

ladies to themselves, in order to play a game at Malilla or Tresillo, or generally to get up a little bank. The young bloods of course remain with the ladies; the conversation is easy, wit and repartee follow each other in rapid succession, inflammable natures ignite and burn fiercely; but outward decorum is never lost sight of. Here in familiar circles, the Spanish dances, boléros etc., are still met with; they are invariably accompanied with song, and are rendered highly significant by the gestures of the performers. The lovers understand the art of expressing their feelings by the eye and tongue, by piano and forte, by approaching and fleeing, and all without coming into contact with each other; whilst those who are jealous cast in thorns, in order to give vent to their bitterness.

These dances have quite disappeared from the balls; the pretty Spanish contredance has alone been retained, which occasionally replaces the dull French quadrille, and the endless succession of galoppades, polkas, and other lung-destroyers, void of character and grace. The young dandies who frequently visit the United States, France or England for a year, and as travelled lions return to their admiring cousins, instead of sound information, which might render their country good service, bring with them naught save a new dance, a bold cut for a dress or frock-coat; and all the fashionable world dances and dresses in the same manner. Our European lions do similar things!

It is now time to terminate our first wandering; about ten o'clock every one is at home, with the exception of the rakes and gamblers, and those who, screened by a pillar, wait for the opening of a balcony-door, whence the sun of their existence is to rise. The families take their supper late, and proceed incontinently to bed. Let us do the like, and fortify ourselves for a further sally.

XVI

COMMERCE, SCHOOLS, ARTS AND SCIENCES.

Life in towns is everywhere distinguished by trade and commerce, which as they determine the physiognomy of towns, I shall here treat of generally.

Mexico's foreign commerce is carried on from the sea-ports; on the east coast by Matamoros, Tampico, Vera Cruz, Tabasco and Campeche; on the west coast by Acapulco, San Blas and Mazatlan (Jamiltepec and Mansanillo are insignificant).

The houses which carry on the trans-marine business are mostly foreign; they receive the wares, dispose of a portion of them on the spot, and forward the remainder to the interior, or rather the principal depôt is in the interior, and the branch house on the coast. The capital, Mexico, is to be regarded as the centre of commerce, whither proceed the wares from Vera Cruz, Tampico, and Acapulco; Tampico, however, has branch-houses in San Luis and Potosi, Matamoros, in Monterey and Saltillo, San Blas in Guadalajara, and Campeche in Merida. The wholesale dealers procure what they require from the store-houses of the towns, and in their turn supply the petty merchants of the towns and villages.

Of the ports, none is strictly speaking a free-port, where ships can put in; and if they find no market for their cargoes, they again set sail. They can put in, indeed, only on paying the port-dues, and under certain restrictions, a measure of incalculable injury to the interests of commerce. The dues are high, and an ill-comprehended prohibitive system, intended to promote native enterprise, for which no elements at present exist, renders all manufactured goods dear. This is especially the case with manufactures required by the poorer classes, such as inferior cotton and woollen goods, iron wares etc. A country, which has still an enormous extent of arable land lying uncultivated, which might bring forth every vegetable product on the face of the earth, which is blessed with vast mineral wealth, and is in want of hands only: such a country should not dream of manufactures, but of promoting agriculture, and cultivating the raw produce for barter with the countries which are compelled to have recourse to manufactures. In order, for example, to maintain a small number of cotton and cloth factories producing ordinary stuffs, the importation of yarn and muslin is prohibited, although scarcely half the raw produce for these factories is produced in the country, but must be imported from North America. The consequence is, that the poor man, the Indian, must pay 300 per cent more for his sackcloth (manta), than if he were to procure it from abroad,* and that these high prices present great inducements to smuggling, which, with such an immense line of coast, and with so extensive a frontier is hardly to be prevented. It is precisely the same with cheap woollen-stuffs, blankets, carpets etc., also with iron-wares of the most indispensable nature. The manufacture of iron can scarcely be said to have commenced; and nine-tenths of what is required in iron and steel are imported. Tools of all kinds pay a heavy duty, in order that the smiths may benefit. At present the forges, especially the good ones, are few and far between, so that the labourer requiring an axe or a hoe, must often travel forty or fifty miles to find a good master-smith. Five or six days elapse before he can return to his work, which may be calculated at three dollars out of his pocket, including his expenses; for the new axe he pays from three dollars to three dollars and a half, which thus costs him between six and seven dollars, and breaks perhaps at the first blow. Owing to the duty, the excellent

