MEXICO.

Interesting Review of Its Political History.

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THE FUTURE OF MEXICO.

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From the peculiar and commanding geographical position of Mexico there is, perhaps, no country in the world destined to play a more important *rôle* in the history of mankind. Situated midway between supply and demand, she stands like a barrier interrupting and claiming tribute from modern European civilization on the east and ancient Asiatic civilization on the west. At her western doors she may bathe her commercial enterprise in the products of Japan, China, India, Australia and all the islands of the Pacific. To the eastward the vast wave of progressive civilization is fast rolling onward towards her shore, bearing with it the demands for ceaseless activity and the germs of national development. It is upon her territory that the wave of empire, which has for so many centuries been sweeping westward, reaches the confines of that great sea from whose western shore it parted. Northward she enjoys the immediate contact of the wonderful national progress of the great republic, while to the southward, within easy reach, lie the trade and wealth of South America. There is not a commercial country in the world which she cannot reach by easy water communication and in almost a straight line.

THE COMMERCIAL ADVANTAGES OF MEXICO.

With such a magnificent geographical position there should spring up great cities and commercial centres upon her territory; for, as commerce advances, it will place her, with reference to the modern trade of the world, in nearly the same position that Syria, Mesopotamia and the whole of Western Persia occupied to its ancient trade. It was the East Indian and European trade currents, flowing over these countries, which gave birth to the cities of Seleucia, Palmyra, Sidon and her colony Tyre. The same causes, later, forced into notice Byzantium and Alexandria, made Rome and Carthage centres of distribution for East Indian products, and gave Venice wealth and power to turn back the Ottoman sword from Europe.

No better illustration of the importance of occupying a central position with reference to the great trade currents can be selected than by the comparison of Europe in the latter part of the fifteenth with the beginning of the sixteenth century. In 1498 her whole Indian commerce flowed westward from its Asiatic sources through the old laborious channels to the eastern shore of the Mediterranean, where the merchants of Genoa and Venice became its principal European distributors. Every Mediterranean port resounded to the hum of commercial life. Suddenly the tide was turned; Vasco de Gama, retracing the track made by Pharaoh Necho's Phœnician ships twenty centuries before, rolled away the barriers to great commercial development and ordered Europe henceforth to look to the Atlantic coast for centres of East Indian supply. The whole Atlantic seaboard immediately sprang to meet the demands made upon it; and to reap the civilizing influences caused by an intense forcing of mental activity to supply the demands of rival commercial interests and reap the new harvest laid at the feet of Western Europe. It was like a desert simoom to the Mediterranean ports; the great Nile of Asiatic commerce which had annually borne in its tide the segregated wealth of the Indies had changed its course and now poured its wealth around the Cape of Good Hope and through the dreaded portals of Hercules. The Mediterranean ports which had thrived upon its bounty suddenly sunk into mere local importance, or, no longer imbibing its fructifying power, became, like Venice, a mournful wreck of their former splendor. The world now breathed westward.

The great trade currents now fast settling their feet upon the northern half of the New World point unerringly to a culmination in Mexico; for as they have advanced westward, constantly nearing the great source of supply, and constantly having more demand to the east of them, the cities with which they have been pregnant have risen to opulence and grandeur in proportion to their ability to intercept and distribute the waves of wealth flowing past them.

Mexico, so favorably situated with reference to every country for all these purposes, must indeed then have at her command more elements than any other country ever before possessed for the building up of a mighty people. Under the colonial rule of Spain the advantages which she possessed for a direct trade with the Indies were not overlooked, and her splendid harbor of Acapulco upon the western coast became the great centre of East India commerce, not only for all the Spanish-American possessions, but even for the mother country, who found it to her advantage to ship direct to the Indies, from the Mexican mines, that silver which the Asiatics so largely demand in exchange for their products; while from Acapulco many of the East India goods, crossing the country by the great national road to Vera Cruz, were reshipped to supply the demand in old Spain.

CLIMATE, SOIL, ETC.

Added to the blessings of geographical position, there is, internally, no country in the world which surpasses Mexico in the natural blessings of climate, fertile soil and opportunities for the development of agricultural, pastoral and mineral wealth. While under a united people her military position would be almost invulnerable. Thus pre-eminent among the countries of the world, Mexico occupies a superior position for great national development, homogeneousness and intense concentration of the elements of stability.

In making this statement we are not unmindful of the refined horrors entailed upon her by Spanish misrule, nor its zealous cultivation into still more bitter fruit by the Mexican clergy; it is this which has prevented her from making use of those magnificent advantages which Heaven has conferred upon her. Mexico has been too much derided by the world for her misfortunes. Our countrymen are too fond of having her painted writhing under the miseries from which for a half century she has been trying to shake herself free. We have been too fond of comparing her woes with the happiness of our own country, which was born under different circumstances; for while everything aided us in our national advancement she drank the bitterest dregs that were ever poured out for the mental crushing of a people.

