

In the cultivation of grain they have charge of the ploughing and sowing, and also of the boiling and purifying upon the sugar plantations, as well as the thinning and removing the suckers from the tobacco; — in short, everything demanding intelligence and judgment devolves upon the Mestizoes; the Indians only perform the mechanical drudgery of day-labourers. This is also the case in the raising of cattle; the Indian herds the sheep and goats, while the Mestizo overlooks the whole, and especially the breeding of cows and horses.

But the Mestizo by no means confines his activity to private life; very many devote themselves to study and find their employment in the service of the state or church. They have access to the chamber of deputies, as well as to the benches of the courts of justice, and appear in the monk's cowl, as well as in the officer's uniform.

It would be improper to call the Mestizoes the middle class of society, for one cannot speak of differences of rank in Mexico, such as exist in Europe. In one case he occupies nearly the same position as the Creole, and in another approaches the Indian, just according to his nearness of relationship with one race or the other. The Creole would gladly contest his equality, while the Indian hates him as the bastard of his daughter; thus apparently both poles are negative. But the positive lies however upon the white side, for there is the attracting force, and the nearer the Mestizo approaches the Creole in colour, the more easy becomes the amalgamation with him. Thus the progress is continually towards the whites. That which has once been torn away from the Indian race, rarely returns to unite itself again. The Indian seeks his marriage alliances only among those of unmixed blood; the ambition of the Mestizo is only satisfied with a wife of fairer colour than himself.

Vagabondism is found properly among the Mestizoes, receiving some accessions to be sure, from the whites and Indians. It is here not an incurable thing as in Europe, for labour is readily found, and homes and possessions are easily acquired. An efficient police would be able to eradicate it in a short time. In the large cities this nuisance thrives upon the outcasts of society, abandoned gamblers, broken-down drunkards, and idlers by profession. In Vera Cruz and Acapulco, the typhus and yellow fever have rendered the penal laws the most salutary assistance. Until lately the young vagabonds were thrust into military service; a matter that I shall speak of more particularly in another chapter.

The number of Mestizoes throughout the whole republic exceeds two millions, and thus constitutes over a fourth of the entire population. The whites and mixed races included, we must reckon the census at three millions and a half; the Indians at four millions and a half. But in moral influence the minority holds the preponderance over the greater, is bound together by uniformity of language and manners, and rules by its higher intelligence and energy of character. I have already noticed the active spirit by which the Mestizo distinguishes himself, and I may also add that he has the advantage of his father, the white Creole, in many respects. He has more decision and elasticity, and is less effeminate. Brought up to toil and accustomed to privation, he adapts himself easily to every situation, and overcomes

difficulties from which the Creole shrinks. In his family he preserves many of the patriarchal virtues: respect for age, kindness to servants, and hospitality. He learns with readiness, has about him no traces of fanaticism or mystical dreaming, and in the intercourse of life conducts himself with ease and propriety. But he lacks development, instruction, and especially a simple moral and religious training. Precisely this defect is the cause of his anomalies of character. Having a perception of honour and justice; and much sound sense, his unbridled temperament urges him on to a thousand follies, ambition, gaming and women are the elements which kindle a volcanic fire in his breast, and fan all the passions into conflagration. Wounded ambition drives him to the wildest excesses of anger, and often to crime. Yet the storm quickly passes, and the clouds never linger behind. One thus offended once said to me: "I could not eat nor sleep; I was forced to seek him; I threw myself upon him and beat him till my heart found rest." This indicates their disposition, which however often leads them to fatal deeds.

Their inclination for games of hazard is a paternal inheritance, which had already found its way to America from Spain. They venture their money upon horse and foot-races, cock-fights and tennis, but above all, card-playing becomes with them a most pernicious passion. Wherever men assemble the bank is held, every one ventures what he has, and when this is lost, he plays upon credit. The farming peasants hold themselves most aloof from this, and play but rarely and with caution. On the contrary, in the towns, villages and mining districts, as well as on the estates, this vice is very common. The labouring classes can hardly wait for their weekly pay, that they may take their earnings to the play-table; and if the wife does not immediately appropriate a sufficient sum for the necessaries of life, the family on Sunday is often in the greatest want. The magistracy of many places attempt to suppress gambling, and send civil officers here and there throughout the whole of Saturday night (for gaming is carried on to the greatest extent at this time), in order to break up the clubs. But little however is accomplished by this means. The gamblers understand how to conceal themselves in all sorts of out-of-the-way places from the eye of the police. The effect of these games upon the character of the people is pernicious in the highest degree. It is purely selfish passion, and extinguishes every better feeling, as I have noticed in another place. The family is neglected, the desire for gain without labour destroys all relish for legitimate activity, their cheerfulness forsakes them, and since it is not easy to sit the night out without drink, drunkenness is an invariable accompaniment, and completes the gamester's ruin. This effect is visible upon the working-classes in numberless instances and would prove absolutely destructive, did not the inborn levity of the Mestizo mitigate its worst results. He loses whatever he has, skulks home in the morning twilight, perhaps without shoes or trowsers, but gives himself no concern about it, sings and dances on Sunday, and goes to work again on Monday in hopes of recovering his lost fortunes.

