

perse the rest, who after many vicissitudes, at length reach their village, fully resolved upon a repetition the next time they go to the city.

Such are the Indians of the present day. I shall often have occasion to revert to them in descriptions of Church festivals, marriage ceremonies, burials, and the like.

XIII.

THE MESTIZOES.

In treating of the different classes of Mexican population in my first section I have characterized the Mestizoes or Mestins in general. The coloured population, including every shade from almost white to the darkest brown, are classed in this country under the general expression of castes (*castas*). The Negroes are also included under this name but not the Indians. Consequently in official communications, statistical tables etc. we find the divisions: Whites, Indians and castes.

I have noticed above that the number of Negroes is but small, and almost exclusively confined to sea-coast districts. There they maintain themselves, partly by marriages with negroes of pure blood, and partly by the immigration of free blacks from Louisiana, from Cuba and other of the West Indian islands. As they have few national peculiarities, but conform in their habits to the Mestizoes in general, I shall omit to speak of them in particular.

The Mulattoes, who in part are the descendants of a black mother and white father, and in part the result of various interminglings of Mulattoes with Negroes, Indians, Mestizoes or Mulattoes among themselves, are so manifold in their nature, that the name which once indicated the degree of intermixture, no more suffices to give a clue to it. The appellation now embraces all in which the African type of crisped, woolly hair, flat nose, thick lips, coarse hands and feet etc. is to be traced. They also go under the name of *Chinas* and *woolly-heads*, and are found almost exclusively upon the coasts.

The Mestizoes are properly the offspring of a white father and Indian mother. In a period of three hundred years, a numerous population of this class was formed, and as the elements still exist, is still forming, although much mixed through the various relations of the Mestizoes among themselves, and with the whites and Indians. This is the Mestizo race of which we are to treat in this connection.

The Mestizo has an inborn originality; is the representative of national customs and peculiarities which cannot for a moment escape observation. While the Creole has taken for pattern his progenitor the Spaniard, and sought as far as possible to reproduce him, while the Indian was quietly preserving the usages of his forefathers without ever being able to assert a prominent position, the Mestizo has never been anything else than Mexican, and the Creole has adopted his peculiarities rather than the reverse.

The Mestizo is a hardy fellow, of lank elastic form; his complexion is not white, neither is it copper-coloured like that of the Indian, but a light brown, through which the flush of the cheeks appears. The hair is thick and black, but softer than the Indian's, the forehead higher, the eyes brilliant, sometimes black, sometimes hazel. He has inherited the Roman nose and heavy black beard of his father, the white teeth and small foot of the mother. One might take him for an Arab, as lance in hand he rushes past upon his light steed. He is an excellent horseman, of a bold excitable disposition, temperate and persevering, but levity itself; always prepared for the dance or game, undisturbed by any care for the future, if the present moment has anything to enjoy.

If my reader will accompany me, we will enter that stately village, just visible through the thick dark foliage of fruit trees. It is Sunday, and the people are assembled yonder for church as if for market; for there is still the same condition in Mexico as existed a few centuries ago in our own country. The church brings together the inhabitants who live scattered far and wide throughout the village. They take the products of their field with them and purchase with them whatever they need for the coming week. In Germany the name *mass* is still retained for certain markets which had attached themselves to the church, and at which a special mass was read. Thus also here; around the church is the market, and during the service the noisy crowd is in full activity until the bell announces the act of transubstantiation within, when suddenly all becomes silent as the grave; at the third stroke the multitude cross themselves, and then at once the tumult of business goes on again. In many villages, especially in the mining districts, a special mass (*misa de plaza*), is read for the market people; a portable altar is set up in the porch of the church, trade and traffic cease as if through some enchantment, every seller kneels beside his wares and with his face turned towards the east receives the blessing.

Let us walk along through that broad cheerful street leading to the market. It is paved and has side-walks of broad flag-stones. The houses are all of one story, partly with flat roofs and partly covered with tiles. They are painted white, and have large windows with wooden lattice-work instead of glass. All the streets cross each other at right angles, and nearly all the corner houses are stores, in which many men assemble, partly to trade and partly to drink. The market square is a large quadrangle, one side of which is formed by the great stone church, adorned and shaded by several rows of cypress and orange-trees. Larger houses, mostly of several stories with arcades, make up the other three sides. Among these the one

with the flag-staff upon the roof is obviously the town-hall. In the one adjoining, probably the priest dwells, for a clerical-looking gentleman is standing at the door, and the rest are trading houses of the Spaniards or Creoles who carry on business in all the villages throughout the country. Now let us turn our attention to the market. The articles for sale are arranged in regular rows. Vegetables and fruits of all kinds, maize, beans, coffee, brown sugar, fresh and smoked meat, fish, poultry, earthenware, mats, baskets, dry goods of various kinds, iron-work and toys: these are the commodities which one finds exposed for sale on Sunday in every large village. At one end are tables loaded with drinks, and in connection stewed meats, with reddish broth of Spanish pepper and fresh tortillas (maize-bread).