But in speaking of her chances in the great march of nations we are looking into the future, when this Mexican chaos shall have cooled down and the volcanic elements so rudely stirred to action by her priesthood shall find outlet in more peaceful pursuits; when that great cloud of fifteenth century darkness which found its Spanish-American focus in Mexico shall be swept away by the advancing sun of modern civilization, and her people, freed from the incubus of a long night of bigoted religious misrule, may really develop their unexampled opportunities for national prosperity.

REVOLUTIONS—ELEMENTS OF PROGRESS.

The insurrectionary outbreaks which have so long desolated the Spanish-American countries are necessary to their progress in the direction of civilization; at each new revolt some grievance, some curse which the rule of old Spain inflicted upon them, is thrown into its grave, and the next uprising buries it completely. No one who has not lived in Spanish-American countries and studied their colonial history can judge of the depth of the flood of entailed woes in which they have had to float their republican arks for a half century, until the subsiding revolutionary surges might give them some hope of rest. Nor does history present instances in European progress where so much misrule has been shaken off so quickly.

In all the Spanish-American republics it will be found as a rule that, in proportion to their distance from Mexico, the great centre of Spanish-American Catholic power, so has been their progress in civilization since their war of independence; for the great prime causes, especially in Mexico, of the numerous revolutions have been the attempts of the progressive portion of her people to shake themselves free from the crushing rule of the clergy. But circumstances far back in the history of Spain, and having more direct and powerfully drawn lines of cause and effect than most historical events, conspired to turn Spanish character into a tide that spent its full and culminating force upon the American colonies.

ERA OF THE SPANISH CONQUEST.

Spain, at the very date of the discovery of America, was taking breath after the most terrible religious war on record. It had taken nearly eight hundred years for the flow and ebb of the Moslem tide, and in that time the whole nation had received an intensely concentrated religious education in a single given direction. Spain was the great battle ground, the bulwark of Catholicism against the more tolerant Moslem faith, whose cimiters, having carved their way across her territory, were threatening to rest on the plains of Italy, under the shadows of the Moslem standards which were advancing westward. Spurred on by all the fiery fanaticism which the Catholic faith could inspire, the whole nation lost itself in a single idea and became the mighty exponent of Catholic militant power in western Europe. As war rolled on and shock after shock baptized the Cross in Moslem blood the mind of Spain lost its balance; every element of the intellect was forced into the channel of religious fervor, until Spain became educated to engraft upon her moral code the most revolting crimes. ("Any one, it was said, might conscientiously kill an apostate whenever he could meet him. There was some doubt whether a man might slay his own father, if a heretic or infidel, but none whatever as to his right, in that event, to take away the life of his son or his brother."—Prescott's Ferdinand and Isabella, vol. 2, p. 451.) Religious fanaticism, true to its instincts to enslave, not to cultivate the intellect, step by step crushed out every ennobling influence, until the former generosity of Spanish character lost itself in the darkness which advanced southward with their armies. The wild tide which, while it hurled back the Moors and drowned human progress in its waves, at length reached the Spanish Jews, who, with all their advancement in civilization, refinement and wealth, bent to the blast which seemed to drive civilization to the shelter of the Crescent. At length came the Inquisition to enthrone itself upon the ruin, fit sovereign to crush out the last spark of intellectual opposition to religious fanaticism, and in the wild wreck to sway the destinies of a people.

The rulers of Spain were at that time the monks and inquisitors. Their sovereign, the exponent of a religious idea, turned the thunderbolts in his power to the task of the upholding of the Cross and the overthrow of the heretic. The whole country became a vast monastery, in which the stormy elements of the times swayed natures as potent for religion, ambition and avarice as ever figured in history; and all these elements, swayed by the Roman pontiff, became in his hands the lash with which he scourged Europe. The brain of Spain, at all times powerful in the direction of its education, proved what mighty efforts man can make when his forces are led in a given direction. The period produced some of the most extraordinary men of history, and though we lament the talent which, perverted, flooded all opposition to its inclinations, we can not but admire the genius which could spring from such elements and wield such power with so much success.

Suddenly the barriers which had for so many centuries held in check the flood of religious fervor were no more. Swept southward by the fanatical torrent, the Moors had disappeared across the Mediterranean and Spain was at length free from civilization and the Crescent. The spiritual fervor was at a loss where to vent its fury; the national mind, missing its accustomed recreation, turned its forces wherever the sanctity of the Cross was to be upheld, and found employment under Cardinal Ximenes in a campaign against the Moors of Northern Africa, or, later still, against Solyman, the Magnificent, in Hungary, and the crushing of Protestantism in Germany. But this was not enough for the occupation of all the turbulent spirits to which eight centuries of warfare had given birth. They sighed for a wider field, and as if destiny had fixed the proper moment, the ships of Columbus brought back the tidings of the wonderful New World which was to become a curse to Spain, of the vast fields which were open for the planting of the Cross and the propagation of the faith. The stories of untold treasures to be gained there expanded like wave ripples, and pandering to the cupidity of the mind linked its two most powerful forces, religion and avarice. The brain of Spain became a vast crucible in which the fiery Spanish imagination melted down the wealth of the New World and threw its power into the religious idea that still swayed the nation. The conquest of Mexico by Cortez, the boldest *filibustero* of his time, and the overthrow of the Empire of the Incas by his cousin, Pizarro, with the tide of treasure which immediately poured into Spain, inflamed to a still higher degree the imagination which had been tame in its estimates of results. To the Spaniard the new sun which shimmered in the West was full of opulent empires only awaiting the Cross and sword of some bold adventurer to build a mighty family upon their ruins.

