

CHAPTER XI.  
THE MEXICAN CHURCH.

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE MEXICAN CHURCH AND THE POPE. — CLERGY, MONKS, NUNS, MONASTERIES, CONVENTS. — WEALTH OF THE CHURCH. — RATIO OF CLERGY AND PEOPLE. — HIGH AND LOW CLERGY — THEIR HISTORY — VICES. — MONKS — RURAL CLERGY — THEIR CHARACTER. — CONDUCT OF CLERGY, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE. — MISSIONS IN CALIFORNIA — MODE OF CONVERSION. — MONKS IN MEXICO — ZAVALA'S STRICTURES. — PAZO'S STRICTURES ON SOUTH AMERICAN CLERGY. — CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES AND IN MEXICO. — CONSTITUTIONAL PROTECTION OF CATHOLICISM. — DUTY OF THE CHURCH — BULLS — PAPER MONEY.

The relations existing between the Mexican church and the Papal throne were interrupted by the revolution. Spain and her monarchs had ever been distinguished and faithful defenders of the Catholic church, and had maintained its power carefully throughout all their American possessions. The pope therefore regarded the revolution not only as unfavorable to the interest of his allies, but as calculated in all probability to introduce ecclesiastical as well as political liberty into regions of which his ministers possessed the entire dominion. Hence the famous encyclical letter of his Holiness of the 24th of September, 1824, directed to the Heads of the American church, in which he anathematizes the doctrines and principles upon which the revolution was founded. But, yielding in the end to circumstances, and probably reassured by the article in the first constitution of Mexico — not yet promulgated when his letter saw the light — by which the Catholic faith was permanently confirmed as the national religion, to the exclusion of all others, he received the rebellious nation once more into his flock, as soon as the Mexican government sought readmission. This reconciliation was negotiated upon the same terms that existed during the Spanish dominion.

Even from the epoch of Iturbide's rule this delicate subject had engaged the attention of the rulers, and in 1825 an envoy was sent

to Rome. The ecclesiastical Junta which met in Mexico, had striven to reinvest the Metropolitan with the ancient right of instituting suffragan bishops; but the canonical right has continued in the Pope, on the presentation of the government. Nevertheless, efforts have been made to extend, substantially the metropolitan powers of the Archbishop of Mexico, of whom it was probably desired to make the true head of the national church, dependent however upon the Roman Pontiff.

There were in Mexico, according to the best accessible official dates, in 1826

1 Archbishop.  
9 Bishops, in 9 Bishoprics.  
1 Collegiate Chief at the Collegiate Church of Guadalupe.  
185 Prebends, (79 vacancies thereof, in 1826.)  
1194 Parishes, of one, two, or more churches.  
9 Seminaries (*conciliares*.)  
3677 Clergymen (1240 engaged in curacies) and the rest in seminaries, ecclesiastical cures, vicarages, &c.)

5 Religious orders, owning  
155 Monasteries; in which there were  
1918 Monks; of whom  
40 Served curacies and  
106 Missions.  
In 47 of these monasteries there were more than twelve monks, and in thirty-nine there were less than five.

6 Colleges de Propaganda Fidé, containing  
307 Clergymen; of whom  
61 Served in missions.  
2 Congregaciones, with 60 presbyters.

58 Convents; with  
1931 Nuns,  
622 Girls,  
1475 Servants.

SUMMARY OF ECCLESIASTICAL PERSONS.

7999 Clergymen, friars and nuns.  
2097 Servants and girls in convents.

Since the epoch of independence the orders of Juaninos, Belemites, and San Lazaro, have been extinguished.

In 1844, when the last accurate summary of the Mexican church, within our reach, was made, the following was the condition :

SUMMARY OF MEXICAN CHURCH IN 1844.

