

say that, in more than one instance, I have noticed these generally good-natured creatures, when heated by pulque or aqua ardenté, and soured by the ill fortune of the day, venting their disappointment, like mere Christians, on the persons of their innocent and unoffending wives.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Mint.

THIS establishment occupies one part of the palace of the Viceroys, and is of considerable extent: we visited it in company with several German and American gentlemen, and obtained admission, without difficulty, and a person to attend us, who explained every part of the process of preparing the silver, coining, &c. and on our leaving the place, refused any remuneration whatever for his trouble,—a thing very unusual in any part of the world. In no institution of the kind, that I am acquainted with, does a stranger receive so much attention, politeness, and information, gratis, as in this.

—The silver is sent from the mines in bars,

about two feet long, and weighing about 1000 ounces each. They are first refined and made to the standard quality, and then melted into narrow pieces, from which they are drawn by a succession of wooden machinery, worked by mules in dark apartments underneath, and afterwards by men nearly naked, into long thin stripes, of the thickness and breadth of a dollar. They are then taken by another set of men, who, by means of a screw-press, cut them into round pieces, of the size of the coin: these are taken to the opposite side of the room, to persons who weigh and regulate them, by filing off the overplus weight: they are then milled at the edges, and sent below to be whitened by boiling in alum-water, and thence carried to the stamping room, where they are coined by fly presses, worked by eight men each: these machines, twenty in number, are said to be capable of coin-

ing upwards of 100,000 dollars in ten hours.

The operations seemed to me to be in general performed in an awkward manner; the machinery occupies a great space, and occasions much noise. At present about two hundred workmen are employed, but when the mines were in full operation four hundred were engaged, and eighty thousand dollars *per diem* were coined here, independently of what was done by the other mints.

They were still striking bad impressions of the expelled Emperor, and I was sorry to observe such ill executed work on a coin which was to serve as the medium of exchange throughout the greater part of the civilized world. They are now sinking new dyes for the Republican Government, but the artists here are totally incompetent to the task of executing them in a style worthy of the country. I had consulted with Pistrucci at

our mint, and obtained his terms for executing the dyes for Mexico, but the haste in which the new Government wanted them finished prevented the possibility of a communication with Europe: the reverse the Mexican eagle, seated on the Nopal, is copied from a fine specimen of the *Falco Chrysaetos*, which I killed in Scotland, and is well etched by Howett, in my catalogue of the late London Museum. I hope, therefore, that the Mexican copy will be an improvement on that which has already appeared.

About 2250 millions of dollars have been issued from this place and circulated over the globe, any one of which, had proper artists been employed in sinking the dye, would have contributed to improve the taste of mankind, by diffusing a knowledge of the arts. But Mexico, owing to Spanish policy, is three hundred years behind Eu-

rope in every species of refinement; yet, in spite of her disadvantages, she will shortly break her chains, and assume her proper station among the nations of Europe and America. As soon as it is known that the traveller is safe in New Spain, many intelligent and respectable men will be induced to visit it for scientific purposes, and will diffuse a spirit of knowledge and inquiry hitherto unknown, but which will convince the Mexicans how far they are yet behind us in intellectual acquirements and knowledge of the arts.