Expeditions launched out in quick succession and headed towards the New World. They were composed of hardy soldiers who had bronzed their faces in the wars of Italy under the great captain or in the wars of Spain against the Moors; of Hidalgos of all classes; from the noble with royal blood to the "Hidalgo de Bragueta;" and while they drew into their wild excitement much of the best blood of the Peninsula they also furnished an outlet for much of the most turbulent and unprincipled element of the Spanish population. The first expeditions were generally of a better class than the emigration which followed. The countries being all occupied or apportioned to Idalantados there was left no inducement to men to organize such knightly expeditions as Pedro de Mendoza fitted at his own cost and led to the conquest of the La Plata region in 1534. Mendoza in this expedition agreed to take with him one thousand men, well armed and equipped, with physicians for the sick and with a number of missionaries for the conversion of the Indians. The latter point was particularly insisted upon by the Emperor. Not even the salary of an Adalantado—two thousand ducats per year—was to be claimed by Mendoza. It was, moreover, especially stipulated in his contract that if any sovereign prince should fall into his hands his ransom, although belonging by law to the Emperor, should be divided among the *conquistadores*, deducting only the royal fifth. It was by such contracts as this that the New World was apportioned to the adventurous spirits of the times. To indicate the intense activity of the Spanish mind in the direction of America, it may be stated that so soon as the terms of the contract were promulgated crowds of all classes presented themselves. No less than fifty grandees and gentlemen of distinction took part in this expedition. Among them were Don Juan de Osorio, who had gained great renown in the wars of Italy; Don Diego de Mendoza, a brother of the Adalantado, and who was named Admiral of the fleet; Juan de Ayolas, Don Domingo Martinez, afterwards a famous poet; Francisco de Mendoza, major domo of the King of the Romans, and Don Carlos Dubin, foster brother of the Emperor; all volunteers led by the spirit of adventure and the desire of riches. The multitude desirous to embark became so great that it was necessary to sail before the appointed day; and when the account was taken of the number on board the fourteen vessels which composed the fleet, it was found that instead of the one thousand men for which Mendoza had stipulated, there were twenty-five hundred Spaniards and one hundred and fifty Germans, besides the crews of the vessels. (See Sir W. Parish's Rio de la Plata.)

In the organization of these expeditions for conquests in the New World there appeared to be very little thought of the wants of the colonists in the new conditions of life upon which they were about to enter.

It did not appear to be the policy of Spain to found agricultural dependencies. The New World, in its earlier developments, was considered a vast treasure house of the precious metals. The expeditions of Hernando Cortez and Francisco Pizarro had demonstrated the truth of the theory, and Spain acted upon this principle, expecting in return for her expeditions not agricultural, but mineral products. Wherever agricultural settlements were formed, as on the banks of the La Plata, they were the results of the disappointed hopes of the *conquistadores*, who, failing in their attempts to realize their golden dreams, had been forced to cultivate the lands around them to sustain life.

The conquest of the country, whether to gut their avarice or religious bigotry, was the prime object; and they carried it onward with a courage and perseverance which the sole exercise of the two most powerful elements of the mind could bring to bear for the object in view. The tide of conquest, after desolating Mexico, swept across the Isthmus of Panama and overthrew the empire of the Incas, southward it flowed, bearing all before it, until at Valdevia they found something of the courage in the Araucanian tribes which animated their own swords; and from that day to this the Araucanians, Hueliches, Puelches, Pehuenches and Pampas have held their territory. (We have had the pleasure of participating in two battles with the banded tribes above mentioned and can attest to their courage, which has lost nothing of its former energy. We have seen them charge a regiment of modern infantry with rude lances, made of reed, having sharpened pieces of hoop-iron bound to the ends of them with hide thongs.)

GOVERNMENT OF THE VICEROYS.