In this year the *possessions* in conventual establishments of the REGULAR ORDERS, was estimated as follows :

Dominicans, . . . . .	25	Conventual establishments
Franciscans, . . . . .	68	“ “
Agustines, . . . . .	22	“ “
Carmelites, . . . . .	16	“ “
Mercedarios, . . . . .	19	“ “

Total, . . . . . 150 Conventual establishments

REGULAR ECCLESIASTICS:—Monks, . . . . . 1,700  
Nuns, . . . . . 2,000

3,700

SECULAR CLERGY, . . . . . 3,500

Total number in religious orders, . . . . . 7,200

The actual property of this establishment has been variously estimated since the earliest period in which Mexican institutions have been described by European writers. The church in Mexico is known to be immensely rich, and that its real and personal property has been carefully managed by the large body of intelligent men who control its affairs. They prudently make no public or statistical expositions of their interests.

In 1807, Abad y Quiapo, in a communication to Don Manuel Sexto Espinosa, estimated the wealth of the church as follows :

REAL ESTATE, from \$2,500,000 to . . . . .	\$ 3,000,000
PERSONAL INVESTMENTS for secular clergy in 9 bishoprics, . . . . .	26,000,000
OBRAS PIAS in the church, of ecclesiastics of both sexes, . . . . .	2,500,000
TOTAL FUND of the churches and communities of ecclesiastics of both sexes, . . . . .	16,000,000
Total, . . . . .	<u>\$47,500,000</u>

In 1831, Don José Maria Mora, a Mexican writer, estimated the property of the church at a valuation of at least \$75,000,000 <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mejico in 1842 by del Rivero. Madrid, 1844.

In 1844, — and we may consider it nearly the same in 1850, — the church property was calculated as follows :

Real estate — urban and rural, . . . . .	\$18,000,000
Churches, houses, convents, curates' dwellings, furniture, jewels, sacred vessels and other personalities, . . . . .	52,000,000
Floating capital, various funds in ecclesiastical treasuries, and the capital required to produce the sum annually received by the Mexican clergy in alms, <i>diezmos</i> , dues, &c. &c., . . . . .	20,000,000
Total, . . . . .	<u>\$90,000,000</u>

The real estate of the church is estimated by Señor Otero, — from whose work on the social and political condition of Mexico, this calculation is taken, — to have been worth at least 25 per cent. more before the revolution; and, to this increased value must be added about \$115,000,000 of capital founded on *contribuciones*, *derechos reales*, and other imposts which were laid on the property of the country for the benefit of the clergy. <sup>1</sup>

It is not to be supposed that the 2,000 *nuns* are of ecclesiastical importance except for charitable and educational purposes; — if we deduct their number, therefore, from the 1,700 monks and 3,500 secular clergy, we shall have only 3,200 men devoted to the spiritual wants of more than seven and a half millions or, 2,383 individuals assigned to the ecclesiastical charge of each priest, monk or curate. And yet, among these men, chiefly, the avails of probably more than \$90,000,000 of property are to be annually distributed or consolidated in a country from which they are constantly asking alms instead of bestowing them.

The value of their churches, the extent of their city property, the power they possess as lenders and mortgagees in Mexico, where there are no banks, and the enormous masses of church plate, golden ornaments and jewels, will swell the above statements and estimates of the church's wealth to nearer one hundred millions than ninety, or to about \$88,000,000 less than it was before the rebellion against Spain; at which period the number of ecclesiastics was about 10,000; or 13,000, if the lay brethren and subordinates are included in the ecclesiastical census. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Otero Cuestion Social y Política de Mejico, pp. 38, 39, 43.

<sup>2</sup> Mexico as it Was and Is, p. 329.

The *higher clergy* of Mexico which was once the depository of science and general learning, is now only distinguished for its elegant manners and aristocratic tendencies. Notwithstanding some members of the church, in orders and belonging to this class, were engaged in the revolutionary struggle, and essentially aided in making it effective, the spirit of the remainder, as a body, was in reality, antagonistic to the movement. The course of the *lower clergy*, however, was different. The members of this grade threw themselves early into the rebellion, and sustained it heroically in its most dangerous epochs, until it triumphed in independence.

