and a new code, the security of civil liberty is requested, the most estimable, the most equitable, the most necessary, and, in one word, the only liberty, as, without it, all others are a nullity. An amendment is asked of the lamentable abuses in our judicature, and which derive their origin from the filthy sink of Spanish legislation, collected in various ages, and from various sources, equally from the productions of folly and of talent, equally the fruit of good sense and of extravagance, and equally the memorial of genius and of caprice. That judicial encyclopedia, that monster with ten thousand heads, which has hitherto been a rod of punishment to Spanish nations, is the fiercest calamity the anger of Heaven ever permitted that unfortunate empire to be afflicted with.

Meditating on the most efficient mode of regenerating the character and habits which tyranny and war have given us, I have dared to suggest a moral power, drawn from the remote ages of antiquity, and those obsolete laws, which for some time maintained public virtue amongst the Greeks and Romans; and

although it may be considered a mere whim of fancy, it is possible, and I flatter myself, that you will not altogether overlook an idea, which, when malloated by experience and knowledge, may prove of the greatest efficacy.

Terrified at the disunion which has hitherto existed, and must exist amongst us, from the subtle spirit characterizing the federative system, I have been induced to solicit you to adopt the concentration and union of all the states of Venezuela into one republic, one and indivisible. A measure, in my opinion, urgent, vital, and saving, and of such a nature that, without it, the fruit of our regeneration would be destruction.

It is my duty, legislators, to present to you a just and faithful picture of my political, civil, and military administration: but to do so would tire your valuable attention too much, and rob you at this moment of time equally precious and pressing; and the secretaries of state will therefore give an account to the congress of their various departments, and exhibit at the same time those documents and records necessary to illustrate everything, and to make you thoroughly acquainted with the real and actual state of the republic.

I will not notice the most momentous acts of my command, although they concern most of my countrymen, and will call your attention only to the last memorable revolution. Horrid, atrocious, and impious slavery covered with her sable mantle the land of Venezuela, and our atmosphere lowered with the dark, gloomy clouds of the tempest, threatening a fiery deluge. I implored the protection of the God of nature, and at his almighty word the storm was dispelled. The day-star of liberty rose, slavery broke her chains, and Venezuela was surrounded with new and with grateful sons, who turned the instruments of her thrall and bondage into arms of freedom. Yes! those who were formerly slaves are now free, those who were formerly the enemies of our country are now its defenders.

I leave to your sovereign authority the reform or repeal of all my ordonnances, statutes, and decrees; but I implore you to confirm the complete emancipation of the slaves, as I would beg my life, or the salvation of the republic.

To exhibit the military history of Venezuela would be to bring to our recollection the history of republican heroism amongst the ancients; it would show that Venezuela had made as brilliant sacrifices on the sacred altar of liberty. The noble hearts of our generous warriors have been filled with those sublime and honorable feelings which have ever been attributed to the benefactors of the human race. Not fighting for power or fortune, nor even glory, but for liberty alone; the title of Liberator of the republic has been their highest recompense; having, in forming an association of those gallant heroes, instituted the Order of Liberators of Venezuela. Legislators! to you it belongs to confer honors and decorations, and it is your duty to exercise that act of national gratitude.

Men who have given up all the benefits and advantages they formerly enjoyed, as a proof of their virtue and disinterestedness—men who have undergone everything horrible in a most inhuman war, suffering the most painful privations and the cruellest anguish—men so deserving of their country merit the attention of government; and I have therefore given directions to recompense them out of the national property.

If I have acquired any portion of merit in the eyes of my countrymen, I entreat you, representatives, to vouchsafe my petition, as the reward of my feeble services; and let the congress order a distribution of the national property, con-

formable to the ordonnance I passed in the name of the republic, in favor of the military sons of Venezuela.

