

TABLE OF THE COINAGE OF MEXICO FROM THE EARLIEST PERIODS  
TO THE PRESENT DAY.

The Mint of the City of Mexico was established in 1535, but there are no returns for the first 155 years, until 1690. If we take the average of the coinage of these years to have been \$1,000,000, we shall have

	\$155,000,000
From 1690 to 1803, inclusive,	1,353,452,020
" 1803 to 1821, inclusive,	261,354,022
" 1822 - - - - -	5,543,254
" 1823 - - - - -	3,567,821
" 1824 - - - - -	3,503,880
" 1825 - - - - -	6,036,878
" 1825 to 1831 (on an average three millions per annum),	15,000,000
" 1831 - - - - -	13,000,000
" 1832 - - - - -	12,500,000
" 1833 - - - - -	12,500,000
" 1834 - - - - -	12,040,000
" 1835 - - - - -	12,000,000
" 1836 - - - - -	12,050,000
" 1837 - - - - -	11,610,000
" 1838 to 1843 (averaging twelve millions),	60,000,000

To this must be added the coinage of State mints not included in the above:

Guanajuato, from 1812 to 1826	3,024,194
Zacatecas " 1810 to 1826	32,108,185
Guadalajara, " 1812 to 1826	5,659,159
Durango, " 1811 to 1826	7,483,626
Chihuahua, " 1811 to 1814	3,603,660
Sombrerete, " 1810 to 1811	1,561,249

All of these for the five years (after 1826) since which they have been calculated in the general coinage,

Total	\$2,068,597,948
-------	-----------------

This amount, you will see, is less than it has been made by several other writers.

### THE CHURCH OF MEXICO—ITS WEALTH AND INFLUENCE.

The CHURCH OF MEXICO is the next and last topic to which I shall direct your attention, and I am compelled again to regret the want of an accurate account of the convents, properties, members, and wealth of the Religious Orders in 1842. I diligently sought information from individuals who should have been *au fait* on these subjects, yet I could gain from

them but little knowledge of an authentic character. I am satisfied, that this arose neither from a narrow distrust of foreigners, nor a Chinese dislike of divulging the secrets of their country. The want of a general work of reference on statistics is denounced, as "shameful and lamentable," by Señor Otero in his treatise on the social and political condition of Mexico.

"In 1842," says this writer, "we possess no publication upon Mexican statistics except the work of Baron Humboldt, written in 1804. That work, precious as it is, has become useless as a guide, in consequence of the immense changes during the intervention of a long and revolutionary period. A complete statistical treatise might be easily compiled without expense to the National Treasury, by merely obliging the functionaries of the Government to make regular and minute returns, which should be digested and edited by competent persons in the Capital. Without such a work it will be impossible to understand the complicated interests of this vast country, or to keep the machinery of its Government in successful operation."

It is, indeed, difficult to imagine how the administrations carried on the affairs of the nation as long as they have done, without a system of statistical book-keeping, which is as necessary for them as a ledger is for the prudent merchant.

The Ministers of State have occasionally presented reports to the National Congresses upon the condition of their several Departments; but these productions have been brief, unsatisfactory, without detail, and rather involving the matters of which they treat in doubt and uncertainty, by their vague generalization, than clearly illustrating the interests, wants, and resources of the Republic.

Of all branches of the national administration, none has suffered more obscurity by this diplomatic rhetoric than the question of the Church, which properly belonged to the portfolio of the Minister of Public Justice and Instruction. It was a subject that men seemed fearful to approach. They admitted that there were abuses in the body;—that many of its members were corrupt, idle, ignorant, and vicious;—and that it enjoyed large revenues, flowing in a narrow stream, which, if suffered to diverge into smaller rivulets, would nourish the parched land and improve the condition of suffering multitudes. But wealth and property were banned and sanctified. The *establishment* was the *religion*; and he who ventured to assail the one must necessarily attack the other. Thus, even patriots who were not ordinarily affected by nervous dread, stood appalled at the first frown of priestly indignation, and trembled for their fate in a conflict between the temporal power and that tremendous spiritual influence which slept like an electric fire in the hearts of the people, ready, on the slightest impulse, to be kindled into a destructive flame.