Although there is in Mexico great religious devotion to the church, regular observance of its feasts, fasts and ceremonies, and obedience to its commands, there prevails, nevertheless, considerable indifference towards its ministers, who, in too many cases have justly forfeited popular respect. The *curás* have united themselves effectually with the interests and affections of the people in the rural districts where they pass the ordinary, regular life of country folks remote from the dissipating influence of cities. They are amiable men, prudent counsellors of all classes, and the hospitable hosts of every stranger who visits their parishes. But, in many of the towns and cities large numbers of the clergy, both secular and regular, have forfeited the personal esteem of the high and low by their open participation in common social vices. "These vices have augmented in proportion as the bonds of discipline have been loosened by the distracted condition of the country. Gambling and dissipation are rooted in the clergy as well as in other classes of society; but we may specially declare that the convents of friars, with few exceptions, are in Mexico, sewers of corruption."<sup>1</sup> This frail condition of ecclesiastical discipline was satisfactorily proved by the state in which the Catholic church of the United States found the parishes of Texas at the period of annexation; and, it is likely, that many more flagrant instances of laxity will be unveiled in New Mexico and California, to whose distant regions our enlightened and pure Catholic clergymen are already directing their attention with honest and pious zeal.

The Spanish government cherished the church, for state as well as religious reasons. The *mayorazgos* or rights of primogeniture, which bestowed the great bulk of patrimonial estates upon the eldest son, necessarily forced the younger offspring of distinguished houses either into the army or into the church; and, hence the splendid eleemosynary establishments which were erected and en-

<sup>1</sup> Rivero, Mexico in 1842, p. 130.

dowed all over Mexico, as much for the comfort of these drones of the social hive, as for the worship and glory of God. Most of the lucrative benefices came in this manner into the hands of the Spaniards and their descendants; and by far the greater portion of the higher ecclesiastics were, either influentially allied, or were persons of elevated social rank. Thus it is that even at the present day so many men of distinguished manners and monarchical tendencies, are found among the "high clergy" of Mexico; for the epoch of the revolution is not so distant that the old ecclesiastical stock has entirely departed from earth.

But since the laws of primogeniture have been abolished, — and, with them, the ecclesiastical privilege of enforcing the payment of tithes to the clergy, — the church has been no longer regarded by the best classes as a favorite resort or refuge for their children. The revolution, as we have said, disorganized the establishment and infused inferior men into the sacred ranks. The material of the several brotherhoods degenerated in quality if not in quantity. The irregularities of the friars became proverbial throughout the republic, and respectable families regarded it as a calamity, or, even sometimes, as a degradation, to hear their members pronounce a monastic vow. Thus, whilst the church became unpopular among the upper classes as a means of subsistence, — its numbers were gradually filled and maintained from the humbler ranks, whose ignorance and disorderly habits tend more and more to widen the difference between the secular and the regular clergy of the republic. It is needless to dwell on the baleful influence which such debased and pretended ministers of religion, must exercise among the common classes of a society over which their ecclesiastical authority and the sanctity of their profession gives them control in such a country as Mexico.

We deem it proper to sustain the allegations made especially against a large number of the Mexican clergy by citations from American, English and Spanish authors upon the country, in addition to the quotation already given from Rivero's "Mexico in 1842."

Mr. Norman, in his Rambles in Yucatan, whilst graphically describing certain festivals, and among them those of Christmas and the Purification of the Blessed Virgin, says: — "The people testify their respect for those festal days, — for so they are denominated, — by processions and such amusements as are suited. Notwithstanding the acknowledged debasing effects of their sports and

pastimes, which consist wholly of bull baiting, cock fighting and gambling, they are not disgraced by either riotousness or drunkenness. \* \* \* The priests give countenance to these recreations, if they may be so called, both by their presence and participation.<sup>1</sup> \* \* \* The men, women, and children, as soon as they had concluded their ceremonies, started, in a body, with revolt ing precipitation, to the gaming tables, which had been set forth in the ruins of an old convent adjoining the sanctuary where the procession had just been dissolved. Here we found all classes of society, male and female. The highest ecclesiastical and civil dignitaries were there, hob and nob with the most common of the multitude."<sup>2</sup> \* \* \* Such is the testimony of Mr. Norman as to some of the disgraceful habits of the clergy in Yucatan. Mr. Stephens in his travels in the same Mexican state, remarks that "except at Merda and Campeché, where they are more immediately under the eyes of the bishop, the *padres*, throughout Yucatan, to relieve the tedium of convent life, have *compagneras*, or, as they are sometimes called, *hermanas politicas*, or, sisters in law. \* \* \*

