

such deep importance to the civilized world, ought to be gifted with talents, and possess acquirements, infinitely beyond those which have fallen to his lot and that consequently he may be accused of presumption in touching on subjects which even sages and scholars would find it difficult properly to illustrate: but, in extension of all his literary talents, he begs the reader to bear in mind, that an individual, compelled by situation and Spanish necessity to seek a subsistence for the last fourteen years by his own enterprise, cannot have enjoyed much time for the cultivation of letters. Making, therefore, no pretensions to the honours of an author, he submits his work to the candid criticism of his fellow countrymen, who are engaged with him in the review of the present judgment of European countries; and he trusts that the favourable opinion of his own countrymen, will be more than sufficient to work up the production of one who never possessed a high opinion of his own talents, was engaged in the honourable pursuit of an American settlement, and who has been a resident in the United States for many years.

To elucidate the causes which gave birth to the present struggles of Spanish America generally, but particularly of that section of which we now treat, against the despotism of old Spain, it

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MEMOIRS

OF THE

MEXICAN REVOLUTION.

CHAPTER I.

Summary account of the Conquest—Humane enactments of Charles V.—Grievances of the Americans—Loyalty displayed by them, on receipt of the intelligence of the difficulties in Spain, in 1808—Politick course of conduct proposed to be adopted, in this emergency, by the Viceroy Iturrigaray—His deposition by a faction of Europeans—Arrival of his successor, Venegas—Plot entered into to overthrow the Spanish government in Mexico—Breaking out of the Revolution, at the town of Dolores, under the direction of Hidalgo—Capture of the city of Guanajuato—Proclamations of the Viceroy, and fulminations of the Church—Action at Las Cruces—Conduct of Hidalgo—Battle of Aculeo—Massacre at Guanajuato, by Calleja—Battle of the Bridge of Calderon—Capture of Hidalgo—Death of that patriot, and of many other officers.

TO elucidate the causes which gave birth to the present struggles of Spanish America generally, but particularly of that section of which we now treat, against the despotism of old Spain, it

is necessary to take a retrospect of its situation from the period of the conquest. It will then appear evident to every impartial mind, that almost each revolving hour, for the last three centuries, has been marked by a steady, systematic course of injustice and outrage towards the unfortunate Americans.

The conquest of Mexico was undertaken by Cortez, in conformity with a plan which had been prescribed to Columbus by the Spanish crown; by which it was provided, that the expense attending the discovery and conquest of any unknown countries should be altogether borne by the adventurers, who should, as a compensation, retain the vassalage of the nations, upon the condition of instructing them in the precepts of the Christian religion. The dominion of all such countries as should be discovered was to be vested in the crown of Spain, which, on its part, guaranteed (*Leyes de las Indias, Ley I. tit. 1. lib. 3.*) that "on no account should they be separated, wholly or in part, from that monarchy;" and the Emperor Charles V. bound himself and his successors for ever, that "these settlements should on no account, or in favour of any one, either wholly or in part, be separated;" and that "if, in violation of this stipulation, any of his successors

should make any gift or alienation, either wholly or in part, the same should be void."

Cortez, in pursuance of these favourable enactments, proceeded from the island of Cuba, on the 10th of February, 1519, to the work of conquest. After sailing along, and making descents on the coast of Yucatan, he landed, on the 21st of April, on the spot where the castle of San Juan de Ulua now stands; and, after experiencing several vicissitudes of fortune, and displaying the courage and ferocity of the Spaniards of those times, he succeeded, on the 8th of November, in planting the Spanish banners on the capital of the Mexican empire.

The chief of that empire lavished upon Cortez every mark of respect and hospitality; but was soon made to feel the effects of Spanish artifice and treachery. Montezuma was entrapped, and kept a prisoner by Cortez for six months. At length he was shot by an arrow, while endeavouring to quell a tumult among his own subjects. They were anxious to avenge his wrongs, and to revenge the treacherous massacre of their nobles on the 13th of May, 1520. This unfeeling outrage was committed by Alvarado, who had been left in the command of the city during the absence of Cortez, when the latter was marching upon Zempoalla, to

attack his rival Narvaez. Montezuma died, frantic with mortification and despair, about the 30th of June, in the quarters of the Spaniards, where he had been kept prisoner by Cortez. This event so much excited the rage of the Mexicans, that Cortez found it impossible to maintain his position in the city; and it became expedient for him to abandon it, and to fall back on his allies the Tlascalans. This movement was accomplished on the night of the 1st of July, but with severe loss. The friendship of the Tlascalans remained unaltered by the change of Cortez's fortune; and they offered him every assistance he should require, to enable him to continue his operations against their enemies, the Mexicans. Cortez, having incorporated with his Europeans the soldiers of the conquered Narvaez, and reinforcements from the Antilles, returned to and entered Tezcucó, the 31st of December. On the 31st of May, 1521, he laid siege to the city of Mexico, with eighty-seven cavalry, eight hundred and forty-eight Spanish infantry, eighteen pieces of artillery, *seventy-five thousand Tlascalans*, and thirteen small vessels, which he had built on the lake.

