

# THE GLEANER:

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"Nec arancorum sane texus ideo melior, quia ex se fila gignunt nec noster vilior quia ex alienis libamus ut apes." No. 9

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## THE GLEANER.

FROM THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

### DON PEDRO, AND THE BRAZILLIAN REVOLUTION.

THE revolutionary earthquake which, in July last, hurled the Bourbon from his throne, and which still continues to agitate the political substratum of the European world, has vibrated with powerful effect across the Atlantic. Like the cholera at present raging in the natural world, spreading its devastating ravages with equal fury amid the snows of Russia, as on the burning plains of Hindostan, the headlong course of the revolutionary scourge is marked by indiscriminating features; uprooting in its fearful progress, both liberal and despotic—the upholder of the divine right of kings and the defender of popular institutions.

The prediction so confidently set forth at the outbreak of the French revolution, by Lafayette, was no idle prophecy—'Revolutionary principles appear destined to make *le tour du monde*.' Within the narrow circle of a year, Cherbourg has beheld two fugitive monarchs seeking refuge in its port,—both the victims of revolution, but whose political careers and principles are distinguished by features certainly as opposite as the hemispheres in which they reigned.

When Don Pedro d'Alcantara, in the year 1822, raised the standard of Brazilian independence, he presented to the world the novel spectacle of a prince, cradled in the lap of despotism, and whose mind was strongly imbued with ultra notions of kingly prerogative casting at once aside the prejudices of birth and education, coming boldly forward as the champion of liberalism, and erecting his new made throne on the basis of revolutionary principles. As the star of independence rose majestically on the political horizon of Brazil, there arose at the same time, a small cloud, which announced a future tempest. The recollection of the principles in which he had been educated, has proved as fatal to the Emperor as the misguided policy of his government; for, from the very commencement of his reign, it inspired his subjects with well founded suspicions of the sincerity of his professions. On the day of his coronation when, to the superficial observer, all appeared *colour de rose*, a trifling incident betrayed the existence of this feeling. On the termination of the ceremony, Don Pedro—his brows encircled by the imperial diadem—harangued from the window of the palace, the crowd assembled in the square beneath. After a speech of considerable length—of course admirably calculated to flatter the vanity, and gratify the hyperbolical taste of the Brazilian people—he concluded by swearing to defend the independence of Brazil, and the constitution which the Cortes should frame for it. In repeating these words with great emphasis of tone, the Emperor carried his hand to the hilt of his sword. The abruptness of the action loosened the crown from his brows, which would have fallen but for the hand of the emperor, which restored it to its place. This little incident was by many regarded as a favourable omen of the short duration and instability of his authority.

The position of Don Pedro was from the first, one of peculiar difficulty. The only monarch in a region encompassed on all sides by new founded republics, and aware that a similar spirit was gradually spreading among his own subjects, with admirable skill and sagacity he sought, on every occasion, rather to lead than oppose the expression of popular feeling; and, by thus forestalling the tide of events, he effectually, for a time baffled the machinations of the republican party. The first acts of his reign were distinguished by wonderful activity and energy of character. The royalists were,

after a short struggle, driven from the country, and the last link of the chain, which for three centuries had bound America to Europe, were severed. Three months after his elevation to the throne, he convoked the legislative assembly. On this occasion, he expressed his confident hope that the constitution which that legislative body would frame for the country, would be equally remote from every extreme of despotism, whether monarchical, aristocratic, or democratic—a constitution, in fact, which would render Brazil at once the 'admiration and terror of the world.' How far these legislators realized the hopes of the emperor and the nation, and how nearly this wild, democratic spirit precipitated the country into a civil war, from which it was only saved by the admirable presence of mind, and stern decision of Don Pedro, are events with which the English public are perfectly familiar—and events, too, which sufficiently demonstrate that the throne of the emperor was undermined from the first moment of its erection.

The promulgation of a new constitution, more adapted to the infant political education of the Brazilian people—the suppression of the revolutionary spirit in the northern provinces of the empire—and, above all, the recognition of the independence of Brazil by Great-Britain and Portugal, appear to have consolidated the authority of the Emperor, and to have consummated the profound policy which aimed at the preservation of the immense empire of Brazil to the house of Braganza. But even at this period, when the state of Don Pedro was at its zenith, the great tide of revolution was rolling on, and gaining ground with every breaker.

We will now endeavour to develop the causes which produced the late events at Rio de Janeiro; but previously it will be necessary to investigate the causes which led to the separation of Brazil from the mother country.