"Some look on this arrangement as a little irregular, but, in general, it is regarded only as an amiable weakness, and I am safe in saying that it is considered a recommendation to a village *padre*, as it is supposed to give him settled habits, as marriage does with laymen; and, to give my own honest opinion, which I did not intend to do, it is less injurious to good morals than the by no means uncommon consequences of celibacy which are found in some other Catholic countries. The *padre* in Yucatan stands in the position of a married man, and performs all the duties pertaining to the head of a family. Persons of what is considered a respectable standing in a village, do not shun left hand marriages with a *padre*. Still it was to us always a matter of regret to meet with individuals of worth, and whom we could not help esteeming, standing in what could not but be considered a false position. To return to the case with which I set out; — the *padre* in question was universally spoken of as a man of good conduct, a sort of *pattern padre* for correct, steady habits; sedate, grave and middle aged, and apparently the last man to have an eye for such a pretty *compagnera*."<sup>3</sup>

As the United States is now interested in the history of California, it may not be uninteresting or unprofitable, in illustrating this

<sup>1</sup> Norman's Rambles in Yucatan, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> *ib.* p. 91.

<sup>3</sup> Stephens' Travels in Yucatan, vol. 2, page 115.

subject, to exhibit the mode of ecclesiastical operations in regard to proselytes in that region, at a recent period.

"At a particular time of the year," we are told by Captain Beechey and Mr. Forbes, "when the Indians can be spared from the agricultural concerns of the establishment, many of them are permitted to take the launch of the mission and make excursions to the Indian territory. On these occasions the *padres* desire them to induce as many of their unconverted brethren as possible to accompany them back to the mission, of course implying that this is to be done only by persuasion; but the boat being furnished with a cannon and musketry, and in every respect equipped for war, it too often happens that the neophytes and the *gente de razon*, who superintend the direction of the boat, avail themselves of their superiority, with the desire of ingratiating themselves with their masters and of receiving a reward. There are, besides, repeated acts of aggression which it is necessary to punish, but all of which furnish proselytes. Women and children are generally the first objects of capture, as their husbands and parents sometimes voluntarily follow them into captivity.

"One of these proselyting expeditions into their Indian territory occurred during the period of Captain Beechey's visit in 1826, which ended in a battle, with the loss, in the first instance, of thirty-four of the converted, and eventually in the gain, by a second expedition sent to avenge the losses of the first, of forty women and children of the invaded tribes. These were immediately enrolled in the list of the mission, and were nearly as immediately converted into Christians. The process by which this was effected is so graphically described by Captain Beechey that it would be doing him injustice to use any words but his own.

"I happened, he says, to visit the mission about this time and saw these unfortunate beings under tuition. They were clothed in blankets, and arranged in a row before a blind Indian, who understood their dialect, and was assisted by an *alcalde* to keep order. Their tutor began by desiring them to kneel, informing them that he was going to teach them the names of the persons composing the Trinity, and that they were to repeat in Spanish what he dictated. The neophytes being thus arranged, the speaker began: "Santissima Trinidad, — Dios, Jesu Christo, Espiritu Santo" — pausing between each name, to listen if the simple Indians, who had never spoken a Spanish word before, pronounced it correctly or any thing near the mark. After they had repeated these names satisfactorily, their blind tutor, after a pause, added "Santos" —

and recapitulated the names of a great many saints, which finished the morning's tuition.