The country in great part conquered, there became no longer any new kingdoms awaiting the adventurous sword; and the problem then was to make the most of the silver harvest that had fallen into their hands and to see how much precious metal might be produced in the shortest possible time. The wars of Charles V. and Philip II. demanded that the colonies should produce largely, and between the exactions of the clergy and the demands of the Crown the colonies were ground into silver, grained through Indian blood. The sway of the earlier conquerors overthrew a civilization in Mexico and Peru which they scarcely replaced during their occupation of the country. Spanish America was wrecked, and like a huge hulk thrown among savages she was torn in pieces to obtain the metal that held her together. It is mournful to contemplate what a garden Spanish America would have been to the mother country had a liberal policy ruled the councils of the nation in its government. What could be the government of the colonies during that long night of Spanish misrule that it could so brand itself upon them that after fifty years of revolutionary throes they have been unable to shake themselves entirely free from the curses which still linger in their valleys and hold the cup of misery to the lips of their people? Humanity might well draw a veil over those woes. It is a sickening tale of horror to run through the three hundred years of sword, bullet, faggot, torture and famine; but a glance at it is necessary to our views of the leniency with which we should judge the Spanish American people in their struggles for stable government. In Mexico especially everything appeared to conspire to hold her in the depths of physical and mental degradation. Under the Viceroys she suffered all the miseries which bad government at home, administered by unprincipled colonial officials, could deal out to her.

Although the "Laws of the Indies" gave the right to creoles to hold even the highest offices, the law of Charles V. stating "that the discoverers, the settlers and their posterity and those born in the country were to be preferred before all others in the offices of the church, State and jurisprudence," yet of the one hundred and sixty Viceroys who ruled during the time that Spain held her colonies only four were creoles or natives of the colonies by Spanish parents; and these four owed their position to an education received in the mother country, to which they had added a powerful home influence. Every situation, even the lowest Custom House clerkship, was held by an European. Of six hundred and two Captain Generals, all but fourteen were Spaniards.

The laws were very rigid in reference to the conferring of ecclesiastical benefices upon the descendants of the conquistadores and "pacificators" of the country; but they were so evaded that, notwithstanding the law stipulated that no Spaniard could hold such a benefice, even if appointed by the King himself. Yet of five hundred and fifty ecclesiastics who had reached the episcopal dignity in the New World only fifty-five were natives. The Viceroys—(There were originally but two viceroyalties, Mexico and Peru. The viceroyalty of New Grenada was established in 1718, that of Venezuela in 1781, that of Chile in 1734, and that of Buenos Ayres in 1778.)—with rare exceptions, were men whose ruined fortunes and profligate life at home had left them no hope, unless an appointment in the New World might enable them in a few years of its occupancy to return home loaded with plundered wealth. Generally men of the vilest antecedents, court parasites, uneducated and bigoted, they appeared to be selected as crushing machines for colonial silver mines. They were the first to violate the law which allowed creoles to hold office. The distance to the mother country and the fact that all complaints had to pass through the hands of those who held office were effectual preventives to all redress of this great grievance. At one time under Godoy every office in the Mexican viceroyalty was publicly sold at auction.

The power of the Viceroy was more than regal; the troops were entirely under his command. Every civil and military appointment was dependent upon him as President of the "Real Audencia," which controlled all appointments by virtue of the "Laws of the Indies." His salary was $60,000 per year. Yet off of this he lived like an eastern monarch and returned home in a few years with a princely fortune. "He reaped profits on the illegal sales of titles and distinctions, granting licenses and the introduction of foreign goods," while "at one time even government situations were in demand without a salary" (see Ward's Mexico), the opportunities for plunder were so numerous. Special privileges or "Fueros" were granted to Spaniards which enabled them to make vast sums of money. Spanish America appeared to be an immense field over which avarice run riot in acts of oppression and misrule.

LAWS REGULATING LABOR.

The *repartimientos* and the *mita* were other evils forced upon the country. The *mita*, as if to grind out every physical effort of the Indian, imposed upon him the most abject slavery. It was a year's personal toil exacted from him; and the owner of every mine had a right to a certain number of Indian workmen, to whom he paid four reals (fifty cents) per day. This was insufficient to keep the Indian and his family from starvation. A system of credit was however established, whereby the Indian could keep life in him while his physical energies endured, the owner of the mine crediting him with absolute necessities; but if at the end of his term of service he was in debt, the law forced him to remain until it was paid. As it was impossible for him to pay it, the poor Indian found no relief from his misery except in death, which, from scanty food, hard labor and exposure, seldom gave him more than two or three years lease of life. The destruction to Indian life was immense; to be detailed to work in the mines was considered by the Indian as a sentence of death. Out of his scanty earnings he was obliged to pay a capitation tax of eight dollars per head, not to speak of the exactions of the clergy which will be hereafter mentioned. The result upon the Indian element in Mexico was not so crushing as in the other colonies farther removed from the mother country, consequently more liable to misrule; but even in Mexico the philanthropic Las Casas has depicted cruelties which freeze the blood. In the 1,400 mines of Peru it is stated (see General Miller's Memoirs) that no less than 8,285,000 Indians perished under colonial rule; but this must be an exaggeration. The Indian could not hold property to exceed the value of $50 without permission of the "Protector de los naturales," appointed by the King.

EDUCATION.

