

LETTER XXXI.

POLITICS.

Mexico, 11th May, 1849.

I PROPOSE here to take a cursory view of what, in my opinion, ought to be the pervading principle of the international policy of Great Britain and Mexico.

The onward course of population in the United Kingdom, the increase of capital, and the almost feverish stimulus applied to British enterprise, make a wider and wider field of commercial intercourse not an advantage to England alone, but a *necessity*, pressing upon the country with an accumulative force, which extends *pari passu* with the growing population. Not to find adequate employment for our swarming millions—not to find vents for our multifarious objects of industry, is to sap the foundation of the empire. Insufficient employment leads from poverty and want, to

discontent, outrage, and insurrection. No one can deny the palpable fact; and therefore the first duty of a British statesman is, to provide new and advantageous outlets, both for our commerce and for reproductive emigration. With foreign states, almost entirely dependent on the manufacturing and shipping of other countries, a free intercourse cannot fail to bring the highest advantages to England, where the comparatively cheap rate at which she can provide the world with every object of manufacture, distances competition, and establishes for us a new market. If that country at the same time be thinly inhabited, it brings the additional advantage of readily absorbing a part of our surplus population. A daily augmenting taste and necessity for the produce of British industry, a partial amalgamation with the habits and customs of our people, and a gradual, however slow, advance in the science of good government, these all follow in the train of English immigration into young and still open countries. It is planting, without the expense of keeping, colonies of our own. Such a country as I speak of should Mexico be to England.

Of the imports of Mexico, I suppose three-

fourths are British ; and a close friendship between the two nations would lead to such fiscal ameliorations in this, as would progressively, and to a wonderful extent, develop the resources and the riches of Mexico ; and by increasing its power of consumption, would give elasticity to its commercial capabilities. A mutual confidence thus established, and a better government organised here, I make bold to say, that there is not a country on the face of the globe where England could lay out surplus capital so securely and so profitably as in Mexico. The working of its mines alone would give employment to millions of money and thousands of additional hands.

This mutual good understanding between the two nations would by degrees lead, naturally and inevitably, to a tide of emigration from England towards Mexico. The variety, but everywhere the beauty, of its climate is proverbial ; and in mining, in agriculture, in pasturage, in the common arts, there is room in Mexico for ten times its actual population. Politically, and supposing the *entente cordiale* to exist, it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of Mexico, as an ally of England.

The *only barrier* against that colossal power

which threatens some day to shut out England *altogether* from this great continent would thus be raised.

Mexican independence, fostered by England, is more worth England's attention than all the influence she can possess on the old and worn-out theatre of European continental politics. To the *new world*, not to the *old*, England must look for a continuance of her due weight. And let her not say that this is a *premature* view ; for, while she sluggishly looks on, others are advancing, by gigantic steps, to the goal of their ambition.

But if the advantages likely to accrue to England are great, to Mexico they are *vital*. The *entente cordiale* with England is the assurance to the Mexicans—first, of their existence as a people ; and secondly, of their rapid advancement from their present low point, to their proper place in the scale of nations. Two great countries are deeply interested in the question of Mexico ; but the policy of the one is to depress, of the other to uphold. It is the interest of the first, as a deliberate and systematic aggressor, to weaken and divide, in order to annex ; the nobler aim of the second is, as a friend, to strengthen and consolidate.

The upas tree kills every plant which interferes with its growth—the oak spreads his branches to protect circumjacent vegetation. Let the two countries lay these truths to heart, while there is yet time to profit by them. Let them hasten to establish the *entente cordiale*; and then, while Mexico will have gained a powerful supporter, England will reckon on one of the most practically important of all her many allies.

The present state of the politics of Mexico forms a heterogeneous mass of conflicting parties, now coalescing, now changing, and anon “running a-muck” in a style which no one but a Mexican, and hardly he, can comprehend. Their movements work upon the head of a straightforward man as a hurdy-gurdy jars upon the ear of a refined musician. The moderates, the “puros,” the Monarchists, the Annexionists, the Santanistas, all mix up in a *pot-pourri* which defies any clear separation of parts, and sets at nought every attempt at analysis. The present executive is an epitome of this chronic confusion. The President Herrera himself professes to be nobody, and the Minister of Finance has just turned out Prime Minister Cuevas. Then the former (Mr.

Arrangoiz), being a Monarchist, presents to the Chamber of Deputies, for their approval, Mr. Peña y Peña, another Monarchist, as new Premier. The Chamber snubs Mr. Arrangoiz, otherwise their pet, and refuse to have Peña y Peña. The Minister of Finance is then indirectly attacked by his colleagues, who present to the Camara a Mr. Lacunza, a lawyer, who is forthwith sworn in as Foreign Minister.

So matters rest now; but by next packet I may have to announce a totally different state of affairs. “Esto no puede durar”—says the phlegmatic politician of the Lonja (Exchange)—“This cannot last,” and no doubt he is quite right. Not one man of the Cabinet, it is said, knows what his colleague is doing in the service or disservice of the state: each only knows that they are all plotting against one another.

