

will not permit us to detail them; but we may observe, that extortion was the leading feature of that disgraceful commerce. The shipments to Mexico consisted of the miserable manufactures of Spain, or of the imperfect products of her agriculture, and of some foreign fabrics, so burthened with imposts, that only the most wealthy classes of society could buy them. The consumption of such cargoes was forced upon the Creoles by every arbitrary and ingenious measure, to the exclusion of commerce through any other channel but that of old Spain; and to the neglect of those advantages which all-bountiful nature has granted the Americans, in the fertility of their soil, and genial climate. To insure to Spain the trade in wines and brandies, the Creoles were forbidden to manufacture either; olives were not allowed to be planted; the cultivation of the silk-worm was interdicted; and, with regard to vines, even such as had been raised for the purpose of affording the Creole a grateful fruit, became an object of jealousy to the Cadiz monopolists, and an order was actually sent out by the government of Spain, to grub up all the vines in the country!!

Tobacco, an article most essential to the comfort of a Spanish American, was a monopoly of

the crown. In Mexico, it is only permitted to be cultivated in the district of Orizaba. The planter was not allowed to seek a market for what he raised; it was forcibly taken from him, at a fixed price, by the king, who manufactured, and retailed it out, at an enormous advance, to the people. The revenue derived from this monopoly was immense; and the unfortunate planter who raised, and the people who consumed the plant, had the mortification to see the revenue, derived from this source, divided and squandered away amongst a host of European Spaniards, who came, almost annually, from Spain, to fill the posts in the administration of tobacco. When a vacancy occurred, by death or otherwise, vain was the application of a Creole to fill it, except in some rare instances, and, even then, appointments were the result of bribery.

Such is a brief outline of the injustice and oppression, to which the Creole of Spanish America was so long a passive victim. manifold as were the grievances, they may be summed up by saying, that he was deprived of the enjoyment of his social, and even of all his natural rights, except so far as it occasionally suited the caprice or interest of a despot to grant them to him as an indulgence. In this

state of things in America, the struggles in the Peninsula commenced.

The news of the declaration of war against France, on the 6th of June, 1808, by the Supreme Junta of Seville, instead of exciting feelings of disaffection among the Creoles, or opening to their view the career of ambition, was, by them, enthusiastically received. Ferdinand was proclaimed, with every demonstration of joy and loyalty. Congratulatory addresses, from all quarters, poured in to the viceroys. The temples of divine worship resounded with the most fervent supplications to the Deity for the release of their monarch; every house presented pictures of their favourite king; and the air was filled with shouts of "*Viva Fernando VII.*" Unanimous resolves were adopted, to repel the meditated dominion of the French, and to afford generous and abundant resources to their European brethren in arms. One universal sentiment of ardent loyalty pervaded the American colonies, and the poor Creole seems to have thrown a veil of oblivion over all his wrongs, and to have directed his whole soul, at that juncture, to the cause of Spain. Future ages will scarcely believe, that a people thus generous and loyal were about to experience such heart-rending injuries, as have made the bloody

horrors of the conquest trivial by comparison, and that a war of extermination was soon to be declared against them, in reward for their generosity and loyalty.

After the occurrences at Bayonne had taken place, orders from Murat were received in the colonies; and, at the same moment, when the Creoles were swearing allegiance to their captured monarch, the Europeans were strenuously engaged in taking the most effectual measures to bring the Americans over to *French allegiance*; and some of the viceroys openly made advances to the people, in the name of the emperor Napoleon. Emissaries from king Joseph spread themselves over the continent, to pave the way for the adoption of the French government. They brought orders from *Ferdinand*, and the council of the Indies, to transfer to France the allegiance of America. The Europeans received the French emissaries with open arms, while the Creoles publicly burnt their proclamations, and, with cries of "*Viva Fernando VII.*" expelled these political intruders from their soil. These are facts of public notoriety; they stand recorded, and cannot be questioned.

Thus were the Americans the defenders of their king; while the conduct of the Europeans

and their chiefs was stained with treachery of the darkest hue.

While the French gained ground in the Peninsula, and Spain was torn by contending factions, the defection of the European Spaniards became so glaring as to produce, in the short space of six months, an indiscriminate rising of the colonists. Without concert, from the same motives, and with the same views, the Creoles attempted, and, in some instances, effected the deposition of their perjured chiefs; declaring, at the same time, their determination to hold their country for their legitimate monarch.

This course of conduct was no sooner made known in Spain, than, in place of being viewed as an evidence of loyalty, or as a great political event growing out of imperious circumstances, it was considered by the Cadiz regency as an outrageous rebellion, and war was declared against Caraccas, in the month of August, 1810. But we must confine ourselves more particularly to Mexico.

