

There exist some tolerable Mexican compositions, but which do not bear the impress of nationality.

The centre of attraction for profane music is the opera; indeed the taste for the theatre is very prevalent among the people of the Mexican towns, and the whole population is passionately fond of public representations. In the capital of the republic much is done for the opera, because the connoisseurs and amateurs are numerous. The celebrated Manuel Garcia was properly speaking the founder of the opera, which he directed during some years. By his indefatigable exertions, and his excellent method, he succeeded in bringing on the stage the master pieces of Mozart, Cortes and the Vestal by Spontini, the best productions of Rossini etc.; and thus by admitting only that which was excellent, formed the taste of the public for good music. The opera has stood its ground ever since, and although the admission of the ballet has flattered the eye of the theatre-going public more than the ear of the musician, the results are by no means inconsiderable.

The city of Mexico has three theatres: one for comedy and vaudeville, the old Coliseo and the new national theatre. The last was built in the year 1843, and for size and elegance may vie with the first in Europe. Acoustically considered, it is quite successful; there is much room and comfort, and several handsome saloons for the entertainment of the public. Play, opera and ballet alternate, and the performances are not unworthy of the fine building.

The larger provincial cities, such as Puebla, Guanajuato, Guadalajara, have permanent theatres; in the smaller towns, such as Vera Cruz, Orizava, Oajaca, in the cool season, from October till April only.

Even at the theatre, the Mexican cannot dispense with his cigarito, and as soon as the curtain falls little blue vapours rise in the air in all directions, many of them from the mouths of the fair sex. The ladies appear in the boxes only, and are prone to exhibiting themselves in beautiful attire. The fan is a necessary companion, but a very unquiet one, which is constantly being opened and closed. Sometimes it must serve to conceal a roguish face, sometimes to transmit signals to an admirer, sometimes to threaten a vacillating suitor, and occasionally to hide the ennui of the bearer.

The pieces represented are partly by the old classical writers Calderon, Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Moreto etc., partly by modern dramatists, such as Moratin, Martinez de la Rosa, Zorilla etc. Besides these there are a host of translations of the good and bad productions of all nations. Schiller and Alfieri, Kotzebue and Scribe, Shakespeare and Raupach are names which are read in the play-bills of the Andes' cities, as well as on the Spree and Neva.

In the country itself few have distinguished themselves in dramatic literature; the works of Manuel Gorostiza are about the best, and have even been honourably received in Spain.

A sort of imitation of the old 'autos sacramentales' is occasionally met with on the Mexican stage. They are representations of biblical scenes with poetical elucidations

and music. Thus I recollect to have seen the Deluge represented with much scenic splendour; the Passion is also sometimes represented, which is indeed not peculiar to the countries where the Spanish tongue is spoken, but may also be met with in more northerly latitudes. The following literal translation of a play-bill printed at Inspruck in the year 1850, may serve as a proof of the assertion: "The whole of the bitter Passion and Death of Our Lord Jesus Christ, represented in fourteen pictures", and "the glorious Resurrection, lighted with Bengal fire."

A glance at literature in general may serve to conclude this short digression from our pilgrimage through the cities. In the 16th century much scientific zeal was exhibited in Mexico; partly by the Spanish, partly by natives; excellent historical, grammatical, theological, and other scientific works were produced. The 17th and 18th centuries are remarkable for their want of intellectual culture. This was part of the system of the government, which regarded every independent development of the mind in the colonies as a dangerous precedent, capable of producing the worst consequences, and deserving to be suppressed by the inquisition. It was not till the close of the eighteenth century, about the same period as in Germany, that scientific research began to make fresh strides. Two excellent works on the history of the country, date from this period; that of Mariano Veytia and of the Abbé Clavigero. The latter, a native of Vera Cruz, being a Jesuit, was exiled. In Italy he published the result of thirty years' researches, his distinguished "Ancient History of Mexico," a work, which shed light on the chaos of the early history of the country.

In the first decennium of the present century, the struggle of the colonies with the mother country commenced. Many of the Creoles of Mexico enthusiastically seized upon the idea of independence, and many literary productions of this period, many poetic effusions, evidence unusual progress. A ruinous war, which lasted eleven years brought all scientific endeavours to a pause. Not till the year 1821, when the Spanish reign was at an end, did a new epoch for literature begin. The licentiate Zarate had already done much against the Spaniards with the pen. Two romances of his exist, which by their accurate delineation of the social condition of the country, possess great interest. Perico Sarniento and La Pepita are the titles of these works. Further he has written a number of good fables, and humorously, even satirically edited the periodical "el pensador mejicano (the Mexican Thinker)."

In the last thirty years, literature has made no inconsiderable progress. The taste displayed by the Creoles for poetry, has given birth to numerous volumes worthy of notice. Besides Gorostiza already named, Calderon and several others have produced dramatic works: Pesado, Heredia, Sanchez. — Tagle, Ortaga, Pagno have distinguished themselves as lyric poets. A humorous volume, "el gallo pitagorico (the Cock of Pythagoras)", attacked the corruption introduced into the state by Santanna's mal-administration, and the persecution to which the author, John Gonzalez, was consequently exposed, evidences that he was acquainted with the sore places.



Charles Maria Bustamente acquired some distinction as an historian. Lorenzo Zaavala and Lucas Alaman published some historical essays and treatises.

Cervantes, de la Llave and Lejarza produced some valuable contributions to natural history (botany), whilst Joseph Maria Bustamente enriched science by geographical, orographical and geognostic researches.