* The best sackcloth can be sent to Vera Cruz for threepence the Spanish yard, which allows the dealer a fair profit. At present it costs one shilling.

Pittsburg axes are rendered very dear, nevertheless the labourers gladly pay five dollars a piece for them, so as not to lose their time. I could produce a whole series of such examples, to prove, that raising the prohibition and reducing the duty, would promote the interest of the people and of the government; the people would have cheap wares, and the exchequer a large revenue, consequent upon the increased consumption. Smuggling, which is now carried on in so barefaced a manner, would disappear, and manufactures would by competition be placed on a better footing, and cease to be sickly hot-house plants.

The high price of the most indispensable articles, is partly the cause of Mexico's unfavorable commercial standing. Excepting the precious metals, it has scarcely any articles of export, the cost of production being too high. To this may be added the hopeless condition of the roads leading from the coast to the interior. Nothing is done in the way of constructing roads, or very little indeed, whilst tolls are called for, without the money being applied to keeping the roads in repair, although the vehicles may be every moment in danger of turning over, or of sticking fast in the mud. This is the case on the sole practicable high-road from Vera Cruz to Mexico; we may therefore easily conceive the state of the other roads through dense forests and ravines. This circumstance renders the transport of goods singularly expensive; and herein lies a second hindrance to the exportation of produce, and to the flourishing of commerce generally. The vessels which convey foreign goods to the sea-ports, find no return cargoes, and must steer for other ports in search of them, necessarily causing greater outlay, which must be covered by higher charges for freight. These remarks, however, lead me further than I had intended: I shall return therefore to the towns.

The ports are far from presenting the busy appearance of the Havannah, or of the cities of the Northern Union. At the Havannah 500 ships may often be seen assembled; thousands of hands are occupied in lading and discharging: at Vera Cruz and Tampico, on the contrary, thirty sail are never met with at once, and frequently the black and brown tide-waiters may be seen lounging about on the quays, anxiously looking out for a mast to appear on the horizon. In the town itself there is more life, as there are still supplies enough in the warehouses; and long caravans of mules come from the country to fetch goods, whilst others are already passing out at the gate, each beast laden with two huge bales. The wholesale dealers may retail nothing, but must sell by bales; consequently so-called assortments (*almacenes surtidas*) are formed, in which the retail-dealer from town and country finds all he requires. In this way much business is done, whilst the countless shops (*tiendas*) serve exclusively for the town and immediate neighbourhood, doing therefore the actual retail trade. The latter may be subdivided into *tiendas de ropa*, dealing in linen-drapery, and into *pulperias*, for the sale of groceries, provisions, liquors etc. Both are frequently combined, and sell everything imaginable. A separate branch are the *mercerias* or hard-ware stores, dealing in metal, wood-work etc. These distinctions are observed

throughout the whole country; the retail business is in the village as in the capital, being, of course, larger or smaller according to the locality and the demand.

In the towns of the interior the traffic is more varied, as much business is done with the produce of the country. Considerable sales are effected in corn, wheaten-flour, pulse, rice, tallow, soap, hides, oil, wine, rum, pulque, sugar, coarse woollen and cotton cloths, blankets, mats, leather, cordage etc. This traffic is important and occupies many persons. In Mexico, Puebla and in other cities are vast magazines of this inland produce, where the retail dealers meet with assortments, in the same manner as in the warehouses for foreign manufactures.