Education, at all times necessary to the intellectual expansion of a people, was confined in the colonies to the narrowest limits. While the rest of the world was basking in the sunshine of a mighty intellectual advancement, while Protestantism was confirming the right to think which God gave to man, the whole of Spanish America was overspread with the dark veil of bigotry. The curse which had rested on Europe for so many centuries, and from which, after long and tremendous efforts, she had shaken herself free, fled to the New World, where, nursed by ambition, avarice and all the most fearful elements of perverted human nature, it found a soil where its seeds, planted by the Viceroys and their parasites and nurtured by the clergy, weighed heavily upon the oppressed creole and Indian races.

The only studies permitted in the schools were Latin grammar, ancient philosophy, theology and civil and canonical jurisprudence, while the only history taught was that of Spain. Public schools were forbidden under plea that "it was not expedient for learning to become general in America." Complete ignorance was the policy imposed. The Board of Trade at Buenos Ayres was not allowed to establish a school of mathematics, it being suppressed by the Viceroy Joaquin del Pino. Juan Francisco, an Opata chief, journeyed on foot to Mexico, a distance of five hundred miles, and crossed the ocean to Madrid, to solicit the privilege of teaching to his tribe the mere rudiments of education. This petition to the "Council of the Indies" was rejected in 1798. Cirilo de Castella, a *cacique*, failed in a similar cause, which, after a twenty years' effort at Madrid, resulted in his death. Merida, in Venezuela, was by Charles IV. refused permission to found a university. In Mexico every effort in a similar direction proved entirely fruitless. With the exception of Peru, Buenos Ayres and Mexico, printing presses were denied to the colonies. In the latter viceroyalty, so late as 1806, there was but one printing press and that was under the control of the government, to promulgate laws for the crushing of the people and the exaction of revenue.

It is unnecessary to detail the acts committed during this long night of saturnalian horrors which held high carnival from San Francisco to Valdivia. We shall find in the war of the Revolution sufficient human suffering to pander to the naturally morbid condition of the mind which delights in pictures of concentrated misery.

During the long colonial dependence of the Americas the exclusive policy of the mother country had shut them out from the progress of the New World; they gained nothing by abrasion with other nationalities; they were free from the heretical doctrines which were rocking Europe like a cradle, and which were giving birth to a new era in the history of religion and civilization. The jealous exclusion of all historical information, except that portion of the history of Spain which, having passed the censorship of the clergy, was deemed fitted for the colonial mind, had narrowed their ideas of humanity, and entirely unprepared them for the flood of light which was to pour in upon them when the Bourbon dynasty was overthrown in the mother country.

INFLUENCE OF CATHOLICISM.

Catholicism had found a virgin field in America, where it had luxuriated and spread its dogmas, free from all contact with heresies which might contaminate it. The land was free from the seeds of the Eleatic philosophy which the school of Xenophanes, Parmenides and Zeno had drawn from physical speculations. It was free from the scientific deductions which Aristotle and Zeno had planted in the Old World. The Church of Rome did not have to step into the New World and dash aside such theories as the opening of the Egyptian ports had spread over Europe. There was no contact with extraneous elements; no Pantheism to the east of them; no Greek philosophy, no Mahommedism to overrun some of the fairest territory of the Church; no sects to distract the faithful; no Trinitarian controversy to set the mind in action. The religious force which had concentrated itself in the Old World burst over the virgin wilds of the New like a pestilence. The fanatical monk penetrated with the crucifix into the midst of the most savage tribes; while sword, fire and massacre were the true instruments used in the propagation of the faith, and made more converts than the Bible, whose blessed teachings the Indians received at the point of the sabre. Truly, the sword holds mighty arguments, and, as Mahommedan and Christian have proven, makes more converts than tongue or pen.

In touching the results of the establishment of Catholic power in the New World we are not attacking the high moral teachings of the Church of Rome, but the perversion of its religion when in the hands of bad men, and its wonderful capacity for such perversion. We know that the Catholic religion was born of the moral wants of the Mediterranean nations, who, completely sunk in immorality, were ready to seize upon any faith which could lift them from the degradation into which the crimes and lust of the Roman empire had sunk them; but, like any other great monopoly of the human mind in a single direction, it soon becomes perverted and deems no measure too atrocious to obtain proselytes. We may not, as Protestants, arrogate too much virtue in our own minds or proclaim ourselves free from the same religious madness which wrecks what it would beautify. We have only to look at our early history to find acts which are kindred to those of the Inquisition, and that opportunity was alone lacking to make proselytes with quite as much fanatical spirit as was ever used by the clergy of Rome in the New World.

