

From the Lady's Book.

LA POLA.

The Colombians, generally, will long remember La Pola. With the history of their struggle for freedom, her story is deeply associated, and the tragical destiny which followed her love of country, is linked with all the interest of the most romantic adventure. Her spirit seemed made of the finest materials, while her patriotism and courage, to the last, furnished a model which it would have been well for her country, had it been more generally adopted and followed by its sons.

Donna Apolonia Zalabariata, better known by the name of La Pola, was a young lady of good family in Bogota, distinguished not less by her personal accomplishments than her rich and attractive beauty. She was but a child when Bolivar commenced his struggles with the ostensible object of freeing his country from the trammels of its oppressors. Her father, a gentleman of considerable acquirements as well as wealth, warmly seconded the designs of the Liberator, though from circumstances compelled to forbear any active agency, himself, in their promotion. He was a republican of considerable resources and sleepless perseverance; and, without taking up arms himself, he probably contributed as much to the success of the experiment, for liberty, as those who did. In this, he was warmly seconded by his daughter, who with that ingenuity of contrivance, commonly ascribed to her sex, was, perhaps, the most valuable auxiliary that Bolivar had in Bogota.

She was but fourteen years of age, when accident gave her the first glance of the man afterwards the president of her country. At this time, with few resources, and fewer friends and coadjutors, Bolivar occasioned little distrust, and perhaps, commanded as little attention. Still, he was known, and generally recognized as an enemy to the existing authorities. Prudence was necessary, therefore, and it was at midnight, and during a severe thunderstorm, that he entered the city, and made his way, by arrangement, into the inner apartments of the house of Zalabariata. A meeting of the conspirators—for such they were—had been contemplated on this occasion and many of them were in attendance. The circumstances could not altogether be concealed from the family, and La Pola, who had heard something of Bolivar, which had excited her curiosity, contrived to be present; though partially concealed by her habit, and by a recess situation which she had chosen. The Liberator explained his projects to the Assembly. He was something more than eloquent—he was impassioned, and the warmth of a southern sun seemed burning in his words and upon his lips. La Pola heard him with unconcealed admiration. Not so her countrymen. Accustomed to usurpation and overthrow, they were slow to adventure life and property upon the predictions of one, who, as yet, had given so few assurances of success for the game which he had in hand. They hesitated, they scrupled, and opposed to his animated exhortations a thousand suggestions of prudence—a thousand calculations of fear. The Liberator grew warmer and more vehement. He denounced in broad language the pusillanimity, which, as much as the tyranny under which they groaned, was the curse of his country.

"Am I to go alone?" he exclaimed passionately—"am I to breast the enemy singly—will none of you come forward, and join with me in procuring the liberation of our people? I ask you not my countrymen, to any grievous risk—to any rash adventure. There is little peril, be assured, in the strife before us. We are more than a match, united among ourselves and with determined spirits, for twice—ay thrice, the power which they can bring

into the field. But even were this not the case—were it that the chances were all decidedly against us, I cannot see, still, how you can, or why you should, hesitate to draw the sword in such a strife. You daily and hourly feel the exactions, and witness the murders, and cruelties of your masters. Thousands of your friends and relatives lie rotting in the common prisons, denied the most common attentions and necessities, and left to perish under innumerable privations. Thousands have perished in torture, and over the gateway of your city, but now as I entered, hanging in chains, the bleaching bones of old Harmino, one of our best citizens, destroyed because he dared to speak freely his thoughts of these doings, attest the uncompromising and bloody tyranny under which you must momentarily look for a like fate. If you be men—if you have hearts or hopes—if you have affections to lose and live for—you surely will not hesitate as to the choice—the only choice which a freeman—one worthy and desirous of the name—should be allowed to make."

The Liberator paused, as much through exhaustion, as from a desire to enable his hearers to reply. But, with this latter object, his pause seemed entirely in vain. The faces of all around him were blank and speechless. They were generally quiet, well-meaning citizens, unaccustomed to any enterprises save those of trade, and they were slow to risk the wealth which many of them possessed in abundance, to the certain confiscation which would follow any overt exhibition against the existing authorities. While in this state of hopeless and speechless indecision, the emotions of the chief were scarcely controllable. His whole frame trembled with the excitement of his spirit. He paced their ranks hurriedly—now pausing with this and that personage—appealing to them singly as he had done collectively, and suggesting a thousand arguments of weight for the effecting of his purposes. He became impatient at length, and again addressed them.

