

in particular, exhibit them in abundance, and in many places they serve in the rainy season as a pen for the cattle, and as milking-places for the herdsmen. On the plateaus, however, the chasms and caves are less frequent, the vast table-land presents few obstacles, and the intercourse of the natives is checked merely by low ranges of hills, or smaller clefts, over which roads have been constructed with little difficulty.

Whoever visits the mountainous districts of Mexico, will meet with much that is interesting and beautiful in the 'barrancas', whether he roam the country as an artist or as a naturalist. Let him, however, be cautious how he descends into the chasms; in the close brushwood, one often imagines one's self at the bottom of the valley, when suddenly a stone rolling down, warns him that he is on the brink of a perpendicular wall of rock, and one false step would ensure inevitable destruction. More than once, a strange plant, or the hope of enjoying a fine view, has enticed me to the summit of a rock, whence there was no possibility of advance, and most hazardous to return. On one occasion I owed my life to nought save the toughness of a creeper, from which, at a dizzy height I hung suspended in mid-air. Indian hunters should be preferred as guides; they know every path, and glide through the thicket with the skill and celerity of the wild animals. One must also beware of descending into unknown chasms towards evening; the sun not only there disappears sooner, but the tropical twilight is so short, that half an hour after sunset it is quite dark. In the rainy season, more especially, the rapidly increasing mountain-torrents are to be feared; after a storm, little gullies become raging torrents, capable of bearing off horse and rider.

During the dry season many of the chasms have no trace of water, whilst in the rainy season devastating floods hurry through them. An English mining-company made bitter experience of this fact. In a tolerably wide chasm, they had erected their huts and store-houses, when in one tropical stormy night, all their labours were completely swept away. Some months afterwards I remarked in the branches of the trees, in the dry bed of the stream, various remnants of their mining-tools.

---

## X.

### THE INHABITANTS OF THE COUNTRY.

---

In the preceding sketches I have endeavoured to afford some descriptions of the surface of the country, less calculated perhaps to interest the general reader, than the friends of natural science. My intention was to offer a view of the soil, on which the various groups of population are met with, in order that the reader might picture

to himself the surrounding landscape, when I proceeded to describe the social relations. When the plateaus are referred to, he knows that tropical forests, and sugar-plantations are there not to be sought for; when speaking of the coast-regions, that corn-fields and pines are wanting.

This would be the fitting place to mention the most remarkable appearances of the animal kingdom; I must, however, reserve it for another chapter, and here venture only to observe that we must beware of attaching credit to all that modern works inform us of the zoological relations of Mexico. The otherwise carefully written work of Mühlenpfordt's, for instance, is quite incorrect in the zoological department; Tümmel's book "Mexico and the Mexicans" tells us fables of monstrous apes, which are clearly the offspring of the disturbed dreams of an ignorant settler, who had plied his rum-bottle somewhat too hard. Old Dr. Hernandez, who describes the animals of Mexico in the sixteenth century, is a more trustworthy authority than many of his successors; and though the learned Professor Lichtenstein of Berlin, in an academical treatise, considers as fabulous many of the animals described by Hernandez, the old author was right, and the animals exist.