In a word, the whole body politic—from the lowest subordinate up to the highest functionary (with here and there honourable exceptions)—is sufficiently rotten at the core; and we must exclaim with Hamlet—“Oh, reform it altogether!” To make “confusion worse confounded,” there is the “federal system,” which sits about as well on

Mexico as a Parisian beauty's ball dress would sit on a Yorkshire bumpkin. Federation here is at once the most absurd and the most costly farce, which any set of political mountebanks could exhibit to the public. Fancy twelve or fifteen mock parliaments in the different provinces, now called sovereign states of Mexico! having all the expensive paraphernalia and machinery of so many independent communities! And imagine not that this *imperium in imperio* has anything to do with the better administration of public affairs in each particular province; for these free and independent states, which invoke "God and Liberty" to all their acts, are simply organised to provide so many more snug places for themselves, their families, and their hangers-on: an ultimate object, we must confess, pretty closely kept in view by politicians of all nations, not excluding our own.

But while I speak thus lightly of some of the "Mandonés"—those who occupy the high places, do not suppose that the voice of the country at large is with them, or that they represent the feelings of all the Mexicans. There is a respectable party in the country, which embraces the thinking men, both in the higher and middle ranks—those

who have something to lose: men of real property, merchants, trading retail dealers—the rich and industrious classes. These observe with indignation and sorrow the misrule of the land; but, as things go, they are both afraid and ashamed to mix themselves up with the politics of the country. Were they well backed by a powerful ally, they would come forward and assert their right to an equitable administration of affairs. These are the men who would support, with heart and hand, an English influence and alliance, if England would take an active part in their affairs; but these, also, are the men who, if England step not in, will, in despair, submit to sacrifice their name and their existence as a nation at the shrine of a good, secure, equitable, and cheap government, even though coming from the people whom they dislike.

Congress is about to close its labours on the 21st instant; and when I seek, in my own mind, for some one, good, efficient, and large measure passed by them during their long sittings, I am as much puzzled as Diogenes was when in search of an honest man. In fact, if they were called on to make a statement of the legislative effects

which they leave behind them, their return would certainly be *nil*.

The question of the hostilities of the Indians and insurrectionists of the north continues to be discussed by the press, and loud complaints are made, that the authorities should still be unable to put down this servile war; but the fact is, that the "Indigenos" have little to do, as principals, with these scandalous aggressions in San Luis Potosi. It is a question of banditti and lawless hordes *on a large scale*, with which the imbecile local authorities are afraid to come into contact.

The public scandal of universal robbery on the highway seems to be on the increase. Not even when you take a ride of a couple of miles out of this city are you safe without pistols. The other day the diligence from Vera Cruz was stopped a very few miles from the town by a band of these robbers, and a poor American was shot. The occurrence was passed over as a matter of course, and I have not even seen it noticed in one of the many newspapers published. Here, of course, the general government has nothing to do with murders and robberies committed in any of the federal sovereign states, save that of Mexico Proper.

From the mining districts the accounts continue to be satisfactory. Letters from Tepic of the 28th ultimo, inform us that the "Oregon," U. S. steamer, had arrived at San Blas, from San Francisco, on the 21st, and sailed for Panama on the 25th. The "California" was expected at San Blas in a few days. H. M. S. "Constance" was cruising on the coast, picking up freight, on which I presume the luckless bondholders will *not* receive the duty which *ought* to be paid, but which is *not* paid by the shippers. A sufficient number of vessels having arrived at Mazatlan and San Blas on the West coast to carry forward the crowds of Californian gold-hunters detained at those ports, and at Tepic, they had mostly taken their departure for San Francisco.

Although I now write on the 11th, our packet letters due on the 8th have not yet arrived; and in three days hence our letters must be sent off, whether we receive our correspondence or not. The arrangements are really vexatious. A packet established expressly for the convenience of the Mexican trade, is every day becoming more and more a nullity. We had letters on the 9th from

Havana, bringing English dates to the 22nd of March; and yesterday, via New Orleans, we had all European news up to the 7th of April, yet we have not our own packet letters of the 1st; and before we can answer them the packet may have taken her departure. As for any one who has studied the routes, thinking of going to England by a Royal Mail Steam Company's Packet, the case every day becomes rarer; almost all go by way of the United States. Let the Directors of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company remedy this evil if they would have the Mexican line be of any use to the public, or of any profit, through passengers, to themselves.

LETTER XXXII.

LIFE IN THE CITY OF MEXICO.

Mexico, 11th June, 1852.

My own time and attention are now so completely devoted to the advancement of my mission, that I shall here avail myself once more of some passing observations on our "visit," contained in extracts from H—'s journal, commencing 18th April. I omit such topics as I have already taken up myself.

"We had visits from Mr. Thornton and Mr. H—. The former and one or two other English gentlemen have lately got an *English* boat to row on the canal here; and as we rather quizzed the experiment, Mr. T. invited us to go next day to have a row, to which we agreed. But, being now in the rainy season, just as I prepared to set off, the water began to pour from above, preventing our excursion on the water