

COLOMBIA'S MISRULE

GLIMPSE OF THE OPPRESSIVE GOVERNMENT PANAMA HAD.

"Voluntary Subscriptions" on Pain of Imprisonment—Military Officers' Graft—Alban, a Tyrant.

New York Evening Post. Next to that the negro republics the most exasperating government is doubtless that which is known as "Latin American." Panama had an experience of it which may well be regarded as an excuse for separation. To get to the point, every member of the present junta was among the company of 23 Conservatives of Panama called together by Governor Alban a few years ago.

"Gentlemen," he said, when they assembled in the yellow room of the Palacio del Gobierno, "the Conservatives need \$50,000. I will withdraw while you arrange the matter."

Retiring, he summoned his soldiers and placed a cordon around the building. Government, the military officers were to enforce martial rule, this meant that any one who sought to come out without subscribing his due share, according to his riches, would be thrown into the yellow room. Alban returns to the yellow room. He was met with protests.

"There are soldiers all about this house," he replied. "Before you pass through them you will subscribe \$50,000. Again he withdrew, and when he returned the paper had been signed.

"These subscriptions were prettily called 'voluntary subscriptions,' as receipts for the army were tied with ropes and called 'volunteers.' They were rather worse, as 'business,' than corporation contributions in Tammany Hall, because there came in return for the money, not only advantages, moral or immoral. Sometimes, if one of the eventual contributors was obstinate, he was made to take chili sauce and salt water. The suffering from this was so abating that the man who had when the man recovered he was fit for prison."

"At any rate, he was in a receptive mood for suggestions of secession, and only bided his time. He had had his share of the Panama revolution, and only bided his time. He had had his share of the Panama revolution, and only bided his time. He had had his share of the Panama revolution, and only bided his time.

Hermadio Arosemena, of the banking-house of that name, suffered frequently from the "voluntary subscription," for all the Arosemenas were known as "Liberals." One day he was posted on his door saying that before a certain hour of a certain day he must pay \$25,000. He had it reported that he was out of town, but he had gone to the city, where he was quartered in his house. "Cable him for the money," the Governor recommended to the family. Arosemena was not in Ecuador, but hiding in his own home. But he would not allow the money to be sent. For nine months he was a prisoner there, never stepping beyond his threshold. Besides, the soldiers on guard during that period had to be fed from his own larder. That was the practice at different times, not reckoning the billeting of troops, the Arosemenas paid within a few years more than \$100,000 in "voluntary subscriptions" to Colombian Government.

Oscar Muller, a jeweler, shows receipts for "war loans" of \$50 to \$100 a month. He was born on the isthmus. Though of German parents, he was a patriot. One day he was asked for a "voluntary subscription" of \$150. He removed everything from his safe, and refused to pay. A commission came from General Alban to force the safe. Muller gave the commission rather than see the safe blown up. Nothing but old papers were found in it. "Lock his house, and let no one in or out," ordered Alban. Muller gave the family was thus besieged. Then Muller compromised for \$300. He had to pay \$1 additional for the man who had come to blow up the safe—the man did not need to do the job, but he had "lost his time." Muller had also to pay \$6 for the advertisement of the intended sale of his store. Your correspondent has seen all these receipts, and he is not a patriot.

Importers for awhile were assessed arbitrary sums, instead of an import tax; banks were forced to make loans. Government, indeed, was a kind of a power, exercising almost as barbaric as that which Henry Morgan carried on along these coasts, with headquarters at Bogota instead of at Porto Bello. Indirectly, foreigners were "all the traffic would bear"; if the people were squeezed too much, they bought less. So it was more profitable not to kite rates too high. The ice monopoly paid the government \$100,000 a year for awhile, and the price of ice to the consumer was 10 cents a pound. Then Bogota raised the rental to \$300 and permitted the concessionaires to raise the price of summer 5 cents a pound. On this basis the concessionaire lost money. The sale of ice decreased, and at last he could not pay the rent of his monopoly, and Mr. Bueque was appointed to run the business for the government itself, reducing the price to "what the traffic would bear."

Alban seems to have been the most oppressive of the military governors. Yet there was a quality in him which now and then touched the hearts of the people. He was exceedingly brave, and was killed at last in a naval battle in Panama Bay, and he lies at the bottom with his ship. Two sisters came to him to seek the release of their brothers from prison. "Bring me \$500," he answered them, and he cast the money. The girls sold all their jewelry, but could raise only \$300. "I must have the full \$500," he insisted. The girls borrowed the other \$200 of a usurer, and returned with the money. "Ah, I thought you could get it," he remarked. "How did you do it?"

"They showed him the receipts for the jewelry," they showed him the contract with the usurer. "What!" he exclaimed. "Ten per cent a month!" He sent at once for the usurer.

"You took the jewels of these girls, giving them only \$300, and then you charge them 10 per cent a month on the other \$200? Bring those jewels to me. Bring also their contract to 'pay.' When the usurer came back, Alban gave the jewels to the sisters, tore up the papers, sent the money lender back to his pawnshop, wrote out a full pardon for the brother of the girls, and sent the \$400 as punishment to the usurer.

Natives make out that the revolutionary or separatist spirit has been long years growing steadily year by year, when the isthmus cut loose from Spain, it spontaneously joined Colombia.

"That country acquired it free of expense, without the cost of penny of a life," as one of them puts it. "But she did not properly value it, for only misrule and oppression followed. The isthmus was used merely as a source of revenue. Finding this, our people grew restless. Several attempts to separate from Colombia were made. One of Bolivar's soldiers, General Espinar, headed a revolution in 1830, and he set up a free state, but by reason of sweet words the isthmus soon went back to Colombia. The sweet words meant nothing. Old practices were reported by the press, and some of our small-island politicians treated us more like serfs than brothers.

"In 1840 there was a revolution which gave another opportunity of breaking away. Under Colonel Herrera independence was once again proclaimed. It was short-lived.

"In 1850 Panama was permitted to be governed by its own laws, but as there appeared to be an era of satisfaction ahead when General Mariscal rose

PROGRESS OF AMERICA

STATISTICAL SHOWING OF ITS MATERIAL INDUSTRIES.

Wealth of the Country Has Increased Ninety-Three Billion Dollars in Fifty-Three Years.

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