

more moment to absorb their attention.

MIRANDA'S SEASON OF GRIEF.

Napoleon I. had placed his foot upon the rest of Europe and was grasping at the crown of Spain. England selecting the weaker of her two enemies, attempted to save the scepter of Charles IV. and sent gold and troops into the peninsula. Miranda, disheartened and bewildered, penniless and friendless, lived a lonesome life in the coffee houses and low resorts in London. The lover of an empress was glad of any breakfast he could get. In the meantime Simon Bolivar, a young man of 24 years, whose family had been intimate with that of Miranda in Caracas, although he was little more than half the latter's age, having completed his education, was traveling through Europe. He met the distressed patriot in London, and, sympathizing with his opinions and plans, furnished him funds from his own well-filled purse, and the two together attempted to excite an interest in the affairs of their country among the British statesmen and soldiers.

INDEPENDENCE AT LAST.

In the meantime the cause of liberty had been gaining ground in Venezuela, and nearly all the citizens of prominence belonged to republican clubs. When Napoleon made his brother Joseph king of Spain they refused their allegiance, and although they had suffered terribly under the despotism of Charles V., declared in favor of the dynasty. On April 19, 1810, the French governor of the colony was compelled to abdicate. It was a national feast day, and all the citizens were in the streets. As the governor returned to his palace, the old structure I have described, he was met at the entrance by a mob that filled the house, conducted to the council chamber, and then given his choice between abdication and death. He signed the renunciation of power that had been prepared for him and sought refuge on a French man-of-war then lying in the harbor at La Guayra. A "junta" or committee of citizens was selected to administer the government and continued to exercise authority until Bolivar arrived from England with Miranda, when the latter was proclaimed general-in-chief of the armies of Venezuela and provisional president of the republic. In a few short months he had emerged from the most distressing situation of his life to enjoy the summit of his ambition, as it is always darkest just before dawn. But a little more than a year later Miranda was a prisoner in the hands of the Spanish, betrayed by those who had been his warmest friends.

SIMON BOLIVAR AS A COLONEL.

The king of Spain sent over an army and a fleet under the command of General Montiverde to bring the rebels to terms. Miranda was at the head of the revolutionary army, and Bolivar, then only 26 years old, ranking as a colonel, was in command of the most important

fortress of the country in the harbor of Puerto Cabello, with a slender garrison and 1,200 prisoners, including most of the former officials of the colonial government and the officers of the colonial troops. Unfortunately for him and for his country a mutiny occurred, the prisoners were released, and the fortress, with nearly all the munitions of war upon which the patriots were depending, fell into the hands of the Spaniards. Bolivar escaped, however, and fled to the estates of his family at San Matteo.

The Spaniards thus reinforced and amply supplied with arms and ammunition, met Miranda in battle on the plain beyond Victoria and compelled him to sign a treaty of capitulation in which the sovereignty of Spain was recognized.

CARACAS DESTROYED BY EARTHQUAKE.

Then came the terrible earthquake which destroyed the city of Caracas and 12,000 lives. A whole regiment of the patriotic army was buried beneath the ruins of their barracks, and many of the men who had been foremost in the republican movement were also slain. The priests, who from the beginning had opposed the revolution and adhered to the Spanish government, pronounced the calamity a visitation of God and the doom of the city the just judgment of heaven upon the unpardonable crime of rebellion against the king, the Lord's anointed.

These two great disasters demoralized the patriots completely, and a bitter controversy arose between Bolivar and Miranda. The latter held his young aid responsible not only for the loss of the fortress at Puerto Cabello, but also, for the defeat at Victoria, as a natural consequence, while Bolivar accused his commander of treason to the republic in signing articles of surrender which recognized the sovereignty of the Spanish king. The feud ended by Bolivar's denouncing Miranda to the Spanish commander. On the 31st of July, 1812, Miranda was arrested at La Guayra.

When Bolivar liberated Peru from the yoke of the Spaniards a banner hung in the cathedral at Lima, over the rusty bones of Pizarro, and its captors divided it in two parts. One half was given to the liberator, who brought it to Caracas, and the other to Gen. Sucre, one of the noblest heroes of the revolution, who presented it to the national museum at his native city of Bogota, where it still remains.

There are other interesting mementoes here also—a rude painting of the humble house in which Bolivar died, and an original portrait of him made in Paris when he was very young. There is also the ever-present full length picture of Guzman-Blanco in a resplendent uniform, and several handsomely engrossed and illuminated memorials which have from time to time been presented to him by the citizens of Venezuela, in which his glories and his virtues are set forth in high-sounding verbs and lurid adjectives.

THE OFFICIAL BRIDAL CHAMBER.

On the large table in the center of the room is the official marriage register of the city, for here all the civil ceremonies are performed. For many years the civil rite of matrimony has alone been recognized as legal by the government of Venezuela, although most of the people go afterward to the church and have the marriage sanctified by the priest. The governor of the district, the judges of the courts, the justices of the peace, and some other magistrates are authorized to perform the ceremony, but all the weddings must take place in this room, and the contract must be signed here in the presence of the parents of the couple or other competent witnesses. Before the ceremony is performed a license must be obtained from the registrar of the city, who occupies an adjoining room, and a notice to that effect must be posted for ten days in a public place. Just outside the entrance to the building, therefore, is a bulletin board upon which the matrimonial intentions of the people of the Caracas are made known, and those who pass along the street invariably stop to inspect it in order to see who of their friends are expecting to be "hitched."

When the ten days are up the bridal party come here clad in bright array, accompanied by their friends, take the vows, and sign the contract. Then they go to the church. The favorite time for weddings is at 9 o'clock in the morning or in the early evening about dusk, and there is usually a crowd of curious people about the door waiting to see the ceremony, which does not differ materially from that in vogue in the United States and is exactly like that used by the civil magistrates of France. The governor or the judge, or whoever happens to be on hand to do the business, first reads the law to the candidates for matrimony. Then he reads the license which has been previously issued. This sets forth the age, nativity, and occupation of the parties, with some other statistical information, and declares that there is no legal impediment in the way of the union. To the facts stated both the bride and the groom have to make oath, as well as the parents, if they happen to have any, and the witnesses selected by them. After this formula has been finished the judge takes the bride aside and asks if she is entering into this business of her own free will and accord, and if any compulsion has been exercised to influence her. If she says "no" he asks the same question of the groom, thus giving him a chance to crawl out if he desires. Then the couple are commanded to stand up and clasp their right hands. Jose Francisco is made to repeat after the judge a formula in which he declares that he takes Maria Concepcion to be his beloved wife, to have and to hold, etc., and Maria Concepcion in a similar manner accepts Jose Francisco as her beloved husband to an equal extent and under the same conditions, until death do them part.