"After a few days, no doubt these promising pupils were christened, and admitted to all the benefits and privileges of Christians and *gente de razon*. Indeed, I believe that the act of making the cross and kneeling at proper times, and other such like mechanical rites, constitute no small part of the religion of these poor people. The rapidity of the conversion is, however, frequently stimulated by practices much in accordance with the primary kidnapping of the subjects. If, as not unfrequently happens, any of the captured Indians show a repugnance to conversion, it is the practice to imprison them for a few days, and then allow them to breathe a little fresh air in a walk round the mission, to observe the happy mode of life of their converted countrymen; after which they are again shut up, and thus continue incarcerated until they declare their readiness to renounce the religion of their forefathers.' As might be believed, the ceremonial exercises of the Roman Catholic religion, occupy a considerable share of the time of these people. Mass is performed twice daily, besides high-days and holydays, when the ceremonies are much grander and of longer duration; and at all the performances every Indian is obliged to attend under the penalty of a whipping; and the same method of enforcing proper discipline as in kneeling at proper times, keeping silence, &c., is not excluded from the church service itself. In the aisles and passages of the church, zealous beadles of the converted race are stationed, armed with sundry weapons of potent influence in effecting silence and attention, and which are not sparingly used on the refractory or inattentive. These consist of sticks and whips, long goads, &c., and they are not idle in the hands of the officials that sway them. \* \* \*

"The unmarried of both sexes, as well adults as children, are carefully locked up at night in separate houses, the keys being left in the keeping of the Fathers; and when any breach of this rule is detected, the culprits of both sexes are severely punished by whipping, — the men in public, the women privately.

"It is obvious from all this, that these poor people are in fact slaves under another name; and it is no wonder that La Perouse found the resemblance painfully striking between their condition and that of the negro slaves of the West Indies. Sometimes, although rarely, they attempt to break their bonds and escape into their original haunts. But this is of rare occurrence, as, independently of the difficulty of escaping, they are so simple as to believe

that they have hardly the power to do so after being baptised, regarding the ceremony of baptism as a sort of spell which could not be broken. Occasionally, however, they overcome all imaginary and real obstacles and effect their escape. In such cases, the runaway is immediately pursued, and as it is always known to which tribe he belongs, and as, owing to the enmity subsisting among the tribes, he will not be received by another, he is almost always found and surrendered to the pursuers by his pusillanimous countrymen. When brought back to the mission he is always first flogged and then has an iron clog attached to his legs, which has the effect of preventing his running away and marking him out, *in terrorem*, to others."<sup>1</sup>

Additional testimony in regard to the evil practices of the Mexican padres may be found in the delightful volumes of Madame Calderon de la Barca, entitled "Life in Mexico," and published in 1842. "Alas!" — exclaims this sprightly lady, — speaking of the wholesome reforms introduced by the viceroy Revilla-Gigedo among the Mexican monks, — "alas! could his excellency have lived to these our degenerate days, and beheld certain monks, of a certain order, drinking *pulque* and otherwise disporting themselves; — nay, seen one, as we but just now did from our window, strolling along the street by lamp-light, with an Indian girl tucked under his arm!"

The author of this slight but significant passage — an American lady of the highest character and wife of the first minister sent by Spain to Mexico, — cannot be flippantly contradicted by critics who would impute to her either prejudice or ignorance.

Zavala, in his History of the Revolutions of Mexico from 1808 to 1830, sketches briefly and forcibly some of the earlier features of ecclesiastical control in his country. As he was a native and a Catholic, he will not be accused of injustice to a church which he endeavored to fasten on the nation by his adherence to the constitution which made the Catholic faith the exclusive religion of the land. "They created missionaries," says he, "who, by the aid of the soldiery, made prodigious proselytes. \* \* \* They prepared catechisms and small formularies in the language of the natives, not for the perusal of the Indians, who could not read, but in order to repeat them in their pulpits and teach them by rote. There was not a single translation of the sacred volume in any idiom of the country, and there was not an elementary work containing the principles of their faith. But how could such works

<sup>1</sup> Forbes's California, p. 215.

exist for the Indians when their conquerors were unable to read them? What I desire to prove by this is that religion was neither taught the natives nor were they persuaded of its divine origin by proof and argument; the whole foundation of their faith was the word of their missionaries, and the reason of their belief was the bayonet of their conquerors. \* \* \* \* \* The dependence of the people was a sort of slavery, a necessary consequence of the ignorance in which they were brought up, of the terror with which the troops and authorities inspired them, of their despotism and pride, and more than all, of an inquisition sustained both by the military and by the religious superstitions of monks and clergymen whose fanaticism was equal to their ignorance. \* \* \* \* \* The catechism of Padre Ripalda, which contains the maxims of a blind obedience to the king and pope was the ground work of their religion; and their priests, parents and masters inculcated these doctrines incessantly." <sup>1</sup>

