

Thus were realized the daring dreams of the immortal *Hidalgo* and the great *Morelos*. But we must acknowledge that the movement started in 1810 was more of a political uprising than a social revolution.

The essential object of the enterprise was the emancipation of the colony from the rule of the Spanish crown, as is sufficiently evidenced by the circumstances that at first it was not considered indispensable, to abolish the monarchical form or to put an end to the supremacy of the Spanish element. In the treaty of Cordoba which was celebrated to end the war and was expressly acknowledged in the Act of Independence, it was stipulated that Mexico would become an independent sovereign kingdom, and that its government would be placed in the hands of that same King Ferdinand VII; or if he did not accept or resigned, it would be left in the hands of his brother, the clerical and sanguinary Charles of Bourbon or any other of the infants of the same house.

The insurgents revolted neither against the influence nor privileges of the clergy; on the contrary, they supported that class in the most determined manner. Their glorious flag bore the image of the Indian virgin, the famous Virgin of Guadalupe. In 1813, the Congress of Chilpancingo had declared that "the Mexican nation would profess and recognize no other religion but the catholic one, and would never permit or tolerate the practice, public or *secret* of any other. Also that it would protect with all its energy the profession of faith, guard the preservation of its purity and dogmas and would keep the regular bodies (the seculars and the clergy). "In the constitution called *Apantzingan*," issued in 1814 by the Sovereign Congress of the Insurgents and subscribed by the priest *Morelos* and other prominent men of the Independence period, the Catholic religion was acknowledged and recognized as the only one to be practised in the nation; foreigners who did not profess the Catholic religion were not permitted to become citizens, and it was resolved that citizenship was forfeited by the *crimes* of apostasy and heresy; travellers, in order to enjoy the protection of the law on their persons and properties were bound to respect Catholicism; free speech and *thought* was forbidden in what referred to attacks on the *Dogma*, and an ordinance was set for the opening and closing of the polls by the celebration of masses to the *Holy Spirit* and for *Tedeums*; it was ordered that all ecclesiastical judges be maintained in their respective offices; and finally it was ordered that all members of the Supreme Government, before taking the oath relative to their resolve to maintain the constitution and the cause of Independence, should be sworn to *defend even at the cost of their blood, the Catholic Apostolic Roman religion*. The first

article of the Plan de Iguala, which assured the triumph of the insurgents, also established religious intolerance in favor of Catholicism, expressly declaring, in case any one dared doubt it, that the clergy, both regular and secular, would be maintained in the possession of its properties and *privileges*. Lastly, the same fierce intolerance was stamped in the Republican Constitution of 1824, and in the Constitutional Bases and Laws issued in the years 1835 and 1836. The Bases, indeed, state that the Mexican Nation would profess or protect no other religion but the Catholic, Apostolic Roman religion, nor would it permit the profession of any other. And the Constitution of the year '36, when enumerating the obligations of Nationals, mentions in the first place, that of "professing the religion of his country," and expressly preserved ecclesiastical privileges.

During several years, counting from the fall of the ephemere empire of *Agustin de Iturbide*, one of the most attractive and troublesome figures in our history, and doubtless the most difficult on which to pass judgment, Mexico was merely a wide field for sterile political struggles aggravated by the several attempts which Spain made to reconquer her lost possessions. The clergy took advantage of this situation in order to develop its resources and extend its influence. Its brazenness reached such extremes that a certain priest applied to the government for authorization which was denied him—to have recourse to *whipping* in order to compel his parishioners to obey and serve him!

But the good seed which the North-American and the French revolutions had planted in the conscience of people had begun to sprout. The Mexican Liberal Party, which was the work of chosen spirits who desired to obtain the development of new ideals for their country began to crystallize, slowly but surely. It became understood that the real obstacle for the progress and development of the Nation and the education of the peoples was to be found in the reactionary party, the one constituted of the clergy and the so-called aristocracy; and the struggle between the retrogrades and the men who aspired to secure greatness for their country began in earnest and the country was divided into two camps: the reactionaries—at the beginning opposed to emancipation, then imperialists with *Iturbide*, afterwards centralists, the same who later supported dictatorship with *Santa-Anna*—always clericals and natural protectors of the clergy; and the liberal party, which wanted to establish a Federal Republic similar to the North-American one, to spread education among the people, to give it ample political and social liberty, and diminish the power of the Church by depriving it of its privileges and forbidding its participation.

