

Sidelights on the Colombian Revolution



COLOMBIAN TROOPS IN FORT SAN FELIPE.



COLOMBIAN REGULARS DRILLING IN BARRACKS.

(Copyright, 1901, by C. C. Adams.)
DURING the official sojourn in Caracas of a former British minister there hung on his office walls two water colors—one showing a coffee plantation in the morning, the happy faces of the black laborers revealing peace and contentment; the other depicting the same field in the afternoon, the sky darkened with the smoke of burning buildings and the bodies of the field hands scattered among the coffee shrubs. Another South American revolution had supplanted the orderly quiet of the morning with fire and tragedy before sundown. The world has come to regard most of these ebullitions with contempt or indifference. More bluster than bloodshed marks the course of many of them. Merely personal ambition or private malice is the mainspring of much of this belligerence. In these Latin-American republics, where active volcanoes make rapid changes in the landscape, we have come to regard upheavals of government as too frequent for notice. On occasions, however, these conflicts have been precipitated by wrongs that needed righting, by misgovernment too atrocious to be borne. The present war in Colombia is one of these occasions.

The causes of this civil war can be only briefly referred to here. Colombia has two intensely antagonistic political parties. The clerical, or "conservative," party advocates a centralized government wielding really despotic power which it shares with the church; in other words, a government copied after the old Spanish model. The liberal party, on the other hand, favors a progressive, democratic form of government modeled after that of the United States. Though these parties numerically are nearly equal, the clericals have held the supreme power since 1886, when President Nunez subverted the government and overthrew the liberal constitution by a coup d'etat as drastic as that of Napoleon III in France.

From that day till he was poisoned by enemies in his own party in 1894, Nunez lacked nothing but the title of an absolute sovereign. The federal government was abolished, the right of suffrage was taken from nine-tenths of the people and nine autonomous states became merely so many districts governed from Bogota, the liberty of the press and all private teaching were suppressed and education was centered in the hands of the Jesuits. It is impossible here to detail the miseries that have befallen Colombia under the despotic rule of Nunez and his successors. It will suffice to say that Colombia, having repudiated its debts, has no public credit and her exports have been so heavily taxed that the country cannot vie with its neighbors in foreign commerce; with a population a

third larger than that of Venezuela, the imports are much smaller, and the opponents of the government have been treated as public enemies.

This, in brief, was the situation that caused the armed revolt of the liberal party in October, 1899. The northern one-fourth of Colombia has been the scene of the more or less desultory fighting that has claimed some public attention. It would not, however, have excited the present interest if the conflict had not recently threatened to involve two or more other republics and to compel the arbitration or the intervention of the United States, either to protect the commercial interests of the world, on the isthmus of Panama, or to prevent the whole of northern South America and perhaps a part of Central America from engaging in a ruinous struggle. Imperial ambitions of Castro, Venezuela's president, began to be discussed and the possibility of a United States of South America has interested not only our own country, but Europe as well.

It is a curious fact worth mentioning that the isthmus of Panama, since the beginning of the Nunez regime, has been worth nothing to Colombia except for purposes of taxation. Its railroad, owned by foreigners, is merely a means of transport for the commerce (duty free) of other nations. The government having neglected to connect the isthmus by transportation routes with the other parts of the country, Colon and Panama are nothing but way stations for the foreign traffic across the isthmus.

The present insurrection, which promises to involve several governments, began among the hills of Santander, the inland, eastern department, which raises a large part of the superior coffee of Colombia. As Santander has no convenient outlet for its coffee through the ports of its own country, it sends the product by mule trains to Maracaibo, Venezuela, for shipment to Europe. Thus it happens that the people of Santander and western Venezuela are particularly well acquainted. This fact probably had something to do with the little plot hatched by the clerical party on both sides of the border in July for the invasion of Venezuela, which so greatly excited President Castro.

But the insurrection has now spread far beyond the limits of Santander. It has extended over the northern plains, where cattle-raising is the chief industry. Parts of the insurgent army command the lower Magdalena and have closed the river route to Bogota; other forces hold points along the coast, but have not yet succeeded in capturing the little port of Riohacha. They have overrun the Department of Bolivar, most of which is in their hands, excepting the seaports of Cartagena and Sabanilla

and the river port of Barranquilla. They have destroyed the railroad from Cartagena to the Magdalena, cutting off that port from the interior. They have reached the Pacific coast in the Department of Cauca, have invaded the isthmus and many of the merchants there are said to have given their allegiance to the revolution. The largest force in any one district is supposed to be with General Uribe-Uribe, who is said to command 6,000 men in Santander. No data yet received give any clear idea as to the number of the revolutionists. The



GOVERNOR OF BOLIVAR, COLOMBIA.

fact that they are scattered in small detachments over a vast territory and that the government troops, numbering about 40,000, are also widely dispersed probably accounts for the desultory nature of the fighting. The fragmentary information received, coming mostly from government sources, shows at least that no engagements between large forces have occurred.