There is no want of shops in the Mexican cities, though certainly they are not so numerous as in Europe. The corner-houses are considered to be most advantageously situated, but more particularly the shops under the arcades. The Mexican delights in a *tienda*; whoever can get a trifle together, opens a little store. Standing inactively behind a counter, chatting with purchasers and passers by, whilst a cigarito is being smoked, possesses a wondrous attraction for him. Many Spaniards, especially Catalonians and Galicians traffic in this way, and by diligence and economy all get on. Neither in trade nor in handicraft is any restraint imposed by guild statutes; every one can follow the profession that suits him, except the apothecary, who must be licensed and undergo examination.

Let us saunter through the town, and look at some of the outward indications of the trade. Placards with letters a yard long, just as in Europe; among them some singular ones, such as "The Ruin of Cheapness". Many of the signs are like those of our European inns, the Sun, the Angel, the Eagle etc. The door is open, and near it a heap of goods is usually piled up, indicating the business carried on, or that other articles may be had within, besides those exposed. Only a few of the newer shops have show-windows; indeed they are not requisite, as the whole shop is before you. On every counter a small chafing-dish is placed, the live coals covered with ashes, in order that the inevitable cigar may be lighted.

The shops of the linendrapers are richly supplied with fashionable stuffs. All the gossamer-like, trumpery webs, which fashion gives birth to in England and France, are displayed here. Carriages stop at the door, elegantly-dressed ladies have whole piles of goods shewn them, look and look again, find everything so very beautiful, and cannot decide on anything. At the shop next door, a great heap of coloured cloths informs us that inland stuffs only are sold here; but they meet with as many admirers as the London stuffs. Tradespeople from the country purchase an assortment of these beautiful *Sarapes*, and choose for their own use a *Sarape* of Saltillo, of genuine colours, and as impervious to water as an India-rubber coat. But 60 piastres are not to be sneezed at, and the old man scratches his head when he hears what his son wants, but at length buys it, and a Rekozo of Temascaltepec (the best kind of cotton shawl) for 36 piastres, destined for the future daughter-in-law.

The wine-shops are adorned with full bottles, but behind, in the warehouse are numerous casks. *Cellars and lofts are unknown; goods of every description are on the ground-floor*, immediately behind the shop or counting-house. Still, at the first glance, the business of the North-European can be distinguished from that of the Spaniard or Mexican. The first has a number of clerks, who write all day, or pretend to write. The latter has only one clerk, who occasionally notes down something; the other assistants are shopmen. These are skilful fellows, quick in business, but somewhat impudent; they are never in want of an answer, have many sweet speeches for the female customers, keep the male customers in good humour; but, if report lies not, are apt to cover the deficit in their private purses by making inroad on their master's, which, however, serves him right, if he does not pay more attention to his business.

In the wine-shop are three fat Spaniards drinking a glass of the wine of their own country, assuring those about them at each sip, that good wine is to be met with nowhere save in Spain. The glass is taken standing before the bar, as is the custom here. Only intimate acquaintances of the master go into the warehouse, and seat themselves on empty casks.

The greatest amount of petty traffic is done in the grocers' shops, but it is a wearisome affair. The cooks and kitchen-maids pour in and out, because the requisites for every meal are always fetched in detail. Here it is merely a question of Tlacos and Cuatillas, the smallest coin of the republic (the eighth and fourth part of a real, about sixpence), or at the utmost of half a real, and yet this is a most lucrative business, if the shopkeeper understands what he is about. Great activity is requisite on the part of the shopmen in order to serve the customers quickly, whilst at the same time those who are waiting must be amused with a jest, those who are importunate be pacified, and all be satisfied. The large and fashionable shops and warehouses present nothing singular in appearance. With some slight variation in the decorations and general arrangement, they resemble those of Europe; but the groceries are interesting for the study of the popular customs, and one should not neglect to listen to them in passing. Not only is something flattering said to every female-customer, however old and smoke-dried she may be, but she must also have her *algo*, her commission, whenever she buys for more than half a real, when a few cigaritos, or a thimbleful of *mistela* (sweet brandy), or something of the sort fall to her share. To attract and retain custom is the business of chandler-shopkeepers. The children get a morsel of sweet-stuff; and indeed all the children of the neighbourhood, even though their mothers send them to other *tiendas*, are sure to come here. I remember an enterprising Spaniard, whose grocery was in the square of a small country town. He had a saddled donkey standing under the eaves of his shop, and all the boys who came to buy something, enjoyed the privilege of a donkey-ride. This, of course, attracted all the boys of the town; the man had an uncommon run of business, and became rich in a few years.