The number of newspapers printed in Mexico is considerable; but few of them are skilfully conducted.

This casual glance at Mexico's literature is far from comprising all that has been published, but merely those things that especially caught our eye, consequent on their being displayed in the shop-windows of the booksellers. Those who visit the capital, will find in a little shop in the Portal de Augustinos, all the novelties of the Mexican muse. Interesting is the collection of popular songs, which represent the poetical element existing amongst the people. These songs pass from mouth to mouth, and are sung to the dancers; the composers are unknown; and as in many parts of Europe, they appear to be spontaneous joyous effusions. The Creole, as well as the Mestizo improvises with facility; he makes love, he teazes in verse, and the wit of the singer excites and enlivens the auditors. The Indian, on the contrary, has no poetry peculiar to himself, and though here and there an Aztec song is heard, it is a mere imitation of the Spanish.

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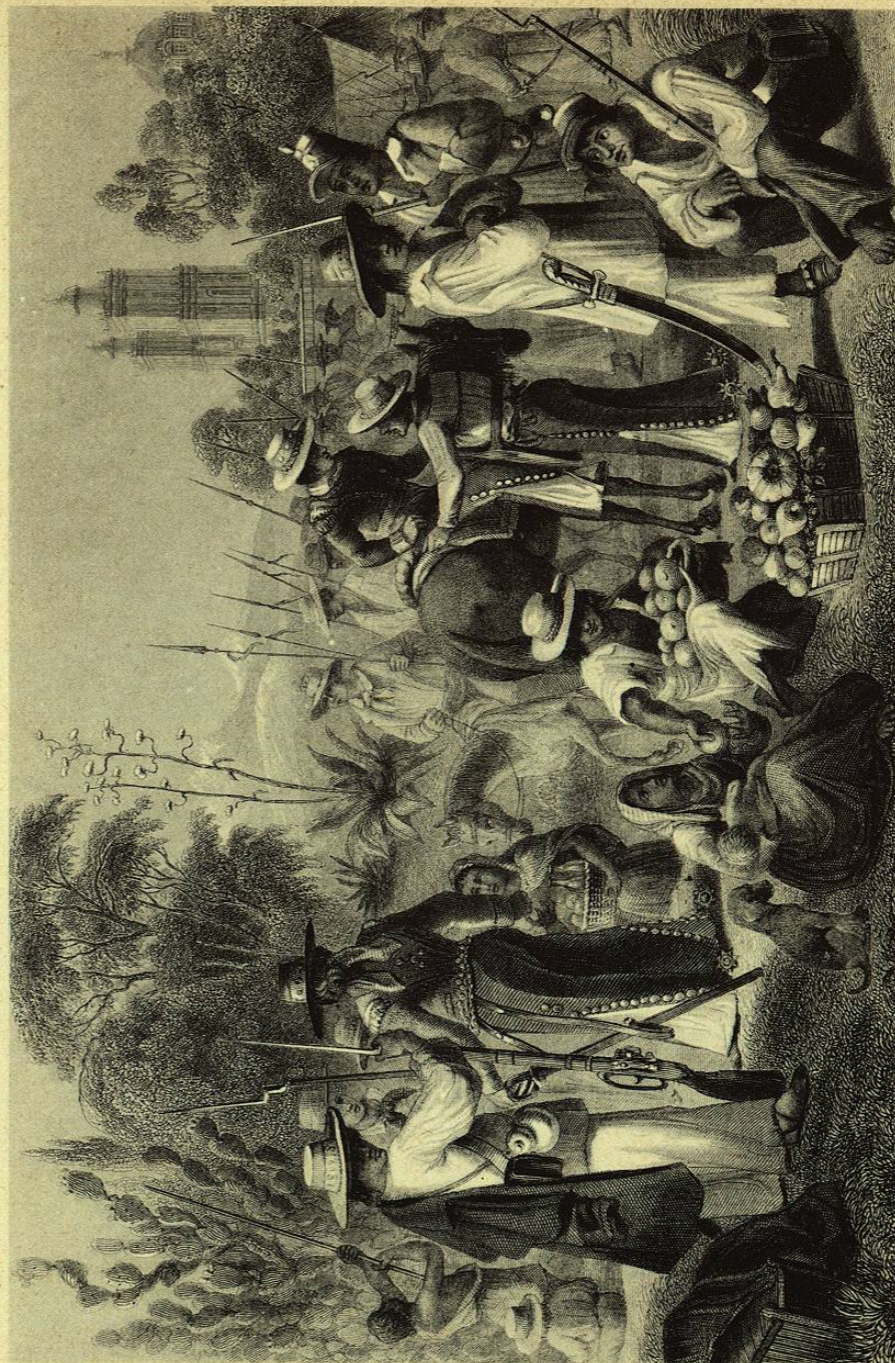
## XVII.

### MILITARY AFFAIRS IN MEXICO.

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One beautiful evening I was strolling leisurely along the promenade de las Vigas on the borders of the great canal, and regarded with delight the golden glow in the west, the reflection of which tinted the snowy peaks of the highlands with purple — when some one seized me by the arm. It was my new acquaintance, the captain with the enormous moustache.

"At length I am so fortunate as to see you again", said he; "for several evenings I have come hither in hopes of meeting you, as I owe you an explanation." — "Not that I am aware of," I returned. "We scarcely exchanged ten words." — "Precisely on that account", he continued. "You have only heard me speak with



SOLDIERS AND PROLETARIANS