The struggle is thus confined to the north. Bogota, the capital, high on the mountain plateau in the south, seems to be safely out of reach. The insurgents could not muster sufficient river boats to transport an army and supplies up the Magdalena and to attempt to carry the war south along the mountain mule paths would be an effort to emulate Hannibal's crossing of the

Alps. On the whole the insurgents, fairly well equipped with munitions, have never been more confident of final success than they are today. The eyes of the world will be upon them if they have an opportunity to try the experiment.

Since July last the attitude of the neighboring republics and particularly of Venezuela has attracted far more attention than the internal troubles of Colombia. The fact that the Venezuelans and the Ecuadorians are watching the conflict with intense interest may easily be explained. Their territories are contiguous and politically the three nations are divided on exactly the same lines. Each has a liberal and a clerical party, whose ideals are identical. The liberals and the clericals of Venezuela, after appealing to arms most vigorously for a number of years, have recently been taking a breathing spell with the liberals in power under the presidency of General Castro. The present government of Venezuela naturally sympathizes with the insurrectionary movement across the border and apparently takes no pains to conceal the fact.

The church party in Ecuador is so firmly entrenched that it is impossible to foresee a time when it will cease to control the state, but Ecuador has had boundary and other disputes with Colombia and the relations between the two governments have not been wholly amicable.

There are excitement and strong feeling over the situation in Colombia and the question has arisen whether these neighboring

states will undertake by overt action hostile to the Colombian government to help settle the troubles in that country. There are other complications of less importance. The sympathies of Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Honduras are said to be wholly with the revolutionists, who have received assistance in one way or another from the people of these Central American states. The volunteers and supplies they may smuggle into Colombia do not from the present outlook, however, seem likely to involve their governments in embarrassment.

Sympathizers with the insurrection having undoubtedly been sending some supplies to the revolutionary forces from Ecuador, the president of Ecuador was accused by General Cordova, governor of Cauca, and others with sending aid to the enemy, but the government of Colombia itself has scouted this idea and so has the Colombian minister at Washington. Whatever the feeble liberal party of Ecuador might be disposed to do, there is no reason to believe that the clerical government of that country will for a moment countenance an attack from their republic upon the clerical government of Colombia.

Neither is there any reason to infer from the present condition of affairs that the government of Venezuela will overtly interfere in behalf of the insurrection. If some of the reports with regard to the recent doings of President Castro are true his actions as the head of a neutral state have been neither discreet nor dignified.

CYRUS C. ADAMS.

Thanksgiving Day at Grandpa's on the Farm

While the Autumn winds are calling,
 Calling, calling, sad and drear;
 From the trees the leaves are falling,
 Falling, falling, brown and sear;
 Other days I can recall—
 Many a bright and happy Fall—
 But as Memory brings them back again with soft and hallowed
 charm,
 There's perhaps no thought so dear
 At this season of the year,
 As the thought of old Thanksgiving days at Grandpa's on the
 farm.

Even tho' it might be snowing,
 Snowing, snowing, fast and long,
 And November winds be blowing,
 Blowing, blowing—weirdsome song—
 Safe, at Grandpa's—from the storm,
 All was pleasant, bright and warm.
 O, how much there was for dinner; more to eat when we were
 through!
 And so good—such chicken pies!
 Lips are moist, as well as eyes,
 As I think of old Thanksgiving days with Grandpa and Aunt Lou.

And the songs we then were singing,
 Singing, singing, long ago,
 Through the glad, sad past come ringing,
 Ringing, ringing, sweet and low;
 These, with legends that were told
 On Thanksgiving days of old,
 As we gathered, bound together by love's sweet and magic
 charm—
 These the heart shall still hold dear,
 Tho' the loved ones be not near,
 Who so much enjoyed Thanksgiving day at Grandpa's on the
 farm.

Hillsdale, Mich., 1901.

E. L. TRUE.



IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE OF THE PRESIDENT OF COLOMBIA.