It is in the nature of these establishments to be the bazaar for all the town-talk and scandal. Every morning, beginning at half past six o'clock, the women come to fetch bread, chocolate, coffee and sugar: of course there is much to be related, as to what has taken place during the past evening and night, and as the same persons appear four times a day to make their purchases, the chronicle is easily kept up. Here also assemble naturally the labourers, coachmen, water-bearers and idlers, to have a throw, to purchase something, to have a chat. Thus the materials for the news of the day are wonderfully increased, and acquire almost an official character. Further it is a general rendezvous, messages are brought and sent, and the Mexicans say proverbially: "The *tienda* is the greatest match-maker."

Peculiar to the traffic of the cities, are the numerous peripatetic salesmen, the little stalls (*mesas* or *camillas*) under the porticos, at the corners of the streets, before the churches and public buildings, and finally the broker-markets, like those of the Jewish quarters of many European cities, and which are kept and attended by the unwashed alone.

There are but few booksellers and bookbinders, a proof that the intellectual requirements of the people are very limited and easily satisfied.

Exchanges are met with in few cities, and have but lately been introduced. Most business is done by the agents, who constitute a guild, with a limited number of fellows, who are subjected to an examination before being received. Generally there is much good faith and confidence in doing business, important transactions are frequently arranged without witnesses, and considerable sums change hands without the aid of an agent. The rate of interest is high, and no legal restriction is imposed. Commission business commands at least 2½ per cent, and transit and packing-dues may be considered high.

The manufactories of Mexico are not sufficiently extensive to confer a distinctive feature on the population of the respective cities. In Puebla, for instance, there are factories with steam and water-power; but the majority of the manufactures are produced by hand and sold to the dealers. The class of factory-labourers is too insignificant to be predominating, as at Manchester, Lyons or Elberfeld; they are lost sight of in the masses, and where they influence the character of individual cities, the fact will subsequently be alluded to, when individual cities are noticed. Puebla produces more especially cotton stuffs and coarse hats, Queretavo, woollen goods, Leon, leather, sadlery and iron wares, Zelaya, soap etc., without any material difference being observed between them and other cities; only the mining-towns exhibit a spirit peculiar to the inhabitants, which we shall allude to in the part devoted to mining.

To conclude this chapter, we add a few remarks about education, and the present state of the arts and sciences, as these results of social development are exhibited more in the cities than in the country. —

The elementary schools in the cities are under the superintendence of the municipal council, and the teachers are paid from the civic fund. Most towns consider it a point of honour to educate the children of both sexes as well as possible; but

as there is a lack of seminaries for the teachers themselves, it is difficult to meet with individuals fitted for the position. The schools are well attended, although the obligation to attend is not strictly enforced; the results, however, are insignificant.

For the classical education of youth, all the cities are provided with a kind of gymnasium, termed *colegios*, which are arranged quite after the fashion of the old convent-schools. The scholars live together in the monastic style, the teachers are ecclesiastics, the course of education, about the same as it was in Germany 300 years ago. The whole arrangement is wretched, and little calculated to promote intellectual or moral development.

Lately therefore they have begun to form classical schools on the European plan, and in this the mining-towns Guanajuato and Zacatecas have set a good example. The capital has also endeavoured to keep up with the spirit of the times; but the means were not always equal to the object in view. The mining-school, *Colegio de mineria*, richly endowed by the Spaniards, requires re-modelling, and above all good masters.

