

## IV.

## A NEW EVENT IN MEXICO.

Palace of the President.—The President.—How he looks.—What he pledges.—  
Former Property of the Church.—Its Consequences.—Corruption.—Prospects  
and Perils.

THE first official recognition by the head of the Mexican nation of any other Church than the Roman Catholic, which was till within a few years the only possible religion, was so frank, cordial, and free as to show how complete is the executive and, therefore, political and constitutional changes in this important republic.

At 4 o'clock, Tuesday, Jan. 14th, the American minister, Hon. Thomas H. Nelson, accompanied by his secretary, Mr. Bliss, son of Rev. Asher Bliss, long missionary among the Seneca Indians, a gentleman of remarkable scholarship and hardly less remarkable wit, took three Americans into the presence of the President of Mexico. One was General Palmer, the Philadelphia representative of the Mexican railroad movement; another was Mr. Parish, of Europe, co-operator abroad in these American enterprises; and the third was a Methodist minister, come hither to arrange for the planting of the Methodist Episcopal Church in this country.

The palace occupies a side of the Grand Plaza on which the cathedral fronts. Through long and handsome apartments we are led to one richly furnished in its hangings, marbles, and paintings, chief of which is the portrait of Emperor Iturbide, who more than any other man was the Washington of Mexico, and secured her independence.

The President soon enters. A small man, with small, well-shaped head and features, hair thin, well-nigh to baldness, with pleasant, bland smile, tone, and manner. We are introduced by Mr. Nelson

in a graceful and dignified form, and the President addresses each by turn. On the introduction of the clergyman, he said he had often heard of the antecedents of the Church he represented, and welcomed him to the supervision of her work in this country. No one Church was recognized by the state as of superior claims to another. Toleration of all faiths was the law of the land. This movement might not be looked upon with favor by bishops here; but the civil power would protect it, if it became necessary, in defense of its rights and liberties. I thanked him for his offers, but said I hoped no such case would arise as would call for the protection of the state. We had no hostile relations to other religious bodies. Our mission was to build up our work in our own way, by education of the people, and by organization of churches of our own faith and order.

He responded yet more at length, re-affirming his readiness to support our churches in any exigencies that might arise in the prosecution of our work, so far as they were imperiled by any unlawful opposition. He repeated his welcome to the land, and his good wishes for our prosperity.

This interview means more than the recognition of one Christian Church. It is the formal and, to a degree, official announcement of the policy of the nation. The President is a scholar and jurist of large repute. He had charge in his earlier years of a school in this city, and in later years was president of the courts, where the question of Church property has been often in consultation. In all his public life he has thus met with Church matters. He has been affirmed to be in more sympathy with the Church party than Juarez, and some of its leaders have dreamed that their former prerogatives were to be restored under his administration.

This strong and unequivocal affirmation of the law of the realm and of his cordial support of its principles, even to the aid of the civil power, if need be, shows how impossible it is for any single Church government to again possess exclusive jurisdiction here and the support of the national arm.

The Roman Catholic chiefs are recognizing this fact, and are

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patriota.*



said to be favorable to annexation, because they can get yet larger liberties under our government than are allowed them here. No one is permitted to appear in his official costume in the streets of this city. Religious processions are proscribed. The holy wafer is carried to dying people no longer in a gilded coach, but in a private carriage, the bared head of the driver being the only sign by which the faithful can know it, and can fall on their knees on its passing by. So great has this irreverence grown, that a native gentleman, pointing to the *sagrario* where this coach is still kept, said to me, "They keep in there what they call 'the Holy Ghost coach,' but I call it the hell-cart." Could disrespect go further?

The confiscation of Church property was an enormous loss of Church power. It held two-thirds of this city in its possession. It held mortgages in as large a portion of the country. Letting its money at a low figure and on liberal and long terms, it gradually became an enormous savings-bank, and controlled the whole landed interest of the country. Its convents covered hundreds of acres in the heart of the city, and were adorned in the highest degree that art and wealth could devise. Gardens, lakes, parks, pillars elegantly wrought in polished marble, churches of splendor in construction and ornamentation, were the unseen luxurious abodes of the world-denying friars and nuns. Corruption of the most startling sort abounded; and money, the sinews of the state, was in the hands exclusively of the corrupted and corrupters.

Good men may have been involved in this arrangement, may have presided over it. Good men have been connected with every controlling evil that the world has ever seen. An Orthodox Congregational minister called his burning satire against New England's demoralization under rum "Deacon Giles's Distillery," and the slave-holding system of English West Indies was supported by rectors of the Established Church, and of our own land by ministers of all churches in the South. So we are all in condemnation, and none can throw stones at the former growth to financial power of the Roman Church in Mexico.

