

all classes present, mingling for a moment into one. I danced a polka, returned to our box, and soon afterwards we left, thus concluding the varied and novel entertainments of the day.

“Next morning we all breakfasted early, and by and by, the whole party, some in carriages, some on horseback, quite a picturesque cavalcade, started for the city. The fiesta in San Agustin being over for this year, fortunes having been lost and won in these three exciting days—the people having all come to their senses, quietly returned to their every-day pursuits, as if these had suffered no sort of interruption. Fancy *my* seeing a man who had lost nearly £20,000, and this seemed to be thought nothing of!

“We had a delightful drive home, without fear of robbers, who generally swarm on this road, and once more quietly in Mexico, San Agustin seemed to fade from every one’s thoughts, and looked to me like a dream.”

LETTER XXXIII.

POLITICS.

Mexico, 11th June, 1849.

THE politics of Mexico, as now in the course of development, merit the attentive observation of the English nation and government. We approach gradually to the alternative of Mexican Independence, or American annexation; and a large portion of this people contemplate no distant day when they must gird up their loins to struggle for their national existence.

In looking at parties here somewhat closely of late, I have been endeavouring to ascertain the real value of the public press, and to what extent it either leads, or is entitled to lead, what little public opinion exists in the country. Seeing, therefore, how much England is interested in the impending struggle, I have thought it might

perhaps not be unprofitable, and certainly be curious to analyse rapidly the present state of parties and the public press in Mexico.

The metropolitan press enjoys a sufficient amount of liberty; but this does not extend in an equal degree to the various States of the Federation, notwithstanding the amplitude of the law which establishes free utterance of thought. The state governors and legislators are, in fact, so many petty tyrants, irresponsible in proportion to their distance from the seat of general government.

But, after all, the press generally does not exercise any great influence over the country: because, first, the number of readers is limited; and secondly, because the country is destitute of any decided public opinion, still more of any decided public spirit. Besides, the press, in general, is anything but luminous in its productions. The provincial, or federal press, is entirely occupied with purely local matters; while in the capital, public writers are busier in tenaciously maintaining personal and party disputes, than in enlightening the masses, or in discussing the vital interests of the nation.

The principal newspapers of the capital are:—

the *Siglo XIX.*, or “Nineteenth Century,” which is not badly sustained, as far as temperate language and correct writing go; but it has nothing piquant to give it a relish. It is the especial defender of the moderate party. When Señor Otero, the great leader of the Moderados, was prime minister, the *Siglo* was ministerial, both on account of the intimacy subsisting between the minister and the owner of the paper, and because the latter was exclusively paid for the insertion of state papers—a lucrative job. Since Otero, however, has ceased to be minister, and the patronage of the government has been withdrawn, the *Siglo* is in opposition; all the stranger, that Otero again aspires to figure in the cabinet, and that, under his shadow, his public organ works for the return of his best customer.

The *Monitor* does not professedly belong to any of the three contending parties—*Moderados* (Annexionists), *Puros* (Republicans), and *Monarquists*. The *Monitor* represents the breeches-pocket of the proprietor, said to be unscrupulous in gaining his ends. He defends the government when it subscribes for a large impression, and gives him its state papers as advertisements. But when

this patronage is withdrawn, or even when the subscription and advertisements are not regularly paid for, the *Monitor* makes a furious onslaught on the government. This print (as well as the *Siglo*) has its three first pages filled with stale foreign news, and generally unreadable articles—the fourth page being reserved for events of the day, mixed up with tit-bits of scandal and personal attacks. It is, by the way, a curious prerogative of the Mexican press, that only the fourth page and the *feuilleton* of all the papers are read by the Mexicans generally. The fourth page contains all the chit-chat. Go into a *café*, and you will see all the Mexican world at the fourth page of the paper, and no other. The *Monitor* being always pretty well charged with *on dits*, the subscribers are numerous. In all countries folly preponderates; but here scandal is the principal aliment of news-mongers. Those who take pleasure in serious or instructive reading are the exceptions, and not the mass.

El Universal represents the Monarchical party, and is edited by men of education, and of infinitely better principles than those professed or acted on by the parties connected with the *Siglo*

and *Monitor*. In *El Universal* are found articles of general interest, or of an instructive character.

But then the *Universal* is high church, intolerant in its principles, having a clear tendency to a retrograde movement in politics, as well as in religion.