After our having, in a succession of victories, destroyed the Spanish armies, the court of Madrid, in despair, vainly endeavored to take by surprise the feelings of those magnanimous sovereigns who had just extirpated usurpation and tyranny in Europe, and who ought to protect the legitimacy and justice of the cause of America. Spain, unable to reduce us to submission by dint of arms, had recourse to her insidious policy, and tried every perfidious art. Ferdinand humbled himself so far as to confess that, without the assistance of foreign aid, he could not force us back under his ignominious yoke; a yoke which no mortal power can oblige us to submit to. Venezuela, convinced that she is in possession of sufficient strength to repel her oppressors, has declared through the organ of government her fixed and final determination to fight to annihilation in defence of her political life, not only against Spain, but even against the universe, should the universe be so degraded as to assume the party of a destructive government, whose only objects are an exterminating sword, and the shrieks of the inquisition—a government that desires not fertile regions, but deserts—not cities, but ruins—not subjects, but sepulchres. The declaration of the republic of Venezuela is the most glorious, the most heroic, and the most dignified act of a free people; and it is with peculiar satisfaction I have the honor of laying it before congress, sanctioned as it is by the unanimous approbation of the free people of the land.

Since the second epoch of the republic, our armies wanted the necessaries of war; they were constantly void of arms and ammunition, and were at all times badly equipped; but at present the brave defenders of independence are not only armed with justice, but with power, and our troops may rank with the choicest in Europe, now that they possess equal means of destruction.

For these important advantages we are indebted to the unbounded liberality of some generous foreigners, who, hearing the groans of suffering humanity, and seeing the cause of freedom, reason, and justice, ready to sink, could not remain quiet, but flew to our succor with their munificent aid and protection, and furnished the republic with everything needful to cause their philanthropical principles to triumph. Those friends of mankind are the guardian geniuses of America, and to them we owe a debt of eternal gratitude, as well as a religious fulfillment of the several obligations contracted with them. The national debt, legislators, is the deposit of the good faith, the honor, and the gratitude of Venezuela: respect it as the holy ark which incloses not only the rights of our benefactors, but the glory of our fidelity. Let us perish rather than fail, in any the smallest point, in the completion of those engagements, which have been the salvation of our country, and of the lives of her sons.

The union of New Granada and Venezuela in one great state has uniformly been the ardent wish of the people and governments of these republics. The fortune of war has effected this junction so much desired by every American, and in fact we are incorporated. These sister-nations have intrusted to you their interests, rights, and destinies. In contemplating the union of this immense district, my mind rises with delight to the stupendous height necessary for viewing properly so wonderful a picture.

Flying from present and approaching times, my imagination plunges into future ages, in which I observe, with admiration and amazement, the prosperity, the splendor, and the animation, which this vast region will have acquired. My

Ideas are wafted on, and I see my beloved native land in the centre of the universe, expanding herself on her extensive coasts between those oceans which nature had separated, and which our country will have united with large and capacious canals. I see her the bond, the centre, and the emporium of the human race; I see her transmitting to earth's remotest bounds those treasures contained in her mountains of gold and silver; I see her distributing, by her salu- tiferous plants, health and life to the afflicted of the old world; I see her im- parting to the sages of other regions her inestimable secrets, ignorant until then how much her height of knowledge transcends her excessive wealth! Yes! I see her, seated on the throne of freedom, wielding the sceptre of justice, and crowned with glory, show the old world the majesty of the new.

Legislators! Condescend to receive with indulgence the declaration of my political creed; the highest wishes of my heart and earnest petition, which, in the name of the people, I have dared to address to you.

Vouchsafe to grant to Venezuela a government purely popular, purely just, and purely moral, which will enchain oppression, anarchy, and crime; a gov- ernment which will cause innocency, philanthropy, and peace to reign; a gov- ernment which, under the dominion of inexorable laws, will cause equality and liberty to triumph.

Gentlemen! Commence your duties: I have finished mine.

The congress of the republic of Venezuela is installed. In it from this moment is centered the national sovereignty. We all owe to it obedience and fidelity. My sword, and those of my illustrious fellows-in-arms, will maintain its august authority.

God save the Congress!

The genius of eloquence had found its accent. Bolivar electrified his listeners, and he still even electrifies us, after so many years of struggle, after so many proofs of patriotic and manly eloquence. That flaming word of enthusiasm; solemn in vigor and virtue; full of grace, sweetness, and grandeur, was unknown in America; and the Colombians could say with the sincere admirers of the Redeemer:

Nunquam sic locutus est homo  
Sicut hic homo.

