

EL FLORECIMIENTO DE MEXICO

(THE PROSPERITY OF MEXICO)

CAPITULO I.

MEXICO MODERNO Y EL GENERAL DIAZ.

(MODERN MEXICO AND GENERAL DIAZ).

A raíz de la guerra de Reforma, de la grandiosa cruzada que el liberalismo mexicano llevó á cabo para transformar las condiciones políticas de la República y hacer posibles ulteriores progresos, la defensa nacional contra la Intervención y las luchas tenaces contra el Gobierno usurpador del llamado Imperio, volvieron á sacudir el país de una manera dolorosa, estancando todos los impulsos de perfeccionamiento, de desarrollo y de prosperidad que pudieran existir entonces. Reconstituida la República, cuando el Benemérito Juárez volvió á ocupar la Capital y pudo reinstalar el Gobierno legítimo y nacional, pudo haberse sentido satisfecho por las grandes proezas consumadas; pero debió comprender que aún no era llegado el momento del reposo, ya que de entre las misteriosas brumas del futuro surgía una obra por efectuar, más gigantesca sin duda que la ya concluida: consolidado el principio de la nacionalidad mexicana y librado el país de la opresión extranjera y de la usurpadora, era imperiosamente necesario dar vida orgánica á aquella nacionalidad y encarrilar el país en una vía firme y segura de adelanto y de desenvolvimiento, á fin de hacer efectivas y estables las conquistas que acababan de consumarse.

¿Pero, en qué condiciones se hallaba el Gobierno al iniciar una obra de tanta trascendencia? Ante la amenaza del dominio extranjero y ante el peligro de la esclavitud, la nación habíase estremecido y la dignidad nacional había estallado en una hermosa explosión de patriotismo hélico. Este patriotismo era una prenda de fe para el porvenir, porque el pueblo que así ama á su patria y ofrenda sin vacilación su sangre generosa en aras de la salvación nacional, demuestra ser susceptible de encauzar esas mismas energías en un sendero de trabajo incesante y de serena tenacidad, en aras también del progreso de la misma patria que supo defender gloriosamente con las armas en la mano. El espíritu nacional hallábase, empero, en estado anárquico, y el Gobierno debía enfrentarse con esa anarquía desde los comienzos de su obra de reconstitución. Las revoluciones primero y la guerra más tarde habían familiarizado y engreído á una gran parte de los ciudadanos con los ejercicios guerreros, de modo que eran escasos los factores aprovechables en una tarea pacífica y fecunda, cual era la que á la renacida República se imponía. La mirada de todos los estadistas y de todos los sociólogos del mundo estaba fija en México: hubo muchos que aún no alcanzaban á comprender la grandeza de las hazañas realizadas por nuestro pueblo y por sus caudillos; hubo algunos que las reconocían y estimaban, pero hasta en éstos florecía una intensa duda acerca de nuestro porvenir, precisamente porque se daban cuenta exacta de los formidables obstáculos con que el Gobierno republicano había de tropezar para colocar á la nación en la misma altura de respetabilidad orgánica que había alcanzado en la esfera de la defensa nacional. El partido conservador, rico, turbulento é intrigante, había perdido en la contienda todas sus armas: su postrero, desesperado juego, le había sido adverso; pero, aun en el seno de la gran familia liberal, quedaban en pie las idiosincráticas ambiciones de los jefes militares de esta tierra, frescamente estimuladas por los éxitos obtenidos durante la guerra, como una formidable amenaza á la tranquilidad y al desarrollo del país. La gran masa popular, doblemente adormecida por el beleño de su ignorancia y por la embriaguez del triunfo alcanzado, no podía concebir cuán ardua se presentaba la nueva tarea de reconstrucción. Pasado el entusiasmo del triunfo, volvía á debilitarse la solidaridad nacional, y sin ésta no era humanamente posible la realización de la nueva obra. El Gobierno del Benemérito Juárez se encontró, pues, ante circunstancias excepcionales: con un deber ineludible al frente y sin elementos materiales ni morales para cumplirlo. No obstante, ese Gobierno hizo mucho; hizo mucho más de lo que era lícito esperar dentro de la asfixiante órbita de aquellas circunstancias excepcionales. Es cierto que no contentó á todos, pero también lo es que ni pudo ni debió contentarlos; es cierto que no realizó cuanto los espíritus radicales é impacientes hubieran deseado, pero también lo es que contó con pocas colaboraciones francas y decididas.