I come to speak last of the best-conducted paper in the metropolis, and the most useful to the Mexican community. This is *El Globo y Estandarte de Mexico*—the “Globe and Mexican Standard.” Two months ago it was entitled simply *El Globo*, and it then was in favour of liberal or Puro principles; but having “pronounced” most energetically for a fusion of the monarchical and liberal interests against the Annexation, or moderate party; having entered most manfully on an advocacy of the nationality of Mexico; having preached “Union” against the domination of the “Yankee,” it took in addition its patronymic of *Estandarte de Mexico*.

This *Globo* is edited by two or three gentlemen, of undoubted talent, education, and enlightened principles; but it advocates intercourse with the foreigner, and this is a mortal offence with a large proportion of the Mexicans. The other papers

take advantage of this senseless prejudice on the part of the people, and so the *Globo* is hunted down as "sold to the foreigner." But *magna est veritas et prevalebit*. *El Globo* is making rapid progress in its patriotic career: the Annexationists begin to tremble; and those who, hating American aggression, were yet most disheartened, are plucking up courage, and begin to believe that Mexico may still continue to exist.

In all other respects, the *Globo* is the cleverest of the Mexican daily press. Its information is good, its writing often vigorous, and it attacks abuses wherever they are to be found.

There are other papers published in the capital, but they are of an ephemeral character:—one comes out to-day, to fulfil some party view; another appears to-morrow, to satisfy a personal revenge; and then both sink into the tomb of all the Capulets. The *Periodico Oficial* is simply what its title indicates—a register of decrees and official documents, only defending, now and then, some particular Government measure.

Turning, then, from the press to parties, I may say, that the *Moderados* are the most insignificant as to numbers; but they reckon among them men

known for intrigue and cunning, who are either actually in power, or who rule unseen, through their influential position and secret councils. This is the party which concluded peace with the United States; and its principal members are secret advocates of annexation.

The monarchical party boasts of men of talent in its ranks. The influential class of the clerical body, as well as many landed proprietors and men of wealth, belong to it. This party now begins to believe it cannot immediately establish a monarchy in Mexico, in consequence of the actual state of Europe, and of the ground already gained by the United States; but they do not for a moment lose sight of their object. Meanwhile, to save the country from the Americans, and to vanquish the *Moderados*, they are disposed to ally themselves with the *Puros*.

These reckon among their number men of intelligence, but ultra in their democratic views. They are generally now without much property, and consequently their influence is accidental, and merely owing to their boldness. They, too, are disposed to lower their pretensions, in order to ally themselves with the Monarchists; for, even

more than the latter, they detest the *Moderados*.

If the Monarchists and *Puros* could compass the fusion which is meditated, it would ensure at once the downfall of the *Moderados*, and give a blow, for the present, to the hopes of the United States and the Annexationists. But, to say the least, the fusion is most difficult, from the absence of a *point d'appui*, such as would be afforded by a cordial union with England. They want some strong and direct impulse to give life to something like patriotism—to activity, to disinterestedness—some controlling power able to abate the conflicting views and interests which tend to alienate one from another.

What the country most pressingly wants is, to crush the federal system, which is rapidly destroying the liberties and consuming the public resources of the country.

With regard to the war carried forward in the northern provinces with the Indians, with whom are associated the very sweepings of the Mexican people themselves, I am sorry to say it assumes a more and more formidable appearance, breaking out now in one, now in the other province. A

sort of peace was patched up in the principal theatre of the war, San Luis Potosi, to be broken whenever it suits the views of the insurgents, and the aboriginal castes in alliance with them.

To my no small surprise, I have to tell you, that for thirty days the executive government has remained without any change in its *personnel*. Nevertheless, I make sure of a political *pot pourri* being dished soon; for the quidnuncs are all agog. The *Moderados* are indubitably losing ground; and I heartily rejoice at the fact; for you will observe, it is the decadency of the Annexationist influence.

Congress closed on the 21st ultimo, and is summoned for the 1st of next month. Its extra labour will be restricted to measures of finance, including a plan for consolidating the public debt.

Before rising, the Chambers passed one good law: they reduced the export duty on silver to $5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.; that is, to 2 per cent. internal duty, and $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on export. The former rates were 5 per cent. each—10 per cent. in all; a fruitful cause of smuggling.