These same phenomena we observe also in the East Indies, among the Malays

of Java and Borneo, and upon the continent of Asia; except that there the passion for gaming reaches a still higher pitch, and the effeminate people are destitute of all energy and capacity for labour. The Mexican can work, and does work heartily, that he may have the means to play again. "Let them play" the owner of a large estate once said to me, as I was speaking with him in regard to the evils of it, "for it is only by this means that we have labourers. If these men were to save their earnings by leading a regular life, they would soon become independent." And this is really the case. Good economists who do not gamble, in a very short time work out for themselves a competency.

In matters of love, of all others, the Mestizo may not be crossed, for he is like powder. He does not coo like a sentimental dove, nor sigh in the moonshine; possession alone will satisfy him, and no obstacle is sufficient to deter him from the conquest. If he sees a woman who impresses his fancy, whether she be maiden or wife, he seeks to make known his inclination to the object of his love. But this is not so light a matter, for the daughter is always watched, and custom does not allow him to speak to her alone. Some confidential old go-between must consequently first prepare the way, and a dance must serve to bring the parties together. Both sexes are passionately fond of the "fandango", a name that the people apply to the dance in general. When a few rockets are sent up (the customary signal that there is dancing in the house) there is no more quiet for old or young; all gather round to see how the matter goes. A little space is sufficient, a few tallow candles or pine torches constitute the illumination, a few mats upon the floor serve as sofas for the ladies, a few guitars and jaranas, or a harp, for music.

The Mestizoes dance only the Spanish popular dances which are always accompanied with singing, and since the young people have for the most part much talent for music (nearly all play and sing and also improvise verses with facility), the music is not only easily furnished, but the singing affords excellent opportunities for making love and receiving messages. Love and jealousy, assaults and evasions, anger and reconciliation for ever constitute the subject of these songs, which are nevertheless of interest as the expressions of national peculiarity.

At these fandangos then, the larger share of love adventures are either entered upon or carried out. The bottle circulates freely with wine or some sweet liquor for the ladies, and brandy, tepatsche or pulque for the men. The songs follow each other in quick succession, more and more lively grows the dance, often they clap their hands in time to the music and at the estribillo (refrain) they whirl suddenly round, and the dancing couples stand face to face. Now is the opportunity for a word or signal, whereby they may concert a more lengthened conversation, as soon as they are able to escape the eyes of observers. A short rendezvous is sufficient to decide upon a place where they may meet with more safety, and if the difficulties are too great, the pair suddenly abscond in the night and darkness, and reappear in some other region as man and wife. This very often happens, and is an easy matter in a land where the institution of police is scarcely known by

name, where the many scattered plantations have little intercourse with the villages, and gladly receive all labourers who come in search of employment. Very often the mad adventure leads to marriage, but often too it is impossible, since one or the other party, perhaps both, are already bound by ties of wedlock. Numberless instances of this kind have come under my observation; many of my own servants had their wives upon trial, and it often happened that an indignant spouse or an enraged father came to demand back his own. In several instances I assumed the office of mediator, and there had the best opportunities of observing the morals of the people in this respect. All ranks are equally lax upon this point, the priesthood not excepted. I had once a fine fellow in my employ, who had with him a pretty young woman, pretending she was his wife. I was exceedingly well satisfied with him, but suddenly one morning both disappeared. This was dictated by prudence, for he knew that search was being made for him. He had been a monk in a Franciscan convent, and had run away, taking the young wife of a relation along with him as his travelling companion.

I have abundant material from the life of the people for piquant anecdote, which I might avail myself of in a more extensive work. I must content myself here however with only a hasty characterization of the various groups of society. — But we have left our church-goers quite out of sight, and hardly deigned the village nobles a look while we have been discussing these half-breeds. Shall we be pardoned for this? We will see. At the next corner dwells the well-beloved. We will attempt to double the Punta Gorda (the high promontory near Vera Cruz) in safety, and make a few other calls. Stay! here are the sirens; we must enter. "Senoritas we throw ourselves at your feet. How is your Highness' health? Excellent of course. Who could doubt it on seeing your splendid appearance!" Gracious smiles, charming assent. "But walk in, gentlemen, papa will be here in a moment, he is still at the court-hall." — In the village dwellings one enters immediately from the street into the chief apartment, the hall where the whole furniture of the house is concentrated. Here all guests are received, and only the most intimate acquaintances are admitted into the inner apartments, where the ladies are accustomed to indulge themselves in the utmost *negligée*.