Don Vincente Pazos, in his celebrated Letters on the United Provinces of South America, does not even stop at the clergy, in charging a large share of the miseries of his countrymen upon the ecclesiastical establishment, but confounds the creed with its unworthy ministers, and strikes even at the religion itself:

"Among the evils suffered by the Indians which have been a source of unhappiness to them, as well as to all South America, is the Roman Catholic religion, which was introduced among them by the Spaniards. This religion, in countries where it predominates or is connected with the government, is widely different from the same religion as it appears in the United States of North America. Instead of being employed as all religions ought to be, in directing the morals, purifying the hearts and restraining the vices of the people, — it is so prostituted in Spanish countries, that it has become nothing but a mass of superstitious ceremonies, and the instrument of avarice and oppression."

The error of the patriotic writer is so evident that it does not need exposure. The faith and the friar are different things. Yet how deep must be the corruption of a class whose vices force an intelligent man, born and educated in the bosom of the church, to denounce his religion for the sake of its worthless teachers.

We have dwelt upon this subject because the religion — and especially the protected state religion of a country — is always of deep interest when we estimate the resources and character of a nation. Priests of all creeds obtain a sacred character in the opinion

<sup>1</sup> Zavala, Rev. de Mejico, vol. 1, pp. 14, 25.

of the multitude the moment their vow is pronounced at the altar. The world believes that they part with human nature in assuming the gown, and become in reality, the *divines* they are called in the fashionable nomenclature of the age.

The priest, whether Protestant, Catholic, Mahomedan or Chinese, is ever an important, and often an omnipotent, member of the social world. And it behooves society in the nineteenth century to cherish Christianity instead of Flamens and Soothsayers.

It has been our principle through life to cultivate a genial feeling of toleration towards all the various sects into which the great Christian church is divided. We have resisted bigotry in all its shapes, and in all its manifestations, from whatever source. Trusting in the essential faith and discarding the external form, we have regarded all men who knelt at the altar which was cemented with the blood of the Nazarine, as a great brotherhood devoted to the religious regeneration and consequent civilization of the world. In writing, therefore, of the Catholic church in Mexico we have been pained to speak disparagingly of a part of the priesthood, whose members, in our own country, we had early in life learned to reverence for their virtuous piety, and admire for their profound learning. We know that the great theoretical dogma of that powerful church is its *unity*, and that its tenets, principles and practices are universally the same throughout the world. For opinions given and examples cited, in another work, we have been severely rebuked, by one of the most learned theologians in the Roman church, who argues our wilful error, upon this assumption of theoretical identity. But we have the satisfaction to know, not only from Mexicans themselves, but from American Catholics who visited the country since that criticism was issued, that our descriptions, in no instance, surpassed the reality, and that if the *tenets*, be in fact, the same as those entertained by the church at Rome and in the United States, the principles, and, especially, the *practices* of many of its ministers, vary extraordinarily from the principles and practices of its ministers here. In another portion of this work we may, probably, notice some of those practices more fully. <sup>1</sup>

The facts we have been obliged to state in regard to some of the *materiel* of the present Mexican ecclesiastical establishment do not touch the dogmas of the Catholic church though they certainly indicate so great a degree of laxity in the administration of a power-

<sup>1</sup> See Mayer's Mexico as it Was and as it Is, 1844; and the review of it by the Rev. Mr. Verot, in the United States Catholic Magazine for March, 1844: See also the reply entitled Romanism in Mexico, published in Baltimore in the same year.