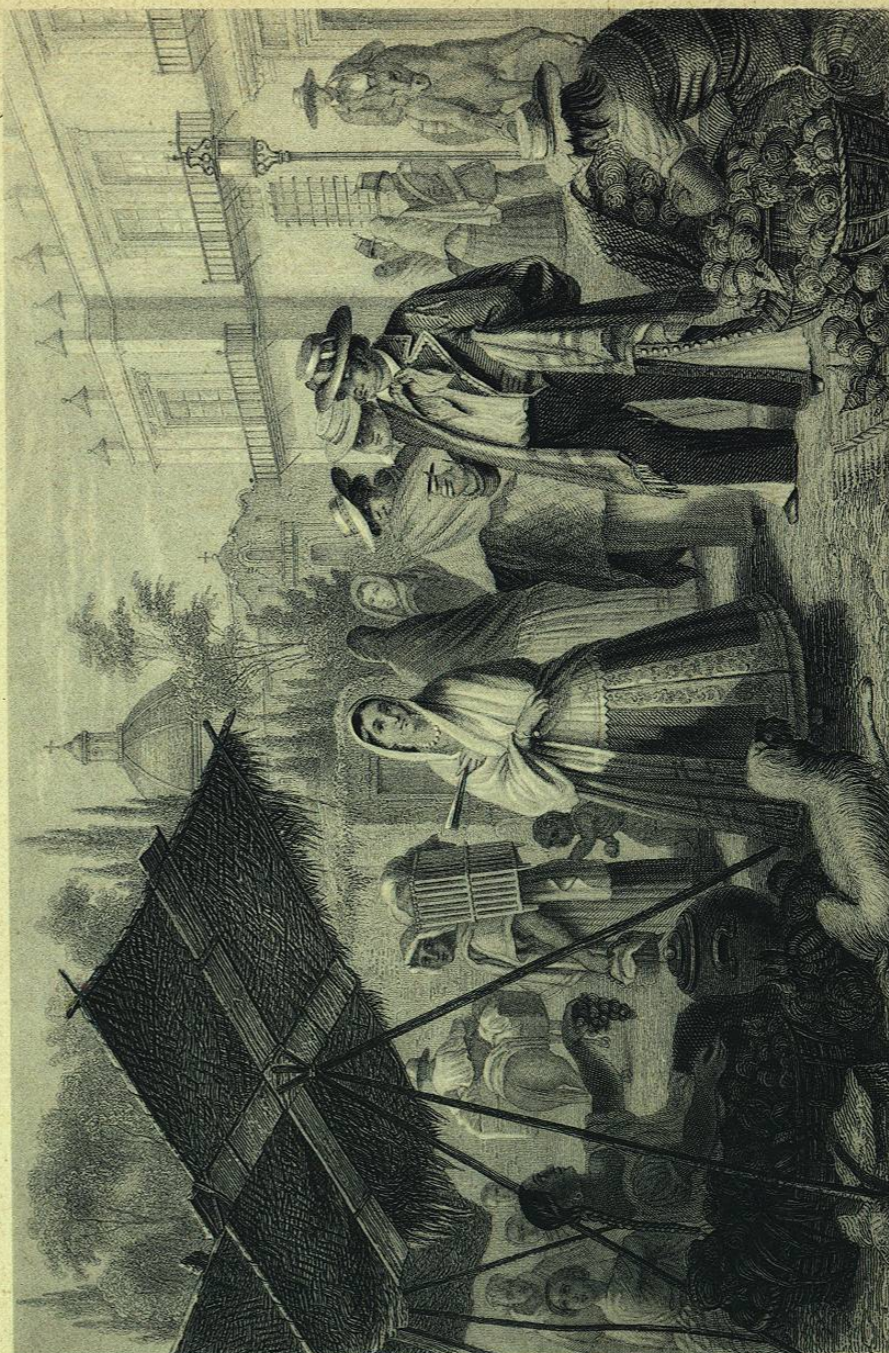
This short digression brings me to the biped creations of Mexico, usually known by the generic name of 'man'. According to the Mexican terminology, they are divided into two kinds, the reasonable and the unreasonable (*gente de razon y gente sin razon*), and although these two species are to be found in all quarters of the globe, and in every climate, the latter predominating, the Spaniard has his own ideas on the subject, and considers the men of his peculiar race alone endowed with reason, the red-skins being denied it. The definition, however, is not extended to all the dark-skinned race, but specially to the full-blood Indians; for those of mixed race, though able perhaps to claim but the most distant relationship to the whites, also pretend to some modicum of reason, and are more pertinaciously opposed to the Indians than the whitest of the whites.