"Men of Bogota, you are not worthy to be free if you can hesitate longer. Your chains and insecurity will have been merited, and be assured, when they become necessary to the wants of your enemy, your present acquiescence to his power will not avail to the protection of your lives or property. They are both at his mercy, and he will not pause, as you have done, to make use of them. To save them from him, you must risk them for yourselves. To suppose that his mercies will keep them for your benefit is to think madly.—There is no security against power, but in power; and to check the innovating terrors of the one, you must exhibit at the threshold, the strong-armed vengeance of the other. A day—an hour—and it may be too late. To-morrow, unless I am betrayed to-night"—looking with a sarcastic smile around him as he spoke—"I shall unfurl the banner of the republic, and if there be no other name arrayed in the arms against the oppressor, the more glory to that of Bolivar."

While the chief spoke, the emotions of the youthful La Pola could not be concealed. The color came to and went from her cheeks—the tears started to her eyes—she rose hurriedly from her seat which she unconsciously again resumed, and as the Liberator concluded his address, rushed across the narrow space which separated her from her father, and seizing him by the hand, with an action the most passionate, yet dignified and graceful, she led him to the spot where Bolivar still held his position; then for the first time giving utterance to her lips, she exclaimed inquiringly,

"He must not stand alone, my father. You have a name, and you will give it—you will not withhold it from your country—and I, too

—I will do what I can, if"—and her eye sunk before that of the chief as she spoke—while her voice trembled with a tone of modest doubt, most winning and expressive—"if you will let me."

The eloquence of the woman did more than had been uttered either by way of reason or patriotic impulse and exhortation from the lips of the chief. The men, touched with a sense of shame, at once came forward, and entered into the required pledges. There was no more hesitation—no new scruple—and the Liberator, pressing the hand of the bright-eyed girl to his lips, called her a spirit worthy of her country, and such as if possessed generally by its sons, could not fail, in a short time, most effectually to recover its liberties.

In another day, and the standard of the republic was raised. The republicans assembled numerous beneath it, and but little foresight was necessary to perceive, that in the end, the cause must eventually triumph. Still their success was various. The Spaniards had too strong a foothold, easily to be driven from their possessions, and the conflict as we know, was for a long time of the most indecisive and various character. What the Colombians wanted, however, in the materials for carrying on a protracted warfare, was more than made up in the patriotism, the talent, and the vigilance of their leaders generally; and however delayed may have been the event which they desired and had in view, its certainty of attainment seems never for a moment to have been questioned, except by those who vainly continued to keep up an ineffectual and hopeless conflict against them.

For two years, that the war had been carried on, no material change had been effected in the position of the combatants. The Spaniards still maintained their ground in most respects, except where the Columbians had been unanimous in their rising; but their resources were hourly undergoing diminution, and the great lessening of the productions of the country incident to its unsettled condition, had subtracted largely from the inducements held out, individually, to their officers, for the further prosecution of the war. In the mean time, the patriots were invigorated with hope in due proportion with the depression of their opponents; and the increase of numbers, not to speak of the added skill and capacity of their arms, following their long and continuous warfare, not a little contributed to their further encouragement. But how, in all this time, had La Pola redeemed her pledge to the Liberator. It may be supposed that the promise of the girl of fifteen, was not of such a nature as to warrant a reasonable hope or prospect of its fulfilment. It certainly was not regarded by Bolivar, himself, as any thing more than the hasty utterance of her emotion, under particular excitement, having no other object, if it had any, than to provoke by a sense of shame and self-rebuke, the unpatriotic inactivity of her countrymen. The girl, herself, did not think so, however. From that moment she became a woman—a strong-minded, highly persevering, and most attractive woman. All her soul was bent to the achievement of some plan of co-operation with the republican chief, and circumstances largely contributed to the desire thus entertained. She resided in Bogota—the strong hold of the royalist forces, under the controul of Zamano, a military despot, who, in process of time, in that country, acquired by his cruelties a parallel notoriety with some of the foulest governors of the Roman dependencies. Her family was wealthy, and though favouring Bolivar's enterprise, as we have seen, had so conducted, as to remain entirely unasspected by the existing powers. This enviable security, the management of La Pola, herself, had considerably effected; and, under