No true Mexican is desirous of remembering the extremes of impoverishment and degradation reached by the country under Antonio Lopez de Santa-Anna the most hateful of tyrants, a tragic clown who in his speeches and manifestos compared himself to Cincinnatus and Washington while he called himself "Alteza Serenisima" and plunged a knife into the breast of the mother-country. None of us desires to bring to mind the fact that the vanity, ambition, cupidity and fanaticism of this fatidic man, the powerful chief of the reactionaries, was the cause, first of the rebellion in Texas, and then of the unjust and unequal war with the United States by which Mexico lost almost one half of its territory.

This terrible disaster occasioned by the dictatorship and the clergy, opened many eyes, until then closed, and necessarily caused the downfall of Santa-Anna and the loss of prestige of his perverse politics. The revolution started. Sword in hand, the liberal party succeeded in taking possession of the power, and the bitter and bloody struggle against clericalism began with the dispossession of property and the issuance of the celebrated Constitution of '57, copied from the American constitution, and by means of which the Federal Republic was instituted, consecrating freedom of thought, of press, of work and of instruction; proclaiming all the other rights of man, suppressing privileges, declaring all men equal before the law, and repressing the ambition and rapacity of the clergy by the declaration that ecclesiastical corporations are incapable to administer or acquire real estate, except those buildings directly and immediately destined to the service and object of their institutions.

The reactionary party turned against these laws furiously and at the cry of "*religion y fueros*" (religion and privileges) began the terrible civil struggle called Reform War, which for years steeped the soil of the republic in blood and almost caused the loss of the Mexican nationality. The clericals, overcome on the battlefield, did not hesitate to search Europe for a scepter to hold sway over the catholic empire they had planned to establish in Mexico. All the world knows how that incomparable and glorious epoch ended, in which the liberal party and the genius of Juarez saved the mother country against the united efforts of the Mexican traitors and the troops of Napoleon the Small.

During this struggle, Juarez, Ocampo and the brothers Lerdo de Tejada dealt to clericalism the tremendous blows which were embodied in the laws which are known in Mexican history under the significant name of *Laws of Reform*; the separation of the Church and the State was decreed, as well as the nationalization of the clerical property; that is to say, it was ordered that all the property owned in the republic by the regular and secular clergy, reverted to the

nation; all religious orders were suppressed and the erection or institution of new convents was forbidden; a law was decreed relative to the civil status of persons, depriving the Church of the faculty it had usurped, of carrying the registers of births, marriages and death, since this work evidently belonged to the State. All intervention of the Church ceased in the cemeteries and churchyards, where burial was often denied to those who had fought against the abuses of the clergy; one specific case was when this denial was applied to the bodies of the men who had signed the Constitution of 1857. The liens between the national and pontifical governments were broken; it was settled that marriage was only a civil contract and that only the unions performed according to law and before those officials specially designed for it by the republic, would be valid before the law and create legal rights and obligations; religious holidays ceased to be national or state holidays; and an ordinance was adopted forbidding the civil authorities as such and the troops in formation, to attend temples or religious ceremonies; freedom of cults was proclaimed; the authority of religion and of priests was declared to be merely spiritual and that in the civil order there could be no obligation, no coercion or penalties for acts, misdemeanors or crimes of a purely religious order. Warning was given that bulls, rescripts, pastoral letters, sermons, etc., on no account would be tolerated; no attack against order or peace, morality, private life or the rights of a third party would be tolerated on any account in any clerical decree, bulls, rescripts, pastoral letters, sermons, etc. The right of enforcement was denied to the Church and also the right to give refuge within temples. It was also declared that oath and its retraction were not of the incumbence of the law nor could have any legal effect; and oath was substituted with the promise to tell the truth and comply with the law; it was ordered that religious acts be confined to the interior of churches and that outside of them the priests were not authorized to wear special clothes nor any distinctive signs of their ministry. It was no longer permitted that spiritual directors be appointed heirs; neither was it permitted to collect alms for religious objects unless duly authorized by the civil authorities, and with the understanding that contributions should always be voluntary and not extorted by coercion. All special treatment of priests and religious corporations was suppressed; the ringing of bells was regulated by the police; hospitals and beneficence houses were placed under civil authority instead of allowing the clergy to have absolute command of them; the nuns were ordered out of the convents and all women convents were definitely closed and all religious teaching as well as all religious ceremonies were banished

from official schools; all these decrees were, during the years 1873 and 1874, when *Sebastian Lerdo de Tejada* was president of the republic, the successor of Juarez—condensed into a law and sanctioned as supreme laws of the republic by the Congress of the Union, and it was added in them that the churches would be under the direct control of the Nation which would permit the priests to make use of them, but this, only until such time as the government should see fit to decree the final consolidation of the property.