The law knows no distinction of the kind; the constitution has placed all the citizens of the country, whatever their colour, on an equal footing, all privileges of birth are withdrawn, and slavery long since eradicated. Customs, however, which have taken root amongst the people, and are perpetuated by the language, cannot so easily be obliterated by law: consequently we find here an aristocracy of colour, as in European republics or monarchies, an aristocracy of birth. It is precisely the same thing. There and here we talk of blood, of noble race; in the east, as in the west, unequal marriages disturb the repose of families; and we must not be surprised if a white Mexican 'proletarian', of pure and noble descent, on his daughter confessing her ardent affection for a brown youth of mixed race, and asking his consent to their union, bursts into a terrible passion, and exclaims: "Accursed child of Satan! how canst thou thus dishonour thy parents, and desire to sully thy pure race with a colour which would disgrace it for ever! Rather would I see thee in thy coffin, than a brown bantling in thy arms, etc." It is sad to remark

such absurd prejudices; but for the observer of popular customs, even excrescences such as these are of interest.

If we desire to obtain a glance at the different elements of which the people are composed, we mix with the varrying crowd in the market-place, or in the bustle of a popular festival, when all are found united. Accompany me, gentle reader, to the capital of the country, and let us criticise the various figures here assembled at the market. A large building surrounds the place on all four sides; on two sides there are countless booths, where chiefly Europeans, and Creoles of Caucasian race offer their wares. There is no mistaking the Spanish type, for of the Europeans in Mexico, it is exclusively the Spaniard who occupies himself with retail business. In the Creoles we recognize the features of the Spaniard of the south, the conquerors and the first colonists having been mostly Andalusians; they are Arabian physiognomies, not very full, with dark eyes, thick black beards and hair. The man there, in the close-fitting talar, and the broad-brimmed hat, cocked on either side, is also of the Creole race; he is a canon or prebendary, who, here and there saluting, attends the provision-market for gastronomical purposes. Those monks, too, with the brown-skinned lay-brothers, select for their refectory the best the market can afford, at the same time darting amorous glances at the kitchen-maids who accompany that bandy-legged steward of some rich man. The centre of the square, or the space enclosed by the four wings of the great market-buildings, is occupied by long rows of dealers in vegetables, fruit, flowers, poultry etc., and every morning crowds of persons of all classes through the passages of this bazaar. The officer and the official, the flourishing artificer, the wholesale dealer with his clerk, the lawyer, the landed proprietor are mostly whites, and are distinguished by their dress and bearing from the other elements of the population.

The greatest contrast is offered by the negro, or a tawny mulatto, perhaps the cook of a Havannese, or of a native of the coast. Few such are seen, however, in the towns of the plateaus, it being too cold for the African race, who are designed by Nature for a scorching climate. The majority of the market-population are the reddish-brown people, of every shade of colour, from the copper-coloured Indian to the Mestizos, who differ but little from the whites. Strange sights are seen amongst the so-called coloured population. The male and female Indian squat on the ground near their fruit and vegetables, which are placed in layers on a mat, and cry their wares most discordantly. 'Atole' and 'tortillas (boiled maize and maize-bread)' are offered by the Indian women, who fail not with their soft voices to announce their merits. Round them are assembled the muleteer, clad wholly in leather, the soldier from the neighbouring barracks, and the labourer, all of the Mestizo class, to take their breakfast. Here roasted wild ducks are lauded, there a ragout of pork with Spanish pepper, whilst the Indian praises his pulque, or we are invited to drink lemonade, chia-water, and other refreshments in coloured glasses, at a table prettily ornamented with flowers. Here we find the sunburnt rancho, the peasant and herdsman with his wife and daughter, or perhaps his



CITIZENS AND MARKET-FOLKS

sweetheart; *he*, spurred, a whip in his hand, and the showy 'sarape' picturesquely flung over his shoulder like the toga, *she*, with a broad brimmed, felt hat, or with a blue handkerchief round her head to keep off the sun. A brown barefooted fellow has a tray before him, on which are little wax figures representing popular subjects, whilst another offers lottery tickets for sale, and promises luck for the drawing which is to take place in the evening; a third recommends a political pamphlet as the newest and most important thing of the kind. In all the public places of the Mexican towns, we always meet with the 'leperos' or lazaroni. They are found at every corner with a rope and porter's knot, offering their services as porters; they officiate also as day-laboures, scavengers, hawkers; their number is increased by peripatetic cobblers, cock-fighters, conjurors, and above all by the honourable guild of cheats, swindlers, and pickpockets. The rascals are so original in their frivolity, that I must afterwards devote a separate chapter to them.

