

SAN FRANCISCO DE QUITO.

ONE of the most ancient cities of the New World, a tribal centre from time immemorial, a seat of government long before the coming of the Spaniards, witness its ruins of the buildings of the Incas, San Francisco de Quito, to give it its full title, is one of the highest-placed capitals in the world. It lies at an altitude of over 9,300 feet, at the foot of the volcano of Pichincha and is almost on the equatorial line. The name Quito is said by some to be derived from the term *Quitu* given to the chief or cacique of the tribe of the Quichua who inhabited it. Since their evangelization by Spain—it was annexed to the crown of Charles V in 1534 by Sebastian de Benalcazar, a lieutenant of Pizarro, and erected into a bishopric some nine years later—the inhabitants have ever been conspicuous for their loyalty and devotion to Holy Church. Its university rivalled that of Lima; its beautiful churches and monasteries are still remarkable. When that glory of the Western Hemisphere, Saint Rose of Lima, was called to her heavenly home, she would seem to have cast her mantle on the neighbouring capital, for shortly after was born there Blessed Mariana of Jesus, the 'Lily of Quito,' who spent her twenty-six years of heroic charity among its favoured people. During the last century it was a veritable beacon of light to the whole of Christendom. In the October number of **BLACKFRIARS** reference was made to the official protest which, alone among nations, the Government of Quito issued against the unjust usurpation of Rome in 1870. Three years later the city afforded a wonderful manifestation of Catholicity, when the Chief of the State, supported by the entire assembly of the nation, solemnly and for all time, consecrated himself, his

Blackfriars

people, the entire territory of Ecuador, to the Most Sacred Heart of Our Lord. Congress followed up this demonstration of faith and love by decreeing unanimously the observance each year of the feast of the Sacred Heart as the national festival. The first Eucharistic Congress in America was held at Quito in 1886 and only the other day a celebration marked the conferring of a gold medal on one of the devoted band of missionaries to the Ecuadorian Indians, who had laboured among them for forty years.

A new lustre may soon be added to this city of the Andes, for the Cause of its illustrious captain, hero, martyr, Gabriel Garcia Moreno, is now being introduced in Rome. The life of this noble President of Ecuador has been so well written in many languages by various authors,¹ that it will suffice to recall briefly some of the events of his career. Born at the end of 1821 in Guayaquil, the youngest of a large family impoverished by the vicissitudes of the period, he owed his early education to a good priest, a friend of his parents. His maternal grandfather had been Governor of Guayaquil under the Spanish rule; he idolised his mother, who died at the age of 94, two years before his assassination, and he always spoke of her as one of God's saints.

At the age of fifteen his passion for learning led him to travel—on foot, for he was without resources—the 169 miles of mule-track which separated the port of Guayaquil from Quito. Obtaining admission to the university, he taught grammar, mathematics and chemistry while following the course of jurisprudence, and he gained his degree of Doctor and the status of advocate at the early age of 23.

¹R. P. A. Berthe, C.SS.R. (Madrid, 1887); R. P. Anselmo Florio, S.J. (Madrid, 1921); Comte de Lambel (Paris, 1886); Hon. Mrs. Maxwell-Scott (St. Nicholas Series, London, 1908); J. J. Horgan (Gt. Catholic Laymen, London, 1907).

San Francisco de Quito

At this period he was commended by Humboldt for the ascent of the Pichincha crater. He made this ascent three times, and later that of Sangay and the giant Cotopaxi.

He now devoted himself to the interests of his country, menaced by its powerful neighbours, New Granada and Peru; and at the age of twenty-seven he went to Paris with the intention of further prosecuting his studies, but after six months made up his mind to return home. At Panama, whilst waiting for the boat to Guayaquil, he encountered the Jesuit Fathers expelled by the machinations of the secret societies from New Granada and on their way to England. He promised them his protection and induced them to return with him to Guayaquil, although Ecuador was at that period practically under the domination of New Granada. Overcoming violent political opposition, he managed to instal them in Quito, and in 1851 published his *Defensa de los Jesuitas*, one of the most noted of his writings. The following year, however, the sectaries of New Granada prevailed, and the Jesuits were ordered to depart. He then published his *Adios a los Jesuitas*, and in bidding them farewell he said it was only for a short time: '*De aqui diez años cantaremos el Te Deum en el Catedral.*' 'In ten years' time we shall be singing in the Cathedral the Te Deum [for your return].' Those in power then turned their rage upon himself; he was persecuted, imprisoned, and his life repeatedly threatened. The people of Guayaquil elected him Senator in order that thus, as stipulated in the Constitution, he should be immune from arrest, but all in vain. He succeeded, nevertheless, in getting on board a French frigate in the harbour of Guayaquil and escaped to France. In 1856, however, he was amnestied and returned to Ecuador, exposed, however, to the fury of the sectaries. In 1860 his party finally triumphed, and henceforward he