Most of the classical schools are monastic foundations, and therefore their whole management reposes in the hands of the superior clergy. The stability which exists in the system of the Church, renders it improbable that innovations of any significance will take place, more especially as the property of the church is managed exclusively by ecclesiastics, without any interference of the state. The state, indeed, has made various attempts to obtain the management of church property; but being unable to offer any satisfactory guarantee for the safety of the capital, the affair could not be accomplished.

The universities are organized in accordance with the other classical schools; every faculty has its scholastic, conventual arrangement, opposed to the free development of the sciences and the study of life. Young men of property finish their studies abroad, especially those who study medicine. The superior Medical Board (*el proto medicato*) can boast of intelligent men, who have to examine all candidates desirous of becoming practitioners.

Taken on the whole, the scientific development of the Mexican cities is at least equal to that of those of most of the provinces in the Pyrenean peninsula, which however, is not saying much.

Very little has been done in Mexico for the arts; in the capital, however, there is an academy for painting and sculpture (*Academia de San Carlos*), which boasts of some tolerable disciples; as yet it has exercised very little influence on the development of taste, nor has it laid the foundation of an original school. Up to the present day art has attempted to adorn the temples only, if those uncouth productions which disfigure the altars of many village-churches, and even of the town churches can be considered adornment.

There is no want of talent for plastic productions, as exhibited in the wax figures and little statues representing popular groups, individual figures, fruits, animals etc. Even the Indian evinces a taste for elegant forms, as shown in his potters'

ware, in his flower-portals-before the churches and public buildings, and in his altar decorations.

In architecture there is a want of good models. The public and private buildings of the towns are for the most part very firm, massive, and practical; but there is a want of elegance in the exterior. Lately, however, many façades have been rebuilt in the modern style: but in the great majority of the buildings, a traditional Spanish architectural style prevails, which has evidently borrowed its internal arrangement from the ancient Roman house, and occasionally by its Arabic forms reminds one of the magnificence of Granada and Cordova. The house of the wealthy citizen is fitted up very luxuriously. A beautiful marble staircase conducts to the principal floor, to the piazza which encloses the court-yard (the impluvium of the Romans) on four sides. On the parapet are flowering plants in large Chinese vases, the walls being adorned with paintings. The numerous and splendid apartments exhibit elegant carpets, expensive furniture, costly paintings on the walls and ceilings. The floors are of burnt stone or of marble, and often of a hard kind of composition which is painted like a carpet and varnished. Elegantly arranged houses are found not only in the capital, but also in the provincial towns, for the wealthy Mexican displays the greatest pride in his house and furniture, in his numerous attendants, handsome carriages, expensive horses and mules, whilst the rich European has other hobbies.

A taste for beautiful villas and gardens is but just beginning to shew itself in the capital. In the immediate vicinity of the city, the salt marshy soil is unfavorable, although Brussels and the Hague prove that such hindrances may be overcome; consequently in the small town of Tacubaya, a league from Mexico, villas with gardens have been called into existence, where a number of wealthy families rusticate from March till June. In the villages of St. Augustin and of St. Angelo, picturesquely situated on hills at the extremity of the plain, many families have houses with wild orchards, in which they occasionally pass a festival; generally speaking, however, the townspeople of Mexico are no great friends of travelling nor of the pleasures of a country-life.

In town and in the country every one is fond of music; the Creole and the Mestizo have much talent; all the world plays and sings, and yet musical education is quite in the back-ground. The congregation do not join in the singing at church, only the paid choristers raise their voices, and these are met with in the cathedrals and larger churches alone. Music is nowhere taught in schools. The young learn to strum on the piano, harp or guitar, without knowing a note, and even whole bands of performers on stringed and wind instruments only play by ear. The number of those who receive regular instruction in music is very small. In the larger cities, especially in the capital, good orchestras are found, and even in private circles music is cultivated with some degree of success. The German "Liedertafel" in Mexico, who gave even public concerts for charitable purposes, contributed no little towards awakening a taste for chorus-singing.