No one has ever spoken like this man!! I admire, above all, that instinctive ability of saying what was convenient to say, and make understood, that which it was licit to say. I admire that majesty, that elevated and calm reason which rules without effort upon the passions; that vigor finally, a quality proper of an honest soul, which communicates the nerve of conscience to the weakest forms, or the most vulgar!

The oration of the Liberator at Angostura is a masterpiece of feeling, reason, and patriotism.

In the same act, the Liberator presented to the Congress a project of consti- tution; and, the cry of *Viva el Congreso de Venezuela!* many times repeated, was followed by a salute of artillery.

The enthusiasm increased even to delirium, when, after having cheered for the Congress, the Liberator, grasping his sword, said with an extraordinary energy, "My sword and that of my renowned companions in arms are always ready to sustain your august authority."

Silence being re-established, the Supreme Chief invited the Congress to pro-

ceed to the election of a President *pro tem.*, to surrender him the command. The Deputy, Francisco A. Zea, being elected by voice, Bolivar took his oath on the Holy Evangelist, and following, all the members one by one. The taking of the oath having concluded, he placed the President on the seat which he himself occupied under the canopy, and addressing the military body, he said: "Generals, chiefs, and officers, my companions in arms, we are no more than simple citizens, till the Sovereign Congress please to employ us in the class and rank which it may think proper. Relying on your submission, I am going to give in my name and yours, the most evident proofs of our obedience, by surrendering to it the command with which I was charged." On saying this, he approached the President of the Congress, and presenting him his General's baton, he continued: "I return to the Republic the baton of general which she conferred on me. To serve her, in whatever class or rank to which the Congress destines me, is for me honorable; in it I will give the example of subordination and kind obedience, which should distinguish every soldier of the Republic!"

The President, addressing himself to the Congress, said: "It seems that the confirmation of all the ranks and employments conferred by His Excellency General SIMON BOLIVAR during his government, does not admit discussion; notwithstanding, I ask to declare it, the express approbation of the Congress! Is it the opinion of the Congress that the ranks and employments conferred by His Excellency, General SIMON BOLIVAR, being Supreme Chief of the Republic, be confirmed?" All the deputies standing up, answered in the affirmative; and, the President continued: "The Sovereign Congress of the Republic confirms in the person of His Excellency, General SIMON BOLIVAR, all the ranks and employments conferred by him, during his government;" and returning him the baton, he seated him on his right hand. After some moments of silence, the President spoke in these words:

"All nations and all empires were in their infancy feeble and little, like man himself, to whom they owe their origin. Those great cities which still inflame the imagination, Memphis, Palmyra, Thebes, Alexandria, Tyre, even the capital of Belus and Semiramis, and thou also, proud Rome, mistress of the universe, were nothing more at their commencement than diminutive and miserable hamlets. It was not in the Capitol, nor in the palace of Agrippa nor of Trajan, but it was in a lowly hut, under a thatched roof, that Romulus, rudely clad, traced the capital of the world, and laid the foundations of his mighty empire. Nothing shone conspicuous but his genius; there was nothing great but himself. It is not by the lustre nor by the magnificence of our installation, but by the immense means bestowed on us by nature, and by the immense plans which you will form for availing ourselves of them, that the future grandeur and power of our republic should be measured. The artless splendor of the noble act of patriotism of which General Bolivar has just given so illustrious and so memorable an example, stamps on this solemnity a character of antiquity, and is a presage of the lofty destinies of our country. Neither Rome nor Athens, nor even Sparta, in the purest days of heroism and public virtue, ever presented so sublime and so interesting a scene. The imagination rises in contemplating it, ages and distances disappear, and we think ourselves contemporary with the Aristides, the Phocions, the Camillus, and the Epaminondas of other days. The same philanthropy and the same liberal sentiments which united to the republican chiefs of high antiquity those beneficent emperors, Vespasian, Titus, Trajan, and Marcus Aurelius, who so worthily trod the same path, will to-day place amongst them