There is no problem in politics, it has been profoundly remarked, more difficult of solution, than that of colonies. To watch over their infancy; to mark the hour of their maturity; to know when to yield to well-founded remonstrance, and when to exact implicit obedience, requires the exercise of consummate sagacity. Much more skill and political discernment, we venture to pronounce, is required of those daring spirits who wield the destinies of Colonies, to mark the hour when by education, the mind of the country is prepared—when the faculties of the *gifted few* are prepared to lead, and of the intelligent mass to follow—for then alone can a well conducted revolution ensue. Did this calm, decided, energetic operation of the reason of the people—diffusely in the common sense of the mass, eminently in the strong conviction of the gifted minds—did this chaste operation of intellect, we ask, exist in Brazil when she reared the standard of independence? We confidently answer the question with a decided negative. Not only was the mind of the country unprepared for the revolution, but there really existed no grounds for the measure. Brazil had ceased to be a colony; and under the mild despotism of the house of Braganza, the country was slowly but steadily advancing in the march of civilization. Up to that period, the political surface of these beautiful regions was still and unruddled as a mountain lake—singularly contrasting with the convulsed state of Spanish America. The constitutional system proclaimed in Portugal in 1820 was adopted a few months afterwards in Brazil—a political event which has brought on both countries all the evils attributed to the fabulous box of Pandora. The real cause of the revolution was a feeling of deadly hatred to every thing European—a feeling produced solely by intrigue, and which was disseminated with inconceivable rapidity from the Amazon to the Rio de la Plata. Unfortunately for the peace and prosperity

of the country, there existed but too many elements admirably fitted to the views of the revolutionary party. The European Portuguese were by far the most intelligent portion of the population, who, by their steady industry and superior activity, were in possession almost exclusively of the whole commerce of the country. The revolutionary party appealed rather to the wounded vanity of the Brazilians than to their sense of wrong; and they touched a chord which vibrated with powerful effect. The long smothered flame suddenly burst forth, and led to acts of atrocity against the defenceless European population at which humanity shudders, and which will ever be a stain on the annals of the country.

\* The war with Buenos Ayres—one of ambition and territorial aggrandizement, undertaken without any just grounds—proved disgraceful to the arms of the empire, ruined its trade, exhausted its finances, and fostered a deep-rooted spirit of discontent throughout every one of its provinces. But it was the intervention in the affairs of Portugal which was the most fatal stroke of policy, and which effectually undermined the popularity of the emperor.

The real cause is of deeper growth, and must be sought for in the character of his people, of whose habits in venality and corruption no adequate idea can be formed but by those who have long resided in the country, and have had access to the best sources of information. The revolution had wrought rather a change of men than of measures: Under the new order of things, every species of corruption continued to pollute both the course of public and private life. Another '*Arle de furtar*' might be written to illustrate the state of manners in Brazil, and of the degenerate spirit which sacrificed every thing to the base consideration of personal interest.

To cleanse out this Augean stable of corruption, was the undeviating study of Don Pedro; but less fortunate than his fabulous prototype, the attempt cost him his crown. His ministry, the object of so much popular clamour, ably seconded the views of the emperor. The abolition of the slave trade—a source of immense profit to those engaged in it, though acknowledged to be detrimental to the best interests of the country—produced general dissatisfaction; but when the reforming spirit of the ministry began to attack the flagrant abuses that pervaded every branch of the public administration, then it was that the revolutionary torrent burst forth. The emperor was abandoned to a man; for even his own adherents, fearful of the public expose in active preparation, threw themselves into the arms of the republican party. A certain marquis, well known in the diplomatic circles of London, is reported to have powerfully influenced the late events by his largesses to the troops, and to have been, in the back-ground, the main-spring of the revolution. \*

Don Pedro had been the victim of untoward circumstances, the operation of which was uncontrollable. So far from committing any overt act against the liberties of his subjects, he granted them a measure of freedom for which they were totally unfitted; while his frank and generous character, and his unceasing exertions for the welfare of his empire, deserved him a better fate than that he has experienced from Brazil, for the crown of which he abdicated that of his own hereditary dominions.

Over the future destinies of Brazil there hangs a thick cloud of fearful uncertainty. We have already remarked that the Brazilian people, at the period of their revolution, were totally incapable of adapting their previous habits to the institutions of freedom. All the phrases of their revolutionary career have been marked more by a servile spirit of imitation than by an abstract love of liberty. In 1821, in imitation of the mother country, they proclaimed a constitution; a few months