In tracing the causes of the numberless revolutions of the Spanish American States, we shall find that at every phase of their history, and especially in Mexico, the clergy have been the great vital principle which has occasioned the chronic revolutionary condition of the country. To form an idea of their power it is necessary to glance at the immense influence which they exercised in colonial affairs, and the vast accumulations of wealth which by every art which avarice could suggest they wrung from Spaniard and native. There were, in 1827, one hundred and fifty convents, besides innumerable parochial churches. The clergy collected, by the exaction of tithes, one-tenth of the whole products of the country. Notwithstanding, the tithe system was abolished in 1833 by the government, many of the devoted adherents of the Church still submit to it. It costs Mexico yearly to sustain her clergy $8,000,000, while the estimated value of church property is from $250,000,000 to $300,000,000—about one-third the valuation of the whole country. In the city of Mexico there are five thousand houses, valued at $80,000,000, of which the clergy own one-half at least. The income of the Mexican Church in 1860 was about $20,000,000. In 1805 they held $44,000,000 cash. In 1826 it had been reduced to $20,000,000, part of it having been seized by the Spanish government. $40,000,000 of mortgages on the agricultural districts around Puebla supported the religious institutions of that city, which is still known as the most intensely Catholic of all Mexican cities.

The clergy had, side by side with Cortez, entered Mexico; and, having the light of the sainted religion constantly before his eyes, the bold conqueror never refused to exchange the consolation of the holy faith for the riches of the Indian. Whether by persuasion or the sword, the Indians were baptized by thousands. The clergy never forgot the injunction of the Pope to require them to embrace the Catholic religion; and, if they were unwilling, to attack them with fire and sword, and exterminate or reduce them to slavery.

So scandalous was the action of the secular clergy in their intercourse with the Indians that Cortez wrote to Charles V. to send him regulars instead of seculars. Said he:—"The latter display extravagant luxury, leave great wealth to their natural children, and give great scandal to the newly converted Indians."

The time which had elapsed from the conquest of Mexico to the date of the revolution of Hidalgo in 1810, had only served to enable the clergy to expand their luxurious habits, in the ratio of their constantly increasing wealth, which, as we have seen, have amounted to almost one-half the entire valuation of the country. Unchecked by any supreme power, they have doled in the mind thereafter $20,000,000, "seedless," of the example which they set to their proselytes, who, in their ignorance, have naturally followed their teachings. They contrived to lay excessive exactions upon everything which might contribute to the moral elevation of the people; and, after the civil authorities had wrung the last drop of treasure out of the physical nature of the creole and Indian, the clergy took them and in their hydraulic religious press squeezed out the treasure from their spiritual development. There are, however, a few shining examples of probity floating in this sea of moral debasement. Don Antonio Raya, Bishop of Cuzco, gave in charities three hundred and seventy thousand dollars in eight years. The Archbishop of Charcas was held in high repute for his honesty and virtue, while several of the bishops of Peru atoned in part for the misrule of others.

IMMORALITY AND EXACTIONS OF THE CLERGY.

The Viceroy and his satellites exerted every effort to lay the most exhaustive taxes upon every article that might possibly yield a revenue. The whole country was given up to the most wholesale system of robbery that the world ever saw. The exactions laid upon the people naturally begot a carelessness with regard to the future, wherein they could only accumulate treasure to poor into the coffers of their masters, who wielded it both for their physical and mental oppression. The exactions of the clergy in Mexico became so great that many a wealthy creole, to prevent the loss of his property by the Inquisition, gave immense sums to the holy orders. The one hundred and seventy-five feast days of the year did not leave the poor Indian time enough to earn the enormous marriage fee of from fourteen to sixteen dollars which was exacted from him for the performance of such a service by the clergy. The result was that marriage was the exception, not the rule. It very naturally inaugurated a wholesale system of concubinage, in which the clergy were the principal actors. Every social or family tie appeared to be broken, or, at the date of the revolution, had disappeared in the mad vortex of political and religious immorality which, like a deluge, had swept over the land. The most brutal passions were uppermost in the Mexican mind. Three great castes—Spaniards, creoles and Indians—had been established at the occupation of the country, and these had year after year taken more marked features, until the woes of the two latter were finally forced to coalesce and form a companionship in misery. The creoles had, at the date of the revolution, been ground down in proportion to the jealousy which their constantly increasing numbers had excited in the breasts of the old Spaniards, who saw, from the groans which their intolerable exactions and cruelties had forced upon them, that they could not be kept much longer from sharing in the government. The Europeans had heaped woe upon misery until Spanish America could no longer endure it. Petition after petition was laid at the foot of the throne; but, spurned in the most outrageous language, they were returned unconsidered to the colonists. A few of the very lowest offices in the Americas had been doled out to the creoles. So late as 1785 the Minister Galvez referred to the fact that a few Mexicans held office in their country as an abuse. Thus was a wide breach opened between the old Spaniard and his progeny. So late as 1817 it was asserted in a Spanish legislative assembly that "so long as a man lived in Spain every American owed him allegiance."

The effect of this policy upon the creoles, who at the date of the revolution were very numerous, was most disastrous. Ignorant, though possessing great natural talent, their whole mind had been so warped by the enslaving rule to which it had been subjected that thought flowed in its channels more by instinct than by reason. With minds corrupted by their masters; with the most disgusting vices engrafted upon their political upas tree; with the clergy pandering to every known vice of a corrupt education; in the culmination of three centuries of the vilest excesses; with honor a myth, virtue a mockery, and honesty buried deep in the foul pool of crime and horror which seemed to have poured down upon them in a ceaseless torrent, they drank from this pool of misery until nature, overloaded, shook itself free by revolution.