this modest general, and with them he will shine in history, and receive the benedictions of posterity. It is not now that the sublime trait of patriotic virtue, which we have witnessed and admire, can be duly appreciated; when our institutions will have had the sanction of time, when everything weak, and everything little in our days, passions, interests, and vanities, will have disappeared, and great deeds and great men alone remain, then the abdication of General Bolivar will receive all the justice it so richly merits, and his name will be mentioned with pride in Venezuela, and with veneration throughout the universe. Forgetting everything he has achieved for the establishment of our liberties—eight years of afflictions and dangers—the sacrifice of his fortune and repose—indescribable fatigues and hardships—exertions of which scarcely a similar example can be quoted from history—that constant proof against every reverse—that invincible firmness, in never despairing of the salvation of our country, even when he saw her subjugated, and he destitute and alone;—forgetting, I say, so many claims to immortality, to fix his attention only on what we have seen and admired. If he had renounced the supreme authority, when it presented nothing but troubles and dangers, when it brought on his head insults and calumnies, and when it appeared nothing more than an empty name, although it would not have been praiseworthy, it would at least have been prudent: but to do it at the very moment when the authority begins to enjoy some attractions in the eyes of ambition, and when everything forebodes a speedy and fortunate issue to our desires, and to do it of himself, and from the pure love of liberty, is a deed so heroic and so splendid, that I doubt whether it ever had an equal, and despair of its ever being imitated. But what! shall we allow General Bolivar to rise so much above his fellow-citizens as to oppress them with his glory, and not at least endeavor to compete with him in noble and patriotic sentiments, by not permitting him to quit the precincts of this august assembly without re-investing him with that same authority which he had relinquished in order to maintain liberty inviolable, but which was in fact the way to risk it?" "No, no," replied General Bolivar with energy, "never, never will I take upon me again an authority which from my heart I have renounced forever on principle and sentiment."

He continued to expose the perils ran by Liberty, one man preserving for a length of time the first authority; he manifested the necessity of being prepared against the views of some ambitious man, against those of himself, as he had no guarantee of thinking and working always in the same manner, and ended his discourse protesting in the firmest and most decisive tone that in no case, and for no consideration, should he ever return to accept an authority which he had so cordially and sincerely renounced to secure to his country the benefits of liberty.

On concluding his reply, he asked permission to retire, which was conceded, a deputation of ten members being appointed to accompany him.

Following, the Congress discussed the subject of appointing a Provisional President of the Republic; but many difficulties presenting themselves to the election, it was agreed that General Bolivar should exercise this power for twenty-four hours, or at the most for forty-eight hours, and a deputation was sent to him with this resolution. The General replied that only in consideration of the urgency did he accept the charge, under the express condition that it should be only for the appointed time.

On the following day (16th of February), the Congress maturely debated the

question, and recognized the necessity that the Liberator should continue as President of the Republic; electing a Vice-President who should, in the absence of the former, perform the duties of the government. The Señor Zea was elected Vice-President, and this election was participated to the Liberator.

He still insisted that he should separate himself from the command, because the duties of the campaign, he said, occupied completely his time, and besides, he was wanting in administrative talent. The Congress, notwithstanding, did not vary in its resolution.

The Liberator divided the Cabinet of State in three parts:—State and Treasury—Navy and War—Interior and Justice.

The foreign relations did not require a special ministry.

For the performance of these posts, he appointed respectively the Señores Manuel Palacio, General Pedro Briceño Mendez, and the Ldo. Diego Bautista Urbaneja.

The Congress declared that, in campaign, the Liberator should exercise extraordinary faculties, and invested him with them, authorizing him to delegate them in whole or part, as he should think proper.

The Liberator foresaw how much Venezuela would gain in the opinion of sensible men of all nations, principally of England, with the installment of the Congress; and he hastened to take advantage of the moment, sending as ministers to the cabinet of St. James, the Señores Fernando Penalver and General José María Vergara, whom, besides their diplomatic functions, were also charged to contract for arms, ammunition and clothing, and a loan of a million pounds sterling. Nothing was effected by the Envoys, in spite of their endeavors and good-will; because the ruinous loans contracted by Don Luis Lopez Mendez had destroyed our credit, concurring to its utter failure the circumstance of the refusal of the English cabinet to receive publicly and officially the ministers Vergara and Penalver. The latter returned to Guayana, and Vergara remained some time more in London, but without success.