Indeed, it has its eloquent advocates to-day. A lady of high

social position and an ardent Papist, as she proudly calls herself, but yesterday was declaring that the former system was far better than the present; that the Church leased its buildings cheaper than landlords do now, and was far more merciful to its debtors; that great suffering had followed the overthrow of its moneyed power. All of this was undoubtedly true. So we have heard of the suffering to the emancipated class in our own land arising from their liberation, and not without foundation is that complaint.

A sudden change in the weather, whether from heat to cold or cold to heat, is attended with loss of life to those whose enfeebled condition can not bear extremes of any thing. If the "Norther" kills every person sick of the yellow fever in the hospitals of Vera Cruz, it drives the fever out of the city, and saves the lives of all that are well. So the old never changes into the new without some sense of loss. But it changes, nevertheless; and it changes for the better. Mexico is far better off under ecclesiastical liberty than under ecclesiastical bondage. New England is vastly improved religiously by the abolition of her State Church, which governed her till within a half a century; as England will be equally advanced in morals and religion when her national Church is disestablished, and lawn sleeves cease to flutter among the black coats of the House of Lords, unless they flutter on the white arms of the ladies of the realm.

So Mexico has sprung up in newness of life through this emancipation from the fetters of an enforced ecclesiastical system. The Roman Catholic Church has yet large control of her people; and will have more, if possible, by the new relation of liberty of choice in which she will stand to them and they to her. Other Christian Churches are springing up, and all the leading bodies in America will be earnestly active.

The prospects of their success are excellent. The people are free in this city and its environs, and are protected in their freedom by public sentiment and the civil power. Consequently, the new churches are well attended, and priests and subordinate church officials are joining them. A doctor of divinity, who was offered



a bishopric if he would remain with the Romanists, has left their ranks and joined himself to the new movement.

In some other cities persecution yet abounds. At Toluca, the capital of this State, a riot broke up lately one of these congregations, in which three persons were killed. At Puebla, the chief city next to the capital, a preacher was mobbed from the town for daring to speak in the name of Jesus. But these ebullitions will grow less, I trust; and, if they increase, it will be but for a moment. Like our Ku-Klux outrages, they are the dying blows of a dying evil. They will grow fainter, and then cease. The new order has arisen on this grand country—the order of religious liberty. It has followed the advent of civil liberty here, as it followed it in our own country. It will enlarge and uplift this land, as it has our own.

Honor, then, to President Lerdo for his cheering words! He will not, we hope, be called to put those into effect which promised protection in the courts and by the power of the state. The leaders of the dominant Church will have to accept the situation, and allow the new forms and forces of the Church of Christ to operate undisturbed, except by such friendly rivalry as they may see fit to put forth.

Since this event, interviews have been granted other clergymen, and like assurances been given. The laws of Congress have been liberal and right. But persecutions have broken out, and murders committed in Puebla and elsewhere. One missionary has fallen. But no punishment has been meted out to the murderers. Unless this is done, promises and edicts will be idle words. We trust it will be done. If not, should not America protect her own citizens in these rights as much as she would protect her merchants trading there? Toleration is the first word, Protection the second. Will the wise Lerdo de Tejada give us both?

*La iglesia  
romana es -  
seguramente -  
la del diablo.  
como antitesis  
de la "veracruzana".*

## V.

## OLD AND NEW AMONG THE SILVER MINES.

A Mediæval Castle.—First Icicle.—Omataska.—More about Pulqui.—A big Scare.—A Paradise.—Casa Grande.—A Sabbath in Pachuca.—A native Convert.—Mediæval Cavalcade.—The Visitors.—Mounting Real Del Monte.—The Castle of Real.—Gentlemanly Assassin.—Silver Factories.—Velasco.—A Reduction.—Haciendado Riley.—Mexican Giant's Causeway.—More Silver Reduction.—Horsemanship under Difficulties.—Contraries balancing Contraries.—La Barranca Grande.—A bigger Scare.—A Wedding.—Miner and Mining.—The Gautemozin.—The better Investment.

ONE need not go to Europe to find one of its best mediæval towns. Let him visit Quebec. So one need not go back to the Middle Ages to see a fine specimen of feudal times. Let him come to Pachuca. I have been pleased often at the ingenious way in which Mr. Hale contrives to get allusions to the Old and New in the introductory pages of his magazine. They are by far the best part usually of its contributions, and not the worst specimens of his own ability. But were he where I am to-night, and had he enjoyed what I have these last three days, he would have material for a most piquant page of his preamble. I have never seen there yet, to my surprise, Lowell's line,

"Old and new at its birth, like Le Verrier's planet."

Perhaps it has been quoted. This experience was old and new at its birth to those that were privileged to enjoy it.

The place where I am writing is a castle of the Middle Ages in its important features. Its huge door is kept closed. Beside the entrance armed men are constantly to be seen. An iron gate within prevents the passage of the enemy if the first door is penetrated. The roof is surrounded with a battlement, pierced with