Following the ideas which were traced out in the action of the Europeans, the creoles imbibed the spirit of their oppressors, and deemed that the only honorable employments were to be found in the army or in the church. In the latter, it had been the policy of the royal government to cherish its temporalities; and thus the "mayorazgos," or rights of primogeniture, frequently forced the younger sons into the religious orders; but after the right of primogeniture was abolished, during the revolution, the church became unpopular as a profession except for the lowest classes. We shall see in the course of the Mexican revolutions the results of this action both in the military and in the church.

BUCCANEERING.

The only ports from which the Spanish Americans could have communication with the mother country were Porto Bello and Vera Cruz. It was as late as 1774 before the colonies were allowed to communicate with each other, and not until about fifty years before the revolution that commerce from any other port than Seville, in Spain, could be carried on with the colonies. It was not until 1713 that the ships of any other nation were allowed to touch at any Spanish colonial port. Great Britain at that date, in her contract to supply slaves, had a very slight trading interest granted to her, but confined to the ships in which the slaves were transported. Not until 1764 did monthly packets commence running to Havana, Porto Bello and Buenos Ayres. Spain not only claimed the exclusive jurisdiction of all the Spanish Americas, but even the surrounding oceans, and it was these claims which gave rise to the disputes between the Spanish Crown and Queen Elizabeth, who claimed that Spain had no right to the possession of territory which she did not actually occupy. It was this controversy, in connection with the attempts of the Dutch and English to trade in New Spain, that gave rise to the buccaneering expeditions which made the Gulf of Mexico ring with the romantic deeds of the freebooters, the capture of richly freighted Spanish galleons, the plundering of Spanish American towns, the sacking of the richly ornamented cathedrals, and other riotous deeds, which gradually caused the buccaneers to sink into pirates, who then seized upon some of the fairest West Indian ports, and, perching their lookout towers upon the commanding points, were ready at any moment to dart out upon the rich treasure ships of Spain.

EFFECT OF THE INVASION OF SPAIN BY BONAPARTE.

On the 29th July, 1808, in the midst of the circling influences which the despotic policy of Spain had produced in the colonies, the news arrived of the invasion of the mother country by the troops of Bonaparte, the deposing of Ferdinand VII. on the 5th of May, 1808, and the resigning to Joseph Bonaparte of all the rights of the Bourbon family to the crown of Spain. It is necessary to trace this phase of Spanish history for a moment. Revolutionary measures opposing the French invasion were immediately inaugurated, and several juntas were established in different parts of the country; these juntas, separately claiming jurisdiction in the colonies, occasioned the greatest uncertainty as to which they owed allegiance, which naturally assisted in shaping the events which now followed. Finally these juntas resolved themselves into the "Supreme Junta of Seville," consisting of twenty-three members, mostly of the nobility. It met June 6, 1808, and proclaimed allegiance to Ferdinand VII., whom they attested had been deposed by the French army, and had been forced to surrender the royal rights of a family which were not in his power to surrender. Meanwhile Joseph Bonaparte had summoned one hundred and fifty deputies, ninety-two of whom assembled and accepted the constitution which Napoleon had prepared for them. This constitution provided that the colonies were to be represented in the general Cortes at Madrid, and enjoy all the rights and privileges of the mother country.

OPPOSITION OF THE MEXICAN CLERGY TO FRENCH OCCUPATION.

From Ferdinand VII. and the Council of the Indies orders were immediately forwarded to the colonies to transfer to France the allegiance of America. The emissaries of King Joseph were immediately scattered throughout America, to make the transfer more certain and to receive the submission of the country. The old Spaniards vacillated. Some were at first for accepting the new order of things, fearful of losing their fat offices, but an element had crept into the problem which, though quiet in its action, was nevertheless more powerful than all the others combined. It was for the interest of the Catholic clergy in the New World to oppose the French occupation of the Americas, for the government of King Joseph had threatened drastic reforms in the Church which would militate powerfully against the monopoly which the clergy of the New World held over the tollgates to heaven. The consequence was that everywhere the clergy opposed the French occupation. M. de Sastenay, who was sent to receive the submission of the inhabitants of the Rio de la Plata, was imprisoned, and the proclamation of King Joseph was thrown into the flames.

At Caracas the government officials made every effort to turn the government over to the French, who had heavily bribed them; but the people assembled on the 15th of July, 1808, and took an oath of allegiance to Ferdinand VII. Throughout the colonies the clergy used their influence to instruct the lower classes of people to support the cause of Ferdinand; and these raised immense sums and forwarded them to Spain to aid the dethroned King in regaining his crown. $90,000,000 were raised for this purpose, and the religious enthusiasm became so great that many colonists crossed the ocean to fight in the ranks of the revolutionists. But the moment had arrived for which the Americans had long hoped, and though loyal still, they seized upon it to advance their social position. Efforts were made by the creoles to disseminate through the masses the idea of their importance and the value of independence. The moving force was the desire to shake themselves free from the dominating hand of the Europeans, but not to separate from the mother country providing they could have equal rights with the old Spaniards. The interests of the clergy coinciding for the time, the moment appeared most propitious. Loyalty was, however, a strong element in the creole character, and it will be noticed that they made every effort in favor of their Sovereign before the action of the "Supreme Junta" and Cadiz Regency forced them to declare their entire independence of the mother country.