The Congress meanwhile continued its sessions, occupied with important subjects: it arranged the uncertain destinies of the republic, constituted since 1811, but soon quenched by physical vicissitudes, and fought to death by hostile armies; it gave entity to principles, value to the resolutions, form to the interests. Even still more than all this, because it presented the spectacle of a self-government, peaceful and moderate in the midst of a great spirit of independence, which revealed conscience; a source of magnanimous inspirations, justice and sovereign power.

Colombia seemed:

*Qualis ubi Oceanus perfusus Lucifer unda.*

(ÆNEID, VIII.)

Similar to the sun, when, after a tempestuous night, it rises calmly over the horizon, returning joy to the fields and consolation to the laborer; thus, through a long night of tears and blood, of martyrdoms and of horror, Colombia appeared to the sight of the people, serene and peaceful, on the horizon of liberty, inspiring courage to the warriors and infinite joy to the patriots who longed for redemption.

There are no words sufficient to relate how much Morillo and his followers labored to neutralize the Congress, now scoffing at its resolutions; now redoubling threats and maledictions; now, finally, mocking at its purposes.

They then wrote more than ever, seeking interpreters, so that, in different idioms, the profanation of our sovereignty should be read. But in vain; because the Congress proceeded in its labors with success, and called the attention of the world by the founded hopes which it offered to the friends and defenders of liberty. The learned Colonel James Hamilton, writing to the Duke of Sussex, on the events of Venezuela, said: "The event most worthy of attention, is undoubtedly the installment of the National Congress in this city on the 15th of February last, with which motive General Bolivar gave a proof so brilliant in moderation and patriotism, as is not to be found in the annals of any country! . . . I have assisted on many occasions at the sessions of Congress, and the deliberations are carried on with much decorum and regularity, which may be attributed to the solidity and formality of the national character. Amongst its members there are several of eminent talents and some of great experience. . . Never has General Bolivar operated with more policy, nor given such a decisive blow to the Spanish government, as assembling the national representation. He has fixed his reputation forever, working as a GREAT MAN and as a VIRTUOUS CITIZEN, and he has excited and given such a consistency to the national character, that will soon secure to Venezuela her complete independence."

The knowing and penetrating Hamilton was not deceived!

Before proceeding any further, and only with the purpose of justifying the Liberator, dissipating the doubts formed by some traitors respecting the good faith with which he promised Petion the liberty of the slaves in Venezuela, I will make a brief digression.

My readers know the proclamation of Ocumare (6th of July, 1816) and the decree of the Council (page     ). The Liberator had proclaimed that there were in Venezuela only citizens and FREE MEN. This was his desire and his hope. In the midst of contingencies and catastrophes, he instituted the Council of State and the High Court, Supreme Tribunal of Justice in Angostura, "so that the rights of all should be protected; so that the properties, the innocence and the merits of the citizens should not be infringed upon by the arbitrariness of any military chief, even that of the Supreme Chief," (words of his discourse on the installment of the Council). When the Liberator returned to Angostura, after the disasters of Semen, the High Court was performing its functions; but, needing the decrees of the supreme chief, which were the law in the republic, the Liberator sent that tribunal a copy of what he still preserved, and he said:

"I inclose to Y. E. eleven copies of the principal decrees issued during the third period of the republic, so that they may be held present in the resolutions of the High Court of Justice, in conformity to the solicitation of Y. E. in his communication of the 14th inst. The universal liberty of the slaves was declared by a proclamation addressed to the province of Caracas, when I landed at Ocumare on the 6th of July, 1816. It annulled a decree issued at Carupano in the previous month, conceding personal liberty and of their families to those who should take up arms, and sustain with them the rights of Venezuela. The vicissitudes of war have caused the loss of this proclamation, which, amongst other things, it said in article 4th: "The unfortunate portion of our brethren, which has until now groaned under the yoke of slavery, is now free. Nature, justice, and policy exact the emancipation of slaves. In the future there will be in Venezuela only one class of men: all shall be citizens." This proclamation, which has been strictly fulfilled in all territory of the repub-

lic, since the day of its publication, has been still more strengthened by the laws in which repeatedly, it has been made known to the people taken under the protection of our arms. No one ignores in Venezuela that slavery is extinguished among us. God preserve Y. E. many years. **BOLIVAR.**"

Soon after the Liberator succeeded in assembling at Angostura the second Venezuelan Congress, and we just finish reading his thoughts respecting *the liberty of the slaves*; a solemn promise, voluntary and magnificent, which Bolivar made to Petion on the altar of friendship and gratitude.