But the task of the great Mexican liberals was too gigantic to be consummated in one generation.

It was an attack against ignorance and secular fanaticism of a whole nation, and against a power which for centuries had absolutely dominated the country, a power which is still alive; for although the Constitution of '57 and the Laws of Reform signified terrible blows against the monster who reacted, they were not sufficient to overturn it, much less to annihilate it.

The very spirit of liberalism which animated these laws was their worst enemy, for although they deprived the Church of official power and placed serious difficulties of form in the way of the Church, still, they allowed it, under constitutional guaranties, to pursue its somber labor of obscurantism and retrogradation.

However, if the Laws of Reform had been issued for an educated, cultured people, one respecting the law, conscious of its rights and acts; or if at least, the laws would have been applied strictly by honest authorities, zealous of fulfilling their duty, the slow work of years would have accustomed the people to such beautiful practices and would have insured for the Mexicans the realization of the glorious dreams of those high thinkers, who endowed their mother-country, more than fifty years ago, with a legislation which in a very incomplete manner, was recently copied by France, and which is still to be copied by other people such as Spain, Italy and the Central and South American republics which still moan under the heavy yoke of clericalism.

But history, which at all times and in all countries teaches us invariably that the best legislations when they are placed very high above the intellectual and moral level of the multitudes and does not care, either, to raise such a level, actively and strenuously, they stumble, when carried into practice, against insuperable difficulties. If nature does not go in jumps and leaps when it is a question of the physical evolution of beings, it does act so either when it is a question of the social or psychological evolution of peoples. Its work, its great work is carried on slowly in all fields,

line by line, step by step, drop by drop. The only thing which will resist the lash of the tempest and the weight of his ideas, is to follow the earth, weed it unceasingly, cultivate it carefully, and resign himself, without losing faith or enthusiasm, to wait until the small sprout becomes a plant and finally develops into a budding bush, and to entertain the hope that the latter will become a strong big tree which will resist the lash of the tempest and the weight of the centuries.

This is what should have been done in Mexico. For despite the declamations of newspapers and demagogues, so abundant in Spanish America, the Mexican people was not prepared to understand nor ready to take advantage of all those conquests which are almost at the summit of social evolution, in so far as can be observed from the depths of the dark valley in which we are still groping. It was necessary to prepare the people, to modify it, it was necessary to reiterate the new truths to it. It was necessary to guide each of its steps, lighting them incessantly with the light of reason; it was indispensable to drag it away with facts and not by mere words, from the claws of fanaticism and ignorance.

If a man's behavior would be considered absurd if he voluntarily exposed his young child to deathly perils claiming that he had instructed him fully and given him valuable and wise advice, in the same way it is absurd to expect the mass of the people to free itself of fanaticism while still being under the influence of the clergy, while the government of the republic merely disowned and despised that institution. It was impossible to close the eyes of the Mexican so that he would not see any idols, watch any soutans, read any clerical literature; it was impossible to plug his ears so that he would not hear any more sermons, salves, rogatives, bells; nor was it possible to stiffen his lips so that he place no more kisses on the feet of saints, or the dirty hands of sinners or on the contaminated ornaments of priests and images; no one could nail his legs so that he should not bend the knee before the so-called ministers of the Divine Power or the evil representations of the Supreme Being; no one could snatch his pocket-book to prevent him from delivering his money to priests. But it was possible to silence bells, burn books, stop sermons, place idols out of the sight and the lips of the Mexican, forbid that veneration of one man for another, prevent those undue worshipings, and those spoliations. Unhappily, that is not what was done. Outside of the principal centres (and not in all of them) where liberal agrupations existed ready to demand the fulfillment of the Reform Laws, the authorities did not exact compliance with them, and tolerated and consented to hundreds of daily transgressions on the part of