The Mexicans, under Quauhtemotzin, the successor of the unfortunate Montezuma, defended themselves with desperate valour; but,

after a resistance of seventy-five days, during which time they had to contend against the ravages of famine and disease, and an enemy who had increased in force to upwards of two hundred thousand men, Mexico was taken by Cortez on the 13th of August, though not until the greater part of that beautiful city had been destroyed.

The emperor, endeavouring to escape, in a canoe, from the fury of the Spaniards, was taken prisoner. The sanguinary Cortez crowned the dreadful cruelties which had sullied all the steps of his conquest, by torturing the emperor in a manner the most diabolical. With a view of extorting from the unfortunate monarch a confession of the place where his treasures were concealed, his feet were first soaked in oil, and afterwards burnt by a slow fire. Cortez, finding that the torture was borne with firmness by the noble Mexican, ordered him to be released; but he, together with two other kings, were hung, three years afterwards, on the allegation of an intent to revolt.

The natives of the country continued, for some time, to withstand the progress of the conqueror, but eventually fell victims to their inferiority in arms. A devastation ensued, by fire and sword, that has no parallel in history.

The unoffending aborigines were slaughtered without mercy or distinction. To the Spanish historians of those days we refer the reader, who feels desirous of perusing the accounts of those cruelties in detail: he will there find portrayed only a part of the bloody scenes,—yet sufficient to cover the Spanish name with eternal opprobrium.

After Cortez felt himself firmly established in the empire, the iron reign of tyranny commenced, in all its bitter and dreadful forms;—the Indians perished by thousands, under the scourge of their barbarous and cruel task-masters.

The remonstrances of many prelates, but particularly of the beneficent and venerable *Las Casas*, against such horrors and anti-christian barbarities, at length awakened the attention of the emperor Charles V. To check the violence of the settlers, and to meliorate the condition of the natives, he instituted the famous tribunal of the Indies, and appointed officers specially for the purpose of acting as a check on the conduct of the settlers. But these protectors and judges speedily rendered nugatory all the humane institutions of the emperor. As no complaints could reach the ear of the monarch but through them, they soon closed all the

avenues to the throne; and, urged by thirst of gain, combined with the settlers in acts of the most flagrant injustice: so that the wrongs of the Mexicans continued unabated.

Charles V. however, persevered in enacting the most salutary and humane code of laws for the welfare of the colonies. In looking over these laws, we find many of them breathing a spirit of humanity and sound policy, that would do honour to the most enlightened age. It was enacted, that *the discoverers, the settlers, and their posterity, and those born in the country, were to be preferred before all others, in offices of church, state, and jurisprudence.* In that plain and important regulation was comprised a fundamental principle well calculated to promote the prosperity, and secure the affections, of the colonists. A departure from this principle ever has been, and ever will be, fatal to the sovereignty of a mother country over its colonies.

It was likewise enacted, that *the aborigines were to be considered as free men, and vassals of the crown of Spain*; the colonies were declared to be *an integral part of the monarchy*; and to such an extent were the *rights* of the Americans protected, that no law promulgated in the mother country could take effect, unless sanctioned

by the representative government of the colonies, which was vested in the council of the Indies.

How different a scene would have been displayed in Spanish America, from that which it now exhibits, if these wise and just principles had been faithfully observed by the successors of Charles V. ! But, alas ! experience has afforded melancholy proofs, that they have all been long since scattered to the winds ; and, in their place, has been established a system of colonial policy, having for its aim the perpetuity of ignorance, injustice, and despotism, over the new world—a system which has terminated in the political degradation, and even abject thralldom, of the Creoles as well as Indians. Ask the European Spaniard, why these salutary laws have never been put in execution, since the day of their enactment ? and, if he is capable of an impartial answer, he will reply, that such laws would have placed a check on his pride and avarice, and would have prevented him from exercising an unnatural authority over the lives and property of millions of Americans.