And now, does the Liberator merit the charges made against him by the Haitians? Did Bolivar forget the fulfillment of his word? Was it for interest that he gave it to Petion, or was it for interest that he did not fulfill it afterwards? . . . When any one writes without the knowledge of facts, truth and good sense are always in peril; and I will say without fear of contradiction, that the acts of that time are obscured by smoke of campaigns, by the dust raised by friendly and hostile cavalry, by the blood which ran abundantly as if to drench the soil. . . It is necessary to investigate much and to hold in the hand the light of impartiality; above all, when Bolivar is to be accused, who in his long career of misfortune and adventure, never merited reproach.

The Liberator, after having issued all the measures which he believed necessary for the tranquil and convenient march of the government, with incessant activity he visited all the authorities and notable persons of Angostura, exhorting them in the most expressive terms to union, and at daybreak of the 27th of February he set out to join the army of Apure.

He was accompanied with leave from Congress, by the Secretary of War, Pedro Briceño Mendez.

Some days afterwards, Urdaneta, dispatched by the Liberator, set out to Margarita, where foreign troops, under the command of General English, had arrived, which, increased with others of the country, should make an expedition against Costa Firme, occupying La Guayra and Caracas, if it was possible, under the orders of the same Urdaneta.

The Liberator had the design of attacking the enemy on the plains of the Apure, and was seeking a strong diversion on the coasts of the Atlantic.

Let us abandon the Liberator, now that he ascends the Orinoco, to entertain ourselves, although cursorily, in the examination or investigation of the principal points of the project of constitution, which he submitted to the Congress.

The Liberator was a man accustomed to great and profound thoughts; this being the origin or course of his peculiar style, of his rapid, luminous language, remarkably significative. Several times, repassing with novelty and perfection the elements of the future peace and well-being of the people of America, he had launched his opinion against the federal form, which he confessed to be, *the most perfect and capable of proportioning human happiness in society*; but also, the most opposed to the interests of the newly-fledged states. Now that Colombia commenced to have security and merit respect; now, that engaged inconceivably in a gigantic struggle, the necessity of passing its frontiers and to proceed further on to liberate the people of Cusco and the children of Atahualpa was discerned at a distance; less did Bolivar believe a weak and complicated government acceptable, exposed to competencies and debates, which

delaying the effect of the best measures, allows for the same case, the evil to take the increment which is the death of justice, of convenience, or of the common weal. The Liberator urged greatly that the federal form should not be even thought of. "Such a social form," he said, "is a regularized anarchy, or better said, the law which implicitly prescribes the obligation of disunion and the ruin of the State without its members. I believe that it would be better for America to adopt the Koran than the government of the United States, *although it is the best in the world.*"

And this was his invariable opinion. "The natives of this continent," he had said before, "have manifested the attempt of attaining liberal and even perfect institutions; undoubtedly carried away by the instinct which all men have of aspiring to the greatest possible happiness, which is infallibly reached in civil societies when they are based on foundations of justice, liberty and equality. But, shall we be able to maintain in its true equilibrium the difficult charge of a republic? Can it be conceived that a people newly redeemed can launch themselves into the sphere of liberty, without that, like Icarus, their wings give way, and fall back into the abyss?" . . .

The Congress became convinced of the necessity of a rigorous, efficacious government; always vigilant to evade risks, active in removing and overcoming difficulties, firm in unity . . . he established the "central republic."

The country derived great advantage from the system of government which it adopted. Colombia had physical force; it had a focus of direction and of impulse for operations and for the employ of measures; and the conscience of her power and resources created moral force. The irrefragable proofs, the peremptory arguments of the excellence of the union and the strength of the system, we shall see further on when we behold liberated an immense territory; victorious the Colombian flag, and respected on the seas; Peru freed by our assistance; Colombia acknowledged and her institutions and laws proclaimed to the world.