the clergy. Proof of this slackness may be had in the numerous and frequent circulars issued by the Federal Government, wherein, invoking patriotism, it requested and exhorted the State governors not to permit that the prize won at the cost of so much blood and suffering, be snatched from their hands and to have the Laws of Reform obeyed in full. Yes; the Federal Government had to make this request, for unfortunately, as it usually happens in the hour of triumph, many reactionaries, many traitors glided into the republican liberal ranks, and secured civil employment, and under *mental restriction*, protested the fulfillment of the laws of the Republic, while they were the first to disregard and violate them, in person and through their families.

When the gigantic work had just started, when the labor of reconstructing a country, ruined and devastated by sixty-six years of bloody struggle, sixty-six years during which the Independence War, the second war against Spain, the war with the United States, the war of Reform, the war against France and the Empire had succeeded each other, mixed with innumerable civil struggles; when the government toiled to solve the serious economic problems, as the inevitable corollary of such deep and lengthy perturbations, there appeared on the bloody stage of national politics the somber figure of the sinister man in whose hands the destiny of Mexico was nearly reversed, and who almost made useless the incessant and mortal struggle which had been carried on for almost two-thirds of a century: that man was Porfirio Diaz.

By his infidelities and by his treasons, he had impeded the great work of Juarez and embittered the last years of the noble old man; his ambition, his hypocrisy and his secret alliance with the men of the reactionary party caused the fall of Sebastian Lerdo de Tejada, that eminent statesman, worthy successor of the *Benemerito de las Americas*, the last representative of the great Mexican liberals, he who went to hide his shame and that of all his race, until he died, in the ample bosom of the free American nation.

Once Porfirio Diaz became enthroned in power by means of violence and deceit, and thanks to the traditional "cuartelazo" which in Spanish American substituted the "por gracia de Dios" (by the grace of God) of the European monarchs, he knew how to keep himself in by means of the paid bayonets of a corrupted federal army, ready to draw in blood, as he often did, all start of protest, all attempt at liberation.

We are not going to make here the history or the criticism of the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz, for we would then be outside our subject, which is merely to point out through the history of Mexico, the work of the clerical party and

the motives for the serious campaign started against it by the Constitutionalism. We will say no more about the man who is now a corpse, the man who had his days of glory, who also shed his blood for liberty, but who was blinded by ambition and dared to place his own interest before that of the Mother-country. His long journey through our national history has at least served to show the capabilities of the Mexican people: how easily it adapts itself to civilization, how, even in the middle of the asphyxiating moral atmosphere in which it breathed, it developed material capabilities and faculties really surprising; how rapidly it became disciplined even under the dictatorship, and how easily it could have been led through the path of real progress and true freedom.

Diaz was well aware of the power of capital and of the clergy, and all his policy in order to perpetuate himself in power, aimed to obtain, first the sympathy, and afterwards the frank, decided, manifest co-operation of the clergy and the "aristocracy," the two reactionary elements in Mexico.

Despite all assertions to the contrary, he comes from the lowest ranks of the middle class, and by means of alliances, he became a member of the most opulent and reactionary families of the metropolis, and forgetting his countrymen, the indomitable Oaxaca Indians, at whose head he had gone to triumph, he employed years and years in trying to become an "aristocrat" to divine the secret of good manners, in the sumptuous functions, in the palatial homes of the richest families or in the beautiful halls of Chapultepec, or in the superb Hall of Embassadors or in the magnificent halls of the Jockey Club.

In the pursuit of an odious "caciquismo," with which he substituted the federal republican regime, proclaimed by a constitution which existed in name only, he reserved all the high posts for his adherents, the rich, fanatical Mexicans, and systematically and implacably drove from the administration all the middle class, the liberal class of Mexico which had contributed with the endeavour of its intelligence and with its blood to the restoration of the Republic; the class which invariably had marched at the front in all the enterprises of progress and liberty which have been enacted in Mexico.

Porfirio Diaz' work of conquest of the clergy was more rapid and easier because he was working on a class which has always been a faithful partisan of dictatorships; it was enough for him to begin what is known by the name of *Policy of Conciliation*, and which at the bottom was merely the violent revocation of almost all the Laws