The viceroys, sent out as representatives of the king, to carry into effect the "*Leyes de las Indias*," and to guard the interests of the Creole, were the first and most distinguished violators

of those very laws. The vast expanse of ocean between them and the mother country, freed them from all restraint. Surrounded by all the pomp and splendour of royalty, they thought only of exercising regal powers, and of amassing riches by every possible means, so that, on their return to Spain, they might, by the aid and powerful influence of gold, completely prevent every complaint of the Americans from reaching the throne. In a little time corruption spread through every department of government in Old Spain ; so that the viceroys, captains general, intendants, and the dignitaries of the church, who were sent to America, together with all their immediate agents, formed a strong phalanx, combined in their interests and views ; and, as they were the only channel through which complaints could be transmitted from America to the Peninsula, it is obvious, that not one grievance in ten thousand, which occurred in the colonies, ever reached the council of the Indies, much less the ear of the monarch. At length, so confident did these tyrants become, in the exercise of their iniquitous system, that they treated with scorn and cruelty every Creole who dared to resist their imperious mandates ; and hence was established a system of passive obedience

and suffering, on the part of both Creole and Indian, such as was never before exhibited, and such as no colonists, in any age, or in any country, had ever before endured.

The European Spaniards, having thus acquired the supreme authority, and conjoining in their hands all the civil, military, and ecclesiastical employments, committed, with impunity, enormities of the deepest dye. Justice became subservient to caprice and interest; and dissensions were fomented between the European and Creole. The latter found himself cut off from every hope of redress; saw his rights, as a man, prostrated, and all the paths to social distinctions impeded by obstacles he could not overcome. Thus degraded and persecuted, every hatred was engendered, and from his heart were banished all feelings of consanguinity.

After the death of Charles V. his successors appear to have studied which of them could most outrageously trample on the laws enacted during that monarch's reign. The Americans have not only been excluded from the privileges granted them by those laws, but even the descendants of the conquerors have been despoiled of many of their rights. Men without education, talent, or character, have been ap-

pointed to civil, military, and ecclesiastical offices of the greatest responsibility; and corruption, in the latter period, had reached so great a height, that most offices in America were either sold at a fixed price, or procured by court parasites.

During the famous, or rather infamous, administration of Godoy, sacrilegiously called the Prince of Peace, every office in America, from that of the viceroy down to that of a menial dependent of the custom-house, was publicly sold; except in a few instances, in which they were bestowed on the servants of the prince, as a premium for their intrigues, or, as it was styled, to reward their fidelity to his royal master or royal mistress. A major-domo of the royal household has been elevated to the government of an American province; and there have been intendants, and judges of the Real Audiencia, the highest judicial tribunal in America, who were men known in Spain for their vices only, or as panders to the passions of the prince and the queen. Under men like these were the lives and the properties of the Spanish Americans placed. Out of *one hundred and sixty viceroys*, who have ruled in America, four only were Creoles born; and even those four were brought up from their infancy in

Spain, and were appointed to the station from accidental circumstances, or through the influence of family connexions in the Peninsula.

The government of Spain, dreading the introduction of foreign literature, and the culture of those natural talents, with which the Creole is so highly gifted, placed every bar to his improvement, by impeding a system of liberal education. It was particularly studious to preserve the Creoles from the contaminating intercourse of foreigners.

In the colleges, the Latin language, ancient philosophy, theological dogmas, mathematics, and some superficial branches of education, alone are taught. The elements of general knowledge are withheld from the students; and the greater part of the Creoles are unacquainted with history, except, perhaps, that of Spain. Many attempts have been made to introduce public schools in different parts of Mexico, but they have always failed, through the secret or open opposition of the Spanish government, which has not hesitated to declare, that *it was not expedient for learning to become general in America.*

The eulogies passed on the course of education in Mexico, by M. De Humboldt, are calculated to convey, to a reader unacquaint-

ed with the real state of that country, an impression, that an excellent system of education has been established and disseminated by the government. This is not the only instance in which that enlightened traveller and philosopher has flattered the Spanish government; but he has occasionally compensated for this incense, by developing many unpalatable truths. The most superficial observer, who has visited Mexico, must have discovered the great want of seminaries of education; for it is only in the city of Mexico, that any scholastic establishments, deserving that name, are to be found; and the abject ignorance of the great body of society throughout the kingdom affords a lamentable evidence of the paucity of institutions of this nature. There is not, in fact, a despotic country, in any part of the old world, which professes Christianity, where education is so limited, and where foreign literature is so little known, as in Mexico.

The commerce and agriculture of the Creoles have likewise felt the fatal and dreadful influence of Spanish despotism. The commerce of the colonies has been restricted to a few Cadiz merchants. The arts, exactions, and injustice, of those avaricious monopolists, would scarcely be believed by the civilized world. Our limits