Among the singular market-figures under the arcades are the so-called evangelists, strange, meager old fellows, usually in dark trowsers and black round jackets. They are seated on a low stool or a step, with a board on their knees, writing. Some servant-girls are whispering their confessions in the ear of one of them, their hands repose confidentially on his shoulder, whilst he raises his bushy brows, and extends his leather-coloured physiognomy, his old fashioned spectacles, clinging to his attenuated nose, and moving up and down on the crooked bridge. Now he nods to signify that he has comprehended what is required of him, and begins to write; his penitents waiting quietly, or hurriedly communicating further wishes. An 'arriero (donkey-driver)' stands near another evangelist, scratching his poll, making piecemeal confessions to his severe examiner, who regards him most suspiciously. The evangelists are the public scribes, who compose love-letters in prose or verse, birth-day congratulations, invitations to stand godfather or godmother, or letters of condolence, etc., all in the most approved form. According to order, the caligraphy is plain or ornamental, with marginal drawings such as turtle-doves surrounded with foliage, burning hearts, or hearts transfixed with arrows, roses, or weeping willows. One should listen occasionally; and most edifying histories may be heard. The evangelist also carries on a petty traffic with ink, ready-made pens, and fancy-paper for billets-doux; scandal indeed affirms that they are also procurers; but this is probably the offspring of professional envy, and it is to be presumed that they would not thus lower their evangelical dignity.\*

The Mexican population presents the most striking contrasts, unlike that of any city of north-western Europe. On one side splendour and luxury, elegant carriages, and Parisian toilette, on the other dirt and indigence, an exclusive life, with a separate national type in its outward appearance, in language and manners. The different figures presented to us at the market, comprise a leaf of the history of

\* These public scribes are not to be confounded with those met with in Rome and Constantinople, with the 'escribanos publicos', or notaries public, who undertake the so-called voluntary jurisdiction.

the country, a sad one, as with so many nations. The dusky Indian ruled here, and boasted a mighty empire; the superior intelligence of the Europeans conquered it, and rendered the freemen slaves. The severe tasks imposed on them, carried off thousands, and to save them from extirpation, the black African was introduced. Three centuries passed, during which the Indian still existed, having been and remaining a tiller of the land, without being compelled to enter upon a new phase of existence, which would have embittered his days, like the North American hunter, who pined in cities, and fretted himself to death like the lion in his cage.

When Cortes with his daring band conquered Mexico, the dominant race was that of the Aztecs, who coming as invaders from the north, had subjected the peaceful agricultural nation, and enriched with immense booty, had adopted the customs of those they had overthrown. The noblest of the Aztecs fell in the struggle with the Spaniards, their property passed into the hands of the victors, who, at the same time became possessed of the families of those who had fallen; the rude warriors were pleased with their acquisition, and married the dusky daughters of the country, who were rendered their equals, by baptism. Cortes himself married the beautiful Marina or Matintzin. Can we therefore be surprised if his comrades, and the numerous adventurers, whom the fame of Mexico's treasures attracted thither from Europe after the conquest, sought to obtain wealth and landed estates by espousing a noble Aztec girl? At the time no one considered this a mis-alliance, in the first decenniums the expression Mestizo or Mestins was unknown, and the noble families of the Aztecs, were regarded as nobles of Spain. The sons of Montezuma, who were educated in Spain, received the title of Count; and many originally Indian families in Mexico, existing even at the present day, for example: Schikotenkal, Chimalpopoca, Ixtlisutschil etc., were invariably equally respected with the Spaniards. We must therefore conclude, that the Indian aristocracy either fell in battle with the Spaniards, or deemed it advisable to join them, and thus secure their material interest. They adopted Christianity, and became amalgamated with the new population.