Don José Iturrigaray, viceroy at that period, on receiving intelligence of the critical situation in which Ferdinand was involved, and looking with a cautious eye on the strange orders of Ferdinand, those of the council of the Indies,

and of Murat, and aware likewise of the local dangers which threatened the kingdom, from the known hatred existing between the Creoles and Europeans, proposed calling a junta, to be formed by a representation from each province, in order to adopt a provisional government, in which the people might have confidence. The purity of Iturrigaray's intentions was known then, and is still acknowledged, by every enlightened Creole in the country. His sole object was to save the kingdom from the horrors of anarchy, and from French intrigue. In the adoption of these measures, the viceroy was cordially supported by the cabildo, who, by an energetic memorial, pointed out that those measures would alone inspire confidence. The memorial proposed, that the viceroy should remain as the representative of the king; that the existing authorities should retain the same power as before; but that a governing junta should also be established, composed of the royal audiencia, the archbishop, the municipality, and deputies from the several ecclesiastical and secular bodies, the nobility, principal citizens, and military.

In the formation of such a junta, it was obvious that Creoles would be blended with Europeans: but the latter, dreading the ascendancy

which the Creoles might gain from a popular government, opposed this loyal and rational overture, and secretly determined on boldly removing the viceroy. This resolution was promptly carried into effect; and, privately arming themselves, they arrested the unsuspecting viceroy and his family, on the night of the 15th of September, 1808, and sent them prisoners to the Peninsula.

This act excited universal indignation among all classes of Americans, by whom the viceroy was held in the highest estimation. His administration had been characterized by a course very different from that of any of his predecessors. He was not only benign and just in his decisions, but indefatigable in the measures he adopted for the internal improvement of the kingdom. It was, indeed, his popularity among the Americans, that excited the jealousy of the old Spaniards.

These circumstances, conjoined with the subsequent massacre of several distinguished Americans, and the arrest and banishment of others who had espoused the viceroy's plans, highly incensed the Mexicans. In this state of fermentation arrived Iturrigaray's successor, Venegas, bringing with him from Spain rewards, distinctions, and offices, for those Euro-

peans who had been conspicuous instruments in deposing the late viceroy.

The conduct of Venegas, during his career in the Peninsula, had not been calculated to inspire confidence among the people over whom he was sent to preside. He had delivered up one or two armies, and had otherwise acted in a manner calculated to make him a very obnoxious character in the eyes of the Americans.

These events, combined with the recollection of their former grievances, operated powerfully on the minds of the Mexicans; and, at length, the rancour, which had been so long smothered in their breasts, burst forth: for, being no longer able to bear with such flagrant injustice, finding that every day added new weight to their oppressions, and seeing no hope of redress but through their own exertions, they entered into a plan to hurl their tyrants from their seats of power.

In this conspiracy were engaged many of the most distinguished men in the kingdom, principally ecclesiastics and lawyers. It was conducted with the greatest secrecy, and extended to almost every city in the kingdom. A simultaneous insurrection was intended in the provinces; and the plot had nearly reached maturity, when it was checked by one of those accidents which frequently prevent the accom-

plishment of great projects; else, it is highly probable that Venegas would have been the last viceroy on the Mexican throne.

One of the conspirators, in a death-bed confession, revealed not only the plot, but the names of many of his principal accomplices. Venegas was alarmed at the magnitude of the plan, but was in hopes, that by seizing the principals he should be able to check it; and he took the most prompt and active measures to arrest those who were denounced. In the province of Guanajuato, the head of the conspiracy was Dr. Hidalgo, the rector of Dolores; in which town, and the adjacent one of San Miguel el Grandè, many of the conspirators resided.

Venegas despatched orders for the arrest of Hidalgo and his party; but, as some of their colleagues were in the confidence of the viceroy, and knew the measures he was adopting, they immediately despatched private couriers to apprise the rector of what was in agitation. The intelligence was received by Captain Don Ignacio Allende, who commanded a small body of the king's troops in San Miguel. He flew to Hidalgo, at Dolores, with the information. They at once agreed that flight was of no avail; they knew that, if taken, death was inevitable, and therefore resolved on making a desperate

effort to save themselves and their party. Allende having brought over his men, and the proscribed party being in readiness, the tocsin of revolt was sounded, on the night of the 10th of September, 1810: and thus commenced the civil wars of Mexico, which form the subject of the following sketch.

The *pueblo* of Dolores consisted principally of Indians, who adored their pastor Hidalgo, and who immediately joined him. He proceeded to San Miguel, where his numbers were considerably augmented. Thence he marched to the city of Zelaya, where he was joined by immense throngs of Indians, armed with clubs, slings, and missile weapons.

As matters had so far proceeded well, it was next proposed to nominate a commander. Allende, being the only military man, was named; but, as Hidalgo's popularity was considered infinitely more important to the cause, in its critical situation, than mere military acquirements, he was chosen commander-in-chief, with the rank of captain-general.