"Capital that you are here to-day", said Donna Pomposa. "We are to have an entertainment this afternoon. There is to be a cock-fight." — "Yes and afterwards", interrupted Donna Victoriana, "we will take a walk to the fountain in the woods, a merienda*) to which all furnish something. You will join us though?" — "With pleasure, if I shall not seem intrusive; but it is perhaps a select party?" — "Oh by no means!" exclaimed Donna Conception, the youngest sister, who had long been impatient to have a voice in the matter. "The invitation is for all who will go with us. Mamma to be sure thought it would be better if only the respectable families

*) Merienda is the evening meal — a cold collation, taken about five o'clock in the afternoon, especially upon excursions.

should take part in it (*la gente decente* the white Creoles like to consider themselves in opposition to the Mestizoes), because the common people so easily crowd themselves in." — The old lady cast a significant glance at the speaker, and blew the smoke of her cigarette through both nostrils — "but papa said that would not do, because the second *alcalde* and the *regidores* (common council) could not be excluded. And I don't see any objection either; there are honest people besides ourselves although their colour" — "Silence!" cries the mother, who has lost her patience over this philanthropic development of the daughter, and directs the conversation to other topics, particularly to the question whether we shall go on foot or on horseback. The young ladies prefer riding, but the mother shows herself inclined towards the infantry, and I declare myself of her opinion from purely selfish motives. According to the custom of the country we should be under the necessity of calling for the ladies and of offering them the saddle; and I trembled for the back of my good horse, who would not only have the enormous weight of the dame to carry, but also my own, because it is the fashion for us to mount behind the saddle and play the devoted knight to the fair one. The judge came most opportunely to the rescue, and decided at once with his better half, and we parted light of heart, to meet again at the cock-fight.

About noon when the market closes, the people crowd into the shops, partly to make purchases and partly to drink. No regular beer-houses are found in all Spanish America. Sitting and drinking together is something entirely unknown. Whoever wishes to drink, calls for what he chooses, and drinks it standing before the bar. In the cities there are a peculiar sort of wine-houses, in which apart from the various kinds of wines, all sorts of distilled liquors are to be had. In the villages, the booths for the most part deal in dry goods, groceries of all kinds, and drinks. Nearly all sell bread, chocolate, sugar, spices, soap, candles, oil, Spanish wines, brandy etc. We may be asked perhaps, if there are no hotels how the traveller finds entertainment? In almost every village there is an inn (*meson*) where the stranger can find shelter for himself and his horse. These establishments resemble the oriental Caravansaries. They are huge structures built around a square court, with a multitude of little rooms, each with a separate entrance from the court. The furniture of the rooms consists of a fir-table, a rickety bench, and a board bedstead. Whoever wishes to sleep in a bed must bring his own with him. Great stables are attached to the dwellings. Sometimes one is able to obtain something to eat in these "mesons" by ordering it, and sometimes one is obliged to seek it in the gambling-houses (*fondas*). This is a Spanish custom which has maintained itself to the present day, and moreover a very inconvenient one. Upon the main thoroughfares, and in the large towns, hotels are now everywhere established. In less frequented regions no sort of public entertainment whatever, is found in the villages, but every Creole or Mestizo gladly offers his hospitality, as in the days of the patriarchs; and whatever the house affords is never withheld, so that the stay of the guest may be made as pleasant as possible. I call to mind many happy hours which I have enjoyed in the families of these friendly Mexicans, whom I by chance have asked for

a night's lodging on my journey. Only the way-worn traveller in a strange and thinly peopled land, or above all the sick man, who has received sympathizing attention among foreign people, knows properly how to appreciate a noble hospitality. I have become acquainted with this virtue in many ways, and rejoice in being able to extol it.

XIV.

THE MESTIZOES (CONTINUED).

Let us now return to the shop where our peasants, whose homes are scattered about the country, are making their purchases of bread, chocolate, sugar; soap etc. The daughters are admiring the beautiful calicoes and silks, and begging the mother to buy them something. The latter stands looking inquiringly at the father, who insists that he has no more money. The tradesman knows how to avail himself of the favorable moment, and offers credit to any extent desired. If the husband now has already been taking a glass with his neighbour or god-parents, as is most likely the case, his heart is tender, and he says: "Buy what you will." Whole mountains of goods must come down upon the table: everything is examined, turned, and overturned, and the choice is made with as much difficulty as if the welfare of the house depended upon it. This indeed may also be seen in every city of Europe.

In the streets one sees many families journeying homewards to their farms, nearly all on horseback; for the Mestizo can dispense with anything rather than his horse. This is natural, for from childhood he has grown up with this domestic animal. The mother has the infant on her arm as she rides along, the elder children sit behind the saddle of the parents, and when six years old they are able to ride alone. On the wedding-day, the bridegroom brings and presents to his bride a saddled mare on which she rides to church; the father presents the son with a colt in order that he may break it in himself, and even the aged man takes pleasure in the horse that has so long borne him. When these *Rancheros* meet, they entertain themselves for hours about their horses, each praising his own for fleetness, intelligence and endurance, that one would really suppose each to be the direct offspring of Mahomet's famous mare; but on seeing them, they are often found to be hacks, hardly worthy of being converted into dogs' meat. The wealthy young Mestizo spares no expence in procuring a good horse, together with a beautiful saddle and trappings. Silver must glitter