It would be unjust, however, to leave you under the impression that the ministers of this church have been solely engaged in enriching them-

\* Vide Otero, Cuestion Social y Politica, p. 30-31.



selves, and scandalizing the cause of true faith, as has been so often proclaimed by European travellers. Although many of them are unworthy persons, and notwithstanding their rites and ceremonies are often rather accommodated to a population scarcely emerged from the forests, than to intellectual man;—yet the wealth of the church has not been at all times devoted to base and sordid purposes, or used to corrupt its possessors and the people. Throughout the Republic no persons have been more universally the agents of charity and ministers of mercy, than the rural clergy. The village *curas* are the advisers, the friends and protectors, of their flocks. Their houses have been the hospitable retreats of every traveller. Upon all occasions they constituted themselves the defenders of the Indians, and contributed toward the maintenance of institutions of benevolence. They have interposed in all attempts at persecution, and, whenever the people were menaced with injustice, stood forth the champions of their outraged rights. To this class, however, the wealth of the church was of small import.

These virtues and devotion have served to fix the whole priesthood deeply in the hearts of the masses, and to attach the poor to their persons and enlist them in defence of their property. The priest, the creed, the church and its revenues, seemed to be *one and indivisible* in the notions of the people; and, in turn, the priesthood became jealous and watchful of the power which this very affection had created. Avarice was not wanting to increase their gains from dying penitents, pious bequests, holy offerings and lavish endowments. And thus (often grossly human while humbly good,) they have contrived, upon the same altar, to serve God and Mammon.

It is now quite natural, that they should desire to preserve the property which has been collected during so many years of religious toil and avaricious saving, and they dread the advance of that intellectual march which, in the course of time, will consign their monastic establishments to the fate of those of England and Spain. The combination of large estates, both real and personal, in the hands of a united class acting by spiritual influence, under the direction of one head, must be powerful in any country, but certainly is most to be dreaded in a Republic, where secret ecclesiastical influence is added to the natural control of extraordinary wealth.

It is difficult to say with accuracy, for the reasons I have already assigned, what this wealth at present is,—but I think the number of Convents, devoted to about two thousand NUNS in the Republic, is fifty-eight; for the support of which, (in addition to a floating capital of rather more than *four millions and a half*, with an income therefrom of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars,) they possess some seventeen hundred estates or properties, producing an annual revenue of about five hundred and sixty thousand dollars.

There are about three thousand five hundred SECULAR CLERGYMEN and seventeen hundred MONKS.

The *latter* possess one hundred and fifty Conventual establishments, divided as follows:

The Dominicans, . . . . .	25
Franciscans, . . . . .	68
Augustines, . . . . .	22
Carmelites, . . . . .	16
Mercedarios, . . . . .	19
	150
Nuns, . . . . .	2,000
Monks, . . . . .	1,700
Secular Clergy, . . . . .	3,500
	7,200

A number certainly inadequate to the spiritual wants of a population of seven millions, and yet too small to be proprietors of estates worth at least ninety millions of dollars, according to the annexed valuation:

Real property in town and country, . . . . .	\$18,000,000
Churches, houses, convents, curates, dwellings, furniture, <i>jewels</i> , precious vessels, &c. . . . .	52,000,000
Floating capital—together with other funds—and the capital required to produce the sum received by them annually in alms, . . . . .	20,000,000
	\$90,000,000

The real property is estimated to have been worth at least 25 per cent. more, previous to the Revolution; and, to this enhanced value must be added about \$115,000,000 of capital, founded on "*contribuciones*" and "*derechos reales*," or *imposts* to which they were entitled, on the property of the country.\*

The value of their churches, the extent of their city property, the power they possess as *lenders*, and the quantity of jewels, precious vessels, and golden ornaments, will raise the above statement, I am confident, to nearer \$100,000,000 than ninety, or to a sum about *eighty-eight millions less* than it was before the outbreak of the war of Independence; at which period, the number of ecclesiastics is estimated to have been 10,000 or 13,000, including the lay-brotherhood and the subordinates of the church.