Hidalgo was a man of irreproachable character, and beloved, not only within the range of his rectorry, but in the adjoining provinces. He was regarded as a man of penetration, and considered well informed; that is, he had ac-

quired such knowledge as a well-educated Creole usually possesses. His reading had been confined to such works as the jealousy of the old Spaniards, and the scrutiny of the Inquisition, permitted to be circulated; of course, it is not presumable, that from such sources he could have derived much knowledge of the world. He was frank and generous, and knew very little of cunning, intrigue, and baseness, the characteristics of his opponents.

Hidalgo considered, that, as the names and plans of the conspirators had been revealed, and their projects thus nipped in the bud, it was necessary to make desperate exertions, and resort to every possible means of exciting the courage and passions of the Indians.* With

* It must not be inferred, from the use of this word *Indian*, that the people to whom it is applied resemble the savages of North America. They are, it is true, descendants of the aborigines; but, with few exceptions, they are a civilized people, tractable, and accustomed to the labours of civilized life. In many points they preserve the customs of their ancestors, and particularly cherish their native language; for although, in general, they understand and speak Spanish correctly, yet, in their intercourse with each other, they use their native language. Notwithstanding they all profess Christianity, yet the Spanish priests frequently discover them sacrificing, in private, according to their ancient system of idolatry. The Mexican Indian, although mild, and obedient to his task-master, yet bears

this view, he unfortunately and precipitately authorized the cry of "Destruction to the Gachupins!"* Hidalgo does not appear, by

in remembrance the outrages the Spaniards inflicted upon his forefathers, and secretly sighs for the day of revenge. All that the Spanish government and Spanish writers have said about their loyalty and fidelity, is mere fiction. During the present revolution, they have invariably manifested their ill-will towards the Spaniards. In the towns and villages where no royal troops were actually quartered, a Creole insurgent, in flying from his enemies, has always found an inviolable asylum among the Indians: whereas, if a royalist took refuge in any Indian village, within the jurisdiction of the insurgents, he never escaped. The descendants of the Indian caciques have a high degree of family pride, and consider a connexion with an European Spaniard as a pollution of blood.

* This term *Gachupin* has been variously interpreted; but it is universally used by the Creoles and Indians as a word of contempt. The Spaniards say, it means "a man with two heads," thereby conveying an idea of superior understanding; and that it took its origin from the invasion of Cortez, upon one of his cavalry being killed. The Indians, who till then had never seen a horse, supposed the animal and its rider to be a single animal. When they beheld the horse and rider fall, they ran up and examined the phenomenon, and finding the man distinct from the horse, they expressed their surprise by exclaiming, "Gatzopin." The Indians, however, flatly deny the Spanish story, and say the word means "thief." But be that as it may, it is most certain that the word is now used by both as a term of scorn and opprobrium.

any act of his life previous to the revolution, to have been a sanguinary man ; and, therefore, his sanction to the cry of " Destruction to the Gachupins and their race ! " ought to be attributed to the reason before-mentioned, and not to a deliberate intention of indiscriminately sacrificing them. But, while this apology is offered, his error is deeply to be deplored ; not merely on grounds of humanity, but because *it is to this impolitic act that the future failure of the revolutionists may in a great measure be ascribed.*

If Hidalgo had reflected that the great body of conspirators were Creoles, distinguished by their wealth and high standing in the community, and consequently sure to take alarm at a commotion that menaced their lives and property, he would have pursued a very different course, and would have had almost every Creole in the country in his favour ; but, rendered desperate, as before observed, by considering his colleagues destroyed, and their plans discovered, he made use of the Indians as a dernier resource, and, by exciting them to the destruction of all the Gachupins, committed a dreadful and irremediable error.

The first steps of the Indians were marked by horrid excesses. In every place they passed

through, the European Spaniards that fell into their hands, and many Creoles, were slaughtered. A large portion of the Creole population, who were as desirous as Hidalgo and his party for the emancipation of their country, now began to tremble for their personal safety, and sought protection from their ancient oppressors. Nevertheless, the forces of Hidalgo continued rapidly to swell ; and, during his stay at Zelaya, the Indians from every quarter flocked to his standard. Numbers of Creole priests, and some royalist soldiers, also joined him. When he left Zelaya, his army consisted of nearly twenty thousand men ; but it was a heterogeneous mass, without fire-arms or order. With this force he marched upon Guanaxuato, the capital of the intendancy of that name, and a city next in point of wealth to the metropolis of New Spain ; the richest gold and silver mines in all Spanish America being in the vicinity of Guanaxuato.

On the approach of the patriotic army, the intendant of the province, with all the Spaniards, some Creoles, and the few troops which were in the city, shut themselves up in the castle, and determined on an obstinate defence. Hidalgo summoned them to surrender, and offered them humane terms, which were rashly refused.