Palpitaban los rencores de la facción vencida y, naturalmente, ésta rehusaba al Gobierno los factores suyos de que aquél hubiera podido servirse: el partido liberal, por su parte, carecía de cohesión, y los obstáculos que de su seno surgieron para entorpecer la benéfica acción del Benemérito no fueron los menores. Sin embargo, repetimos, el Gobierno reconstituyente del Sr. Juárez hizo mucho. Cuando se escriba serena y definitivamente la historia contemporánea de México, los cinco últimos años de la vida de Juárez habrán de reclamar atención preferente y minuciosa, y habrá de verse entonces que, los méritos por él contraídos ante la nación durante ese período, si menos ostentosos, no son menos trascendentales ante el criterio positivo que los anteriormente contraídos en toda su gloriosa vida.

Una de las más apreciables fuerzas del Gobierno de Juárez, si no la mayor, fué sin duda el extraordinario prestigio personal de que aquel varón ilustre disfrutaba entre sus conciudadanos, aun entre aquellos que no

Immediately after the war of Reform, of that glorious crusade which the liberal party of Mexico undertook for the purpose of altering the political conditions of the Republic and of rendering future progress possible, as well as for the defense of the Nation against the foreign intervention, and after the determined struggle against the usurping Government of the so-called Empire, the country was again shaken to the foundations in a painful manner, and all attempts at improvement and development of the prosperity that could then exist were entirely suspended. Once the Republic was reestablished and the great Juárez had reoccupied the Capital and had been able to reinstate the legitimate and National Government, he might have felt satisfied with the great triumphs which he had obtained; but he could do no less than understand that the time for him to rest had not as yet arrived, seeing that out of the mysterious mists of the future a work appeared that required attention, unquestionably of more gigantic proportions than that which he had now completed. Having consolidated the principle of Mexican Nationality and liberated the country from the foreign usurper, it became absolutely necessary to give an organic life to that Nationality and to set the country on the firm and certain path of progress and evolution, in order to render the victories that had just been obtained effective and stable.

But let us see in what situation the Government found itself at the time of initiating this great work. In the face of a foreign domination and the danger of permanent subjugation, the Nation had thrilled and the National dignity had asserted itself in a magnificent burst of warlike patriotism. This patriotism constituted a proof of faith in the future, because the people who so love their country that they do not hesitate to sacrifice their generous blood on the altar of national salvation, show that they are capable of directing those same energies in the path of continuous work and progress of the country which they have known how to gloriously defend with arms in their hands. At the same time the national spirit was in a highly disturbed condition and the Government had to face that condition from the commencement of its work of reconstitution. The revolutionist first and the foreign war later on had familiarized a great part of the citizens with warlike operations, so that there were few factors that could be taken advantage of for the carrying out of such a pacific task and that imposed by the reorganization of the Republic. The eyes of all students of statecraft and sociology in the world were fixed on Mexico: many do not even now understand the grandeur of the triumph obtained by our people and its leaders; some there were who recognized and appreciated them but they were full of doubts as to our future, precisely because they could exactly understand the formidable obstacle which the Republican Government would have to overcome in order to place the Nation at the same elevation of organic respectability that it had reached in the sphere of its natural defence. The conservative party, rich, turbulent and intriguing, had lost the whole of its power in the struggle; its last desperate effort had resulted fatally, but even in the bosom of the great liberal families there still existed many ambitions amongst the military chiefs of this land, stimulated by the successes that had been obtained during the war and that constituted a formidable menace to the tranquility and development of the country. The great mass of the people, stupefied by their own ignorance and drunk with victory, could not form any idea of the arduous nature of this fresh task of reconstruction. Once the enthusiasm of the victory had passed, the sense of national solidarity again commenced to weaken and without this sense it was not humanly possible to carry out the new work. The Government of the immortal Juárez thus found itself working under exceptional circumstances and with an imperative duty before it; but without any material or moral resources that would enable it to comply satisfactorily with that duty. Nevertheless this Government did a great deal; it did much more than anybody had a right to expect in view of the very exceptional situation in which it found itself. It is very certain that it could not satisfy all, but it is also true that it could not have satisfied them; it is very true that it did not realize all that the extreme members of its own party would have desired, but we must bear in mind that it could count on a frank and determined co-operation in but few quarters.

The rancor of the losing faction was still alive and it naturally refused to lend the Government the assistance of its resources: the liberal party, on the other hand, had little cohesion and the obstacles which arose amongst its own members to obstruct the beneficent action of Juárez were of no small importance. Nevertheless we repeat, the reconstituent Government of Juárez accomplished much. Whenever a calm and well meditated contemporaneous history of Mexico is written, the five last years of the life of Juárez will claim a preferent and minute attention and it will then be seen that the merits which he had gained before the Nation during that period, if less ostentatious, are no less important in the sight of good judges than those which he had previously earned in all his glorious life.

One of the most appreciable if not the greatest powers in the Juárez Government was undoubtedly the extraordinary personal prestige which that illustrious man enjoyed amongst his fellow-citizens, even amongst