It was not so with the poorer class, who from the earliest periods had been subjected to the Indian aristocracy, and at the conquest only changed masters. They were not regarded by the Spaniards as equals, and though not slaves they were considered minors, even by law, and consequently the pariahs of society. Nevertheless countless mongrels were born, some in lawful matrimony, some 'per nefas'; and during three centuries the priest and the monk, the soldier and the young Creole have continued to graft the Caucasian stock on the wild trunk. Thus arose the numerous Mestizo population, which has inherited in part the brown hue of the mother, but also the greater energy and more vigorous mind of the father. The gradations of colour are naturally determined by the degree of relationship, the union of the Mestizo with the whites giving rise to a lighter, that with the Indians to a darker hue.

The African race, which is but slightly represented in Mexico, has such very marked characteristics, that it may be recognized in spite of every intermarriage,

by the woolly hair, thick lips, and broad compressed nose. From the union of a negro with an Indian female, or of a Mulatto with a negress, arise those dark-brown Mestizos, known on the west coast by the appellation Zambos; in general, however, the different degrees of colour are not taken into consideration, as was the case when slavery still existed, and as it still is in the West Indies and North America. Mexico, in fact, never had many slaves, and these only in the torrid regions on the coast. In the higher districts, where there was no want of hands, the conviction had long since been arrived at, that the labour of freemen was cheaper than that of slaves. In the time of the Spanish dominion, a proprietor named Yermo, a native of Biscay, who cultivated several large sugar-plantations with the assistance of slaves, made the calculation that free labour would cost him less; he assembled therefore his negroes, and offered them their liberty, on condition of their remaining on the estate, and taking service under him as free labourers. The blacks accepted the offer with the greatest delight, but they soon found out that they must work harder than before, that they must now provide themselves with lodging, clothing, and food. After a few weeks, they begged their master to receive them again as slaves! Of course he was not able to do so, as they had been legally manumitted; they remained therefore free labourers. On these estates the African type may be recognized even to the present day, though it is disappearing more and more by intermarriage.

When in 1810 the Creole population rose against the Spanish rule, abolition of slavery was proclaimed in one of the first paragraphs, and as soon as they had attained complete independence, it was determined by the Constitution, that slavery should not be permitted within the bounds of the republic, that every slave should be free, as soon as he touched Mexican ground.

In time the black race will disappear altogether, and would have been extinct already, if free negroes, mostly artificers, had not emigrated from Cuba, and other islands of the West Indies, and settled in the sea-ports. Though their number be small, it is still sufficient to keep up this part of the population. In a legal point of view, they are on an equality with every other citizen.

The varied groups of the Mexican population, have something highly original, and form an excellent relief to the landscape; particularly the Creole in the country, and the Mestizos, who as horsemen, are quite equal to the Arabs, and gallop about the far-extending plateaus. Saddle and bridle have something antique in their appearance, as though dating from the time of Cortes. It looks well, however, is quite practical for the country, and convenient for horse and rider. The latter is as firm in the saddle as though he were glued to it, and his motions are as easy and safe as though he were exhibiting his skill in the circus. A broad-brimmed hat, with a coloured riband round the short head, shades the brown bearded face; the shirt-collar is turned back very far, and kept together by a carelessly tied, bright silk handkerchief. His upper garment is a short jacket, often of brown or black deerskin ornamented with a number of silver buttons. The trowsers of deerskin,

1020001195

or cloth beset with leather, are fastened with a bright silk girdle (*banda*), wound three or four times round the body; down the sides are many buttons, but they are closed only to the knees, so as to fall over the peculiar leggings, which are fastened under the knee, and consist of large pieces of pressed deerskin, twisted twice round the lower part of the thigh. The foot is protected by leathern half-boots, on which the large jingling spurs, whose sharp rowels are often two inches in diameter, are fastened with straps.