Among the traders one distinguishes at the first glance the Mestizoes from the Indians, by their dress, complexion and language. The Mestizo is also clad differently from the Creole, who imitates the European fashions, but the garb of the former is not ill-looking, and is particularly becoming to the horseman. In the warmer regions the Mestizo wears on Sunday a white shirt carefully plaited or embroidered, long wide trowsers of drilling or various coloured cotton-stuff, fastened round the hips by a gay silken girdle; brown leather gaiters, a broad-brimmed felt hat and a parti-coloured covering thrown over the shoulders for a mantle. He never cumbers his neck with a cravat, his shirt is generally open, and upon his naked breast a malls rosary or a scapulary is seen. The peasants or rancheros that live upon farms, usually distinguish themselves from the villagers by means of the calzoneras, a sort of trowsers, left open on the outside from above the knee, and through this opening the broad white linen drawers appear. They also gird themselves with a straight hanger, which is in no case omitted. The village artisans, tradesmen and mule-owners (arriero) wear upon holidays a calico or tick jacket, but dress like the rest on other days.

The Mestizoes of the table-lands wear everywhere the calzoneras of cloth or brown buckskin, and set off with many buttons on the sides. A sort of riding-boot of pressed leather, fastened about the knee by a coloured knee-band, protects the leg from thorns. The colder climate demands also warmer covering for the body; a cloth or leathern jacket is consequently worn, the latter often richly ornamented in front with silver buttons, needle-work of bright coloured leather and the like. A coloured silk handkerchief, loosely tied about the neck, and the woollen mantle *i. e.* the great carpet-like garment, resembling a herald's mantle hanging down behind and before, completes the defence against the cold. An embroidered band of pearls, fur, gold or silver-work, about the hat is never wanting.

The church-service is just ended and the multitude is pouring out through the folding-doors. In Europe the men are fond of gazing at the motley crowd of church-goers; and in Mexico they are not less so. We shall therefore be in no danger of offending against the customs of the country by falling in with the corps of observers. A band of proletarians forms the vanguard of the procession, barefooted fellows, whose attire indicates that they have not very long become sober. They are the last to go into

church and the first to come out; consequently they take their place close by the door. They have other reasons also for choosing this position, especially that they may be able to avail themselves of the precious time, as they say, during the sermon, to visit the nearest gin-shop, as otherwise the admonitions of the father would give them the headache, especially upon an empty stomach.

Next follow the peasants, all cleanly clad with their sarapes and mangas (simple or various coloured coverings) thrown around them like the toga. Immediately on stepping out of the church they exchange compliments with those about them, for it is the custom throughout the land to salute each other after mass. All these are Mestizoes, hale and robust of countenance with firm and graceful gait. The more thriving Indians go dressed in a similar manner (this is found to be the case everywhere among the mixed population), but they are easily distinguished by their complexion, lack of beard and inferior carriage. Now follows the crowd of women; first the unshod Indians in their embroidered huipiles, and many with children by the hand. Their step is hurried and not graceful, and their feet turn inward; they do not look about them and are not much noticed, for behind them are the wives and daughters of the Mestizoes. These latter are of good stature with elegant waist, prominent hips, easy and graceful carriage. In colour they are nearly white, their lips are fresh, cheeks tinged with red, and the movements of their dark eyes are far from phlegmatic. Their habit is adapted to the climate, light and simple. They wear a fine white chemise with short sleeves set round with points. It is plaited and cut tolerably open, but gathered with an embroidered trimming or selvage so that it may not stand out. A silken scarf is tied about the neck. Full skirts trimmed below with embroidered points, extend to the feet. A girdle of silken crape passing three or four times round the waist serves to fasten them. The material is ordinarily calico, but on Sundays, and when they wish to dress in state, they prefer white or coloured muslin, embroidered moll, and other light fashionable stuffs, with heavier, coloured under garments. Stockings are seldom seen (in the towns of the table-lands silk stockings are sometimes worn upon special festivals), but the little foot is encased in a satin or cloth slipper. An important article of clothing is the wrapper (pañó de rebozo) a kind of shawl, of greater length than breadth, of a peculiar sort of cotton fabric and generally with dark stripes. This is thrown over the head; in such a way, however, that the face remains perfectly free. One of the long fringed ends falls down in front, while the other is thrown over the shoulder. In this way the body is covered, the face set in a dark frame, and the hands kept constantly employed. First upon one side, then on the other must the drapery be rearranged; the beautiful form is now disclosed now concealed, glances are exchanged, and since, constantly changing, the head can be turned at pleasure, an excellent opportunity is afforded for coquetting, and the lasses understand well how to avail themselves of it. The older ladies also conduct themselves after the same fashion, and as well as the girls allow their hair to hang down in long braids behind. Throughout the land caps are nowhere worn; but on horseback, a broad-brimmed hat like that

of the men, protects them from the sun, and the cloth which otherwise serves as a head-covering is now tied about them like a scarf. In the larger villages the Mestizo matron attires herself in a dress with waist and sleeves, at least on going out. She nevertheless does not give up the rebozo. The young people, on the contrary, north as well as south, will hear nothing of the sack, which as they say, binds up the chest and allows them no freedom of movement.