ful moral, civil and religious engine endowed with immense resources, that they should attract the reforming notice of those pure branches of the Roman fraternity whose proximity will best afford them the occasion to counsel their brethren in an age of progress and competition not only in trade but in religion. Texas has already improved under the auspices of a new ecclesiastical administration since her union with the North American states and her religious alliance with their Roman Catholic Archbishopric. Nor is the importance of these ameliorations less demanded at the hands of republican ecclesiastics when we recollect that the federal constitution adopted in 1847, now the fundamental law of the land, declares in its first title, that the "religion of the Mexican nation is, and will be perpetually, the Catholic, apostolic, Roman. The nation protects it by wise and just laws, and *prohibits the exercise of any other!*" Men, in Mexico, must not only not *pray* as they please, but, constitutionally, they must not *believe* as they please. A priesthood which is thus indissolubly and exclusively welded to the state in a republic, should be, indeed, peculiarly sacred and pure. Sole, despotic ecclesiastical power, based upon numerical strength, — intolerant of all other modes of worship or modifications of Christianity, — is an anomaly in the nineteenth century, nor is it likely that the civil liberty of a nation can ever become secure or worthy, until religious liberty is, at least, permitted if not enjoined by its paramount law. These two elements of human right and progress have ever moved hand in hand. It is a mockery to separate them and tell the people they are free. The indefeasible rights of *reason* and judgment are sapped and stifled. When conscience, even, must struggle with legal shackles in its intercourse with God, what must be the conflict of the soul in its intercourse with man!

"We speak not of mens' creeds — they rest between  
Man and his Maker;" —

but we have confined our observations in this work, exclusively to those painful exhibitions which cannot fail to strike a stranger as disadvantageous both to intellectual progress and the pure and spiritual adoration of God. The mixture of antique barbaric show and Indian rites, may have served to attract the native population at the first settlement of the country; but their continuance is in keeping neither with the spirit of the age nor the necessities of a republic. While the priesthood has contrived, in the course of centuries, to attract the wealth of multitudes, and to make itself, in various ways, the richest proprietor of the nation, the people have been impoverished and continued ignorant. Not content with the

natural influence possessed by a church whose members are spread all over the republic, the hierarchy of Mexico, has exacted a constitutional recognition not only of its permanence, but of its right to exclude all other faiths, and all other religious reunions for worship. It appears, therefore, just that in such a republic it was the duty of the Roman church voluntarily to unfetter its wealth, to reform its priesthood, to sweep into the public coffers the useless jewels that adorn the altars and statues, yet do not glorify the Almighty; and to imitate the virtues, resolution and self-denial of its ministers in our country, who, while blending themselves in politics and public spirit most effectually with the masses, have devoted their lives to the education of people of all creeds and classes for support and independence.

"Far from the goods of the church being exempted because they are consecrated to God," says Vattel in his immortal work, "it is for that very reason that they should be the first taken for the welfare of the state. There is nothing more agreeable to the common Father of men than to preserve a nation from destruction. As God has no need of property, the consecration of goods to him, is their devotion to such purposes as are pleasant to him. Besides, — the property of the church, by the confession of the clergy themselves, is chiefly destined for the poor; and when the state is in want, it is, doubtless, the first pauper, and the worthiest of succor."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> We trust that it will not be regarded as levity if we relate an anecdote which shows that the church *has* contributed to the money if not to the wealth of the country, in years past, in a most unexampled manner. It will be recollected that in the historical part of this work there is an account of the mode in which a large revenue was derived by the government from the sale of Bulls issued by the church permitting the people a variety of indulgences and acts which, without the possession of such a document, were not allowed by the spiritual laws of Rome, or the temporal laws of Spain. Immense packages of these Bulls were found in the treasury after the revolution, and, when it became necessary for the government to issue a temporary *paper money*, the financiers of the nation thought it a wise stroke to make these Bulls at once a license of indulgence to the holder, and a security against counterfeiters. Accordingly they printed the government notes on the blank back of the Bulls, which had been sent from Spain to supply her revenue. One of these treasury notes, now before us, measures twelve inches in length by nine in breadth, and promises to pay two dollars. The Bull upon which it is printed is an indulgence, valued at "two coined silver reals," or, twenty-five cents, allowing the possessor to eat "wholesome meat, eggs and milk," during lent and on fast days.