Blackfriars

virtually governed the country until his assassination on August 6th, 1875. He was elected President for four years in 1861, for the second term in 1869, and for the third term just before his death. Like that other great captain and loyal son of the Church, Simon Bolivar, he sought neither honours nor emoluments, and accepted office with the greatest reluctance. In conversation with a friend a short time before his murder he said that his calumniators would have a free hand when they had made away with him and that it would take more than fifty years for his country to recognise that he had never been actuated by personal motives, but always, under God, sought its best interests. He accomplished a hundred times more for its betterment than any of his slanderers. He embellished Quito, linked it to the sea by constructing a causeway to Guayaquil, a truly stupendous feat of engineering; reinstated the Jesuits, as he had foretold; fostered education, and was ever, even as the saintly Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, a protector of the native Indians. Ecuador, though larger than France, is one of the smaller of the South American States, but he brought it to the forefront of Latin America and established its independence of its powerful neighbours. Allusion has been made to his manly defence of Pius IX, and his Consecration of Ecuador to the Sacred Heart. A few days before the end the Superior of the Christian Brothers, about to leave for Europe, came to bid him farewell. *'Adios, voy a ser asesinado; soy dichoso de morir por la Santa Fe; nos veremos en el cielo.'* 'Good-bye, I shall be assassinated; I am fortunate to die for the faith; we shall meet in heaven' was his adieu; he knew he was a marked man.

On the day which was to be his last he left home for the Government Palace about one o'clock in the afternoon and on his way stopped a short time at the house of his wife's parents. He had to pass the Cathedral

San Francisco de Quito

on the south side of the Great Square—the Government buildings are on the west side—and he entered as there was Solemn Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, it being the first Friday of August. He remained in prayer for a considerable time and then, coming out, mounted the steps leading to the portico which fronted the official quarters and where the three hired assassins concealed behind the pillars awaited him. One of them, Rayo, a would-be trader, whom he had prevented from despoiling the defenceless natives, rushed out and stabbed him in the back, while the confederates fired. He fell, and Rayo, hacking him with his knife, shouted ‘Death to the tyrant.’ ‘*Dios no muere,*’ ‘God does not die,’ answered the saintly President. They were his last words, and prophetic. A sentry, catching sight of the fleeing assassin, fired and killed him on the spot, while loving friends carried the dying hero into the Cathedral to the altar of the Mother of Sorrows whom he loved so well. To the priest attending him and asking if he forgave his enemies, he could only testify by a movement of the eyes, and in a quarter of an hour he expired. He had received fourteen wounds, seven or eight of them mortal. In his note-book, under the date August 6th, were three lines in pencil: ‘*Señor mio Jesu, dadme amor y humildad, y hacedme conocer lo que hoy debo hacer en vuestro servicio.*’ ‘My Jesus, give me love and humility and make me know what I should do in your service to-day.’ It may be that the response to this prayer was the crown of martyrdom offered and accepted!

He has been called the greatest of Latin Americans, ‘*el hombre mas grande de la america latina.*’ He certainly stands out in his epoch as a noble Christian, a wise ruler, a fearless champion of the rights of Holy Church, and a fervent disciple of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Blackfriars

The Congress of his country acclaimed him after his death as the ' Regenerator of Ecuador and a martyr of the Faith.'

F. MONTGOMERY.

PURIFICATION

O DEATH, set thou a seal upon my eyes,
A guard' upon my lips : nor let thy clay,
O Earth, rest lightly on me in that day,
But wrap me close about; veil off the skies,
With every star that in their bosom lies,
That no dear beam of theirs may light my way.
Still every sound, and let no rare scent stray
To stir my senses—these are past replies.
These must I give back unto Him' who gave
As they were given, purified and blest,
Even from every sight and sound and touch
Through which they faltered, till the hallowed grave
All things of sense in darkness has compressed :
For these I knew, and loved them overmuch.

EDWIN ESSEX, O.P.