During the royal Government, the influence of these rich proprietors must necessarily have been exceedingly great. It was the policy of the Spanish cabinet to cherish the temporalities of the Mexican Church. The *mayorazgos* or rights of primogeniture, forced the younger sons either into the profession of arms or of religion; and it was requisite that ample provision should be made for them in secure and splendid establishments. Thus, all the lucrative and easy benefices came into the hands of Span-

\* Vide Otero, p. 38, 39, 43.



iards or their descendants, and by far the greater portion of the more elevated ecclesiastics were persons of high birth or influential connections.

But the rights of primogeniture have been abolished. The laws of the Republic have taken away the power to collect *tithes* by compulsory processes. And the consequence is, that the church has become unpopular with the upper classes *as a means of maintenance*, while a comparatively democratic spirit has been infused into its members, who now spring from the humbler ranks. Still, however, the remaining wealth and the forces of clanship have preserved in their body a most powerful influence.

While this change has occurred in the church, the army has become equally unpopular with the upper ranks as a profession, and as its command is consequently intrusted to men who have arisen immediately from the people, or, in other words, as the same classes of society furnish both the church and the army, the church and the army will, in all probability, (while forming aristocracies in themselves,) sustain each other against the aristocracy of landed proprietors, and all who live upon their income without the necessity of labor.

Between these two classes there will be a constant war of opinion, while the only real democracy of the nation is left to reside in individuals, who have neither estates to despoil nor wealth to confiscate. The fellow feeling between the church and the army, arising from the kindred origin of their numbers, is, however, no protection to the riches of the former. The Government, pressed by its wants, is beginning to encroach gradually on its resources, and, within the last two years, has appropriated parts of the real estates of the clergy to replenish an empty treasury. That such is an honest and patriotic devotion of ecclesiastical means, no one can deny, and the doctrine is sustained by legal writers of the highest authority.\* The church has no need of possessions, except for purposes of beneficence and charity. The vow of its members is for chastity and poverty. It receives, only to become an *almoner* for more extensive benevolence. And as the State, in the hour of need, must ever be the chief pauper, she has an unquestioned right to call upon the ministers of God, in the spirit of the religion they teach, to open their coffers freely

\* Vide Vattel, Book I, Chapter 12, § 152.

"The State," says this high legal authority, "has unquestionably the power to exempt the property of the church from all imposts, when that property is not more than adequate to the support of the ecclesiastics. But the priesthood has no right to this favor except by the authority of the State, which has always the right to revoke it when the public good requires. One of the fundamental and essential laws of society is, that on all occasions of need the goods of all its members ought to contribute proportionably to the wants of the community. Even the prince himself cannot, by his authority, grant an entire exemption to a numerous and wealthy body of persons, without committing an extreme injustice to the rest of his subjects, upon whom the burden would altogether fall by this exemption."

Far from the goods of the church being exempted because they are consecrated to God,—it is for that very reason that they should be the first taken for the welfare of the State. There is nothing more agreeable to the Common Father of men, than to preserve a nation from destruction. As God has no need of property, the consecration of goods to Him, is their devotion to such usages as are pleasant to him. Besides, the property of the church, by the confession of the clergy themselves, is chiefly destined for the poor. Now, when the State is in want, it is, doubtless, the first pauper and the worthiest of succor. We may extend this reasoning to the most ordinary cases, and say, that to impose a part of the current expenses on the church property in order to relieve the people to that extent, is really to give those goods to the poor, according to the spirit of their original destination.

for the public good. With its ninety or one hundred millions of property and money, it might extinguish the national debt of eighty-four millions, and still leave an ample support for its seven thousand members, or, at least, for its Secular Clergy, who would be cherished and sustained more liberally by the masses for an act of such Christian sacrifice and benevolence.