The horseman is never without his cloak, in rain or sunshine, be it the parti-coloured 'sarape', or the sober 'manga'. Both are pieces of woollen stuff, two fathoms long by one broad, furnished in the middle with an opening longways (this slit which is two feet in length, is usually trimmed with velvet, several inches broad, and bordered with gold and silver fringe), through which in rainy weather the head is thrust, the cloth thus covering the whole body. In good weather the cloak is merely flung over the shoulder; but without it no Mexican leaves home, on horseback or on foot; it is a mark of his dignity, the toga, which accompanies him to market and to church, and which is only laid aside at home, or when at work.

In the towns the younger Creole, belonging to the educated classes, is dressed in the European style. The desire to play the dandy is unmistakeable in the young people; whilst the old Creole, as well as the Spaniard, never quits his dwelling without his long dark cloth cloak (*caba*), even though the sun be in the zenith.

The Indian invariably retains his national dress, which is as simple as the whole mode of life of these children of nature. The man wears short, wide drawers of coarse cotton, or brown deerskin, which seldom reach to the knee, and a sort of frock of coarse woollen cloth, fastened round his hips with a belt. A little straw hat and sandals complete his dress, which is devoid of all ornament. The females wrap themselves in a piece of woollen stuff, that passes twice round the body, but is not closed with a seam; this is girded round the waist with a broad, coloured band, so that it forms a sort of gown, reaching to the unshod feet. The upper part of the body is covered with the 'huipile' a wide garment, closed on all sides, reaching to the knee, and furnished with two openings for the arms. The hair, tied up with a bright riband, is either wound about the head in a thick roll, or hangs down in two plaits. Large earrings and bead necklaces complete the toilette. The Indians distinguish their tribes by the colour and fashion of their simple clothing, like the Scotch Highlanders. Wearing shoes is considered by them a departure from the good old fashion.

So much for the outward appearance of the popular groups, as they present themselves at the first glance. The description of the life and manners of the separate classes of the population will afford these slight outlines colouring and shade.

## XI.

### THE CREOLES.

The word Creole (*criollo*) means in general "native", and is employed thus in Mexico; in a more limited sense, the meaning: native of white or European descent, is attached to it. We are about to make acquaintance with the Creoles in the latter signification.

The white Mexicans represent the intelligence of the country, and may therefore be regarded as the nobility and gentry. The Creoles constitute a seventh part of the population, about 1,200,000. In outward appearance they approach the Spaniards; and yet a peculiar type is unmistakeable. Men and women are seldom above the middle height, of slender growth, with dark hair, lively dark eyes, and little hands and feet. We find many faces of an oriental cast, with the curved nose and fine mouth. The complexion usually is not very fresh, especially in the warmer districts; in the colder parts, however, rosy cheeks, and even fair hair are not uncommon. Both sexes soon arrive at maturity; the young man is completely developed at seventeen, the girl at fourteen. The Creole is very animated; he learns with facility, is of active habits, a graceful dancer, a skilful horseman, but not very muscular, and unfit for a continuance of heavy labour. His speech is quick, and accompanied with most animated gestures. This, though a peculiarity of all southern nations, is specially cultivated by the Mexicans; and the northman, who hardly accompanies his speech with more than a slight movement of the hand, wonders at the thousand motions which as dumb show sometimes award more emphasis to what is said, sometimes serve as a commentary.

If, for instance, I desire to indicate the height of an object with my hand, for inanimate things I employ the horizontal position of the whole hand, for an animal, the upright position of the whole hand, for a human being, the raised forefinger. If I beckon some one to approach, I move the palm towards my body in a descending curve; the contrary motion, from the body, means: "Go away!" If I move the hand vertically downwards, the meaning is: "Stand still." The language of a people is not thoroughly understood, unless their looks and gestures are also comprehended; but it requires long practice to render one's self acquainted with this dumb show, especially if the parties are desirous that it should not be understood, as with the telegraphic communications of lovers, etc.

In general the Creole is passionate and easily moved; but he is able to govern his emotions. His warm blood often runs off with his head; anger, love, or jealousy drive him to inconsiderate actions; but he is soon restored to his usual equanimity. Treachery is foreign to him; he seeks not to revenge himself by hired bandits, as in Italy or Portugal. Though we are informed by many tourists, that when offended