The period which had elapsed from the first news of the French invasion of the Peninsula until 1810 was all quivering with the agitation of the elements which, in the colonies, had been so long subject to the control of the few. They maintained themselves in complete uncertainty as to their future, and the whole political forces of the country being unsettled left the people to imagine the wildest theories with respect to their future government. It was in this condition that they received news of the dissolution of the Supreme Junta of Seville, and that some of its members had been accused as traitors; that the French had conquered the whole of Spain, excepting Cadiz, where a Regency had been illegally established by the President of the defunct Junta, who published a decree, without date, naming the five members who composed it.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A COLONIAL JUNTA.

During this uncertain condition of colonial affairs the Viceroy of Mexico, Jose Iturrigaray, more liberal than many of his predecessors, had espoused the popular side and assisted in the formation of a Colonial Junta, which placed him at its head to represent the interests of King Ferdinand during his captivity. But the power of the old Spaniards, who still held the principal offices both civil and military, was more than a match for the unorganized creole faction, and they, therefore, immediately seized Iturrigaray and forwarded him a prisoner to Seville, where the Junta approved the action, rewarded those who had deposed him and appointed another Viceroy, Vanegas, who was sent to assume control of affairs in Mexico. It appears that the Supreme Junta of Seville not only claimed full control of all Spanish affairs during its existence, but endeavored to assume control of all the affairs of the New World, that they might obtain sufficient funds to wage war against the French and drive them out of the Peninsula. They were therefore bitterly opposed to the establishment of provisional governments by the different viceroyalties, and took measures by every method in their power to prevent such proceedings, proclaiming as rebels all who engaged in their organization.

The Regency which had been organized on the 29th of October, 1810, decreed a very democratic constitution, infringed seriously upon the religious influences of the Church, and abolished the Holy Tribunal. The effect of this upon the New Word was to bind the clergy more firmly in their opposition to the Regency and the support of the colonial juntas which gave more hopes of a continuance of religious monopoly.

The old Spaniards who had so monopolized colonial offices were generally excluded in the formation of the colonial Juntas. In Buenos Ayres they were wholly so; but in Chile old Spaniards and creoles joined in the general movement until the former, attempting to restore the old order of things, were entirely excluded from the Junta then established. The Spaniards, at first inclined to espouse the French cause, found that, in opposition to the creole and church interests, it was impracticable; they, therefore, with the hope of continuing their monopolies, espoused the cause of the Cadiz Regency which threatened to overthrow all the colonial juntas and restore America to its former dependent position. The native element had, however, grown too powerful to be treated with impunity; the avalanche of free thought and action had received its impetus, and was destined to roll through the land crushing out all attempted opposition. The people had tasted the waters at the spring of power, for which they had so long sighed, and though the fountain has often, from that day to this, flowed blood instead of water in its attempts to free itself from the poison of colonial rule, liberty and progress are still the moving forces of the Spanish-American mind.

The first impulse of the Cadiz Regency was to deal liberally with the colonies. On May 17, 1810, they declared them open to free trade in all articles of their own production which Spain could not consume. The merchants of Cadiz, all powerful in their monopoly of colonial trade, found means to have this decree revoked one month after its issue; and the Regency went back to the old system of trade throughout America. It was too late to exercise such a vacillating policy; the colonists had discovered their rights and were now determined to assert them, while, from reasons already mentioned, the clergy sided with them.

It is a notable fact that the revolution in Spain against French power was incited principally by the parish priests, while the nobility and higher orders were the principal adherents of King Joseph. There was a similar power existing in America; the "Curas," who were in immediate contact with the lower classes, swayed their minds in any desired direction, and the lower orders of the clergy, being composed entirely of creoles and mixed races, naturally exercised their influence in the direction of the provisional juntas from which they had so much to hope.

Strong in the belief that by provisional governments they might be enabled to hold the country for Ferdinand VII., they established juntas almost simultaneously in all parts of the country—that of Caracccas 19th April, 1809; La Paz, 15th July, 1809; Quito, 19th August, 1809; Santa Fe de Bogota, 25th May, 1810; Buenos Ayres, 25th May, 1810, and Chile, 18th September, 1810.

No people in history were ever blessed with a more favorable opportunity to free themselves from the crushing despotism that weighed upon them than were the Spanish-Americans. Their whole country contained but very few Spanish troops. In fact, so convinced was the mother country of the loyalty of the colonies that immense districts had been guarded with but the