Bolivar desired also something of the English constitution. (It is known he had the greatest respect for the political institutions of England); with the difference that, in place of a king, a president, charged with executive power, should be established of popular election, and for lifetime; he desired an hereditary legislative House of Representatives or Senate, which should place itself, during public tempests, between the popular waves and the bolts of the government; and he desired, finally, a legislative body, of free election, without any other restrictions than the House of Commons of England. "This constitution," he said, "participates of all the forms, and I wish that it did not participate of all the vices."

The Liberator knew thoroughly the state of the American people; a *negative* state, he called it, having no example in any other civilized association; he feared that those people who had lived in abstraction, and to say better, *absent from the Universe*, inasmuch as it related with the science of government and the administration of the State; that they had never managed their domestic affairs, and that suddenly, by unexpected events, they had become free, and represented on the scene of the world, should devour each other mutually, by inexperience or by the excess of the spirit of liberty. The federal system was not proper, amongst people and representatives, for, being too perfect, and requiring virtues and talents much superior to those which the country had; he resolutely refused a monarchy, because nature itself, in America repels it, and

all his attempt was limited to evade anarchy, seeking a means between the opposed extremes, which would always conduct to the same breakers—misfortune and dishonor. To found a free government without tumultuous excesses, and strong without the signs of despotism, he imagined popular representatives and a lifelong president, and between these extremes a neutral body, the hereditary Senate. "This shall be the base of all the system," he said; "it shall equally serve as a counterbalance for the government and the people; an intermediate power which will weaken the blows which these eternal rivals reciprocally aim at each other. In all struggles, the calmness of a third party is always the instrument of reconciliation; thus, the Senate of Venezuela will be the shield of this delicate edifice, and too susceptible of violent impressions; it will be the rainbow which shall calm the tempests, and shall maintain harmony between the members and the head of the political body."

The Congress, notwithstanding, did not adopt this idea, and less that of a lifelong president, whose constitutional form notwithstanding incloses many and precious advantages! The government is a tempestuous gulf. No ship crosses the seas with greater peril than the vessel of state, exposed to the raging tempests of ambition, to the breakers of intrigue and enemies, to the gales of the people . . . Skillful must the pilot be who conducts it to a harbor; but this skill is annulled and paralyzed, when he governs with the misfortune of a near termination, in which there is not time to display virtues nor valor, nor to overcome difficulties with firmness, nor to establish firmly and securely the empire of good doctrines, usually bound by the benevolence and love of the magistrates who found it. The authority which changes, perils in its own stability; not thus that which is preserved, which does not suffer indignities, and if some love it, it is because it rewards; if they fear it, because it chastises; distant from the deceits, with which flattery gains the will of those who aspire. All in nature says to the one who governs, that the hand which commands is made of clay, subject to human miseries; but if law adds to this observation the end; if each hour which passes is a spoliation of power, a disregard for credit and moral authority, at last scorns obedience, disrespects faith and religion, and forgetting all decorum, it enters into the dominion of successive changes to be soon lost in the absurd of military tyranny.

"The supreme authority thought the Liberator should be perpetual, because in the systems without hierarchy there is needed, more than in others, a fixed point around which girate the magistrates, citizens, and things. The President of the Republic must be like the Sun, who, firm in his centre, gives life to the Universe."

And this was his invariable opinion. Who can say that the convictions of the Liberator were erroneous? Who can reprove them? The Congress, obeying moral influences, the most invincible of all, the general spirit of the nation, put aside lifelong authority, and the hereditary Senate, which would have had a taste of monarchy; and left us popular elections applied to the first national functionary for a short space of time, which has been the main and immediate cause of terrible disturbances, which we shall never duly lament. BOLIVAR wished to satiate from the beginning military ambition, *eradicating the crime by liberality*; he wished to compose the hereditary Senate with the liberators and chief benefactors of Venezuela, and this not only out of gratitude and national honor, but for "public interest;" but his ideas were not under-

stood. Envy in some, ignorance in others, the deception of the imagination of all, left the project of constitution of the Liberator without legal authority! They awaited to touch with the hands the evils which he foresaw and wished to evade, to have their eyes opened by experience, teacher of the ignorant. As if the errors of those who had been before, did not serve as an advice to those who are! The great politicians call the past centuries hospitals, where science executes the autopsy of the republics which flourished, not to leave infirm and without remedy, the present ones.