Really we have been gazing so long after the ladies, that we well nigh overlooked the rear guard of our procession, and it is precisely this that imagines itself especially worthy of our consideration. The people of distinction (*la gente decente*) come last, for it passes for respectable with people of quality and good breeding not to walk out immediately upon the priest's leaving the altar, but to remain behind and say a few more Paternosters. Look out! here comes the heavy artillery, the pure blood, the genuine Castilian! "Who are these?" asks one at our side. "What magnificence! What a fat lady though!" "Do you not know her?" returns the other. "That is Doña Pomposa, the wife of the judge, with her two daughters. What splendid creatures (*que lindas criaturas!*)" In the Spanish parade step the noble dame bears down upon us, clad in light blue satin, a sulphur-coloured shawl forming the drapery of the head and shoulders — laced to a fearful extent, but yet three fathoms in circumference. With the air of a conqueror she bestows her salutations left and right, and her two chicklings, already pretty well fledged to be sure, and of no inconsiderable weight, smile graciously and play with their fans. The lady of the Alcalde follows in black silk attire, attended by her niece, a tall, spare, cinnamon-coloured woman, and obviously in bad humour because slightly eclipsed by her predecessors. The Alcalde and judge, the one in dress, the other in frock-coat follow, apparently absorbed in state matters. Then come a few more ladies and gentlemen of different ages, some in half, some in full European costume, who, as I learn from my neighbour, are the families of the county-clerk, custom-house officer, merchants etc.; the ladies all regular beauties, and stared at and admired by the spectators.

Entirely in the rear come a few closely-veiled female forms. The tips of their noses are scarcely visible, and their step in the highest degree measured. "And these?" asked I. "Are devotees" (*beatas*) replied my neighbour. "Church-spiders, altar-feeders; but it is not so bad after all; they have tender hearts, and when a handsome fellow presses their hand, they by no means scratch his eyes out, notwithstanding they confess every week." — "I am obliged to you," returned I, "for this pleasant piece of information. I should never have imagined that civilization had already found its way so far into these remote regions. This is precisely the case also in Europe."

On a Sunday morning after church, in one of these villages at the foot of the Andes, are very many things said and thought about, rather more nearly connected with this world than the next; therefore what we overhear from the two swarthy fellows walking in front of us need not create surprise. "Hear Pepe, the fair blonde has given me a wink; it is all right!" "Where did you see her then?" — "At church. I calculate upon your horse." At this point the words are lost in the wind, and the two speakers in the market-crowd.

In the country the number of Mestizoes is unquestionably greater than that of the white Creoles. The class of small land-owners and farmers, the scattered peasants and shepherds are nearly all Mestizoes. Precisely this brave, simple, industrious, trustworthy peasantry is the heart of the Mexican nation. It has so much originality in its entire appearance, that we must devote a chapter exclusively to it.

Among the artisans of the towns and villages there are indeed many Creoles, but also many Mestizoes, who since freeing themselves from Spanish authority have apparently improved their condition, and have sufficient ambition to undertake to cope with the whites or even to surpass them.

The trade was formerly entirely in the hands of the Spaniards and Creoles, but now there are many Mestizoes occupied in it. They have charge especially of the trade at the markets, traffic in the products of the land and the like.

The immense host of muleteers or *arrieros*, by means of which nearly the whole transit business of Mexico is carried on, consists of Mestizoes. The merchant entrusts to his hands the most valuable commodities. They transport gold and silver ingots, rich ores and coin, giving no other security than a bill of lading. It is a toilsome life that this *arriero* leads. The whole year round he travels along the road with his beasts, now in the scorching, sickly regions of the coast, now upon the rough mountain-ranges; morning and night he loads and unloads the heavy burdens of his beasts, sleeps nearly always in the open air, and prepares his meals during the bivouac. Upon marshy ways, where in the rainy season his animals often stick fast, he himself must bear the burdens to dry land, wade through swollen, turbulent streams, keep watch over his animals, and in short endure the hardest fatigues that a man is able to bear; and yet he is cheerful and in good humour in the midst of his toilsome occupation. Scarcely has he pitched his camp covered his goods and fed his beasts, when he begins to dance by the fire to the sound of the *jarana*, and accompanies the dance with lively songs. Whoever has only cast a glance upon the country is acquainted with these tough, stout fellows, with their coarse woollen apron, their leathern cuirass and *tapajo*, a piece of leather to cover the eyes of the beasts while they are being laden, to which also a heavy whip is attached. Their constant intercourse with asses does not improve their manners, nor make their language the most elegant; but they are a hardy and serviceable class of men.

Nearly all the male and female domestics in the towns and villages are Mestizoes, they are apt and skilful, and distinguish themselves by their courtesy towards their employers. The servants upon a journey are far more expert and serviceable than the European; and instances of self-sacrificing fidelity in defence of their masters are by no means rare.

In the mines it is chiefly the Mestizoes who labour as carriers and pickmen, and as smelters and assistants in the foundries. It is enough to say in praise of their capability and endurance in these occupations, that German miners when placed in competition with them have not been able to equal them. Also in agriculture on a large scale upon the extensive plantations, the looking after and execution of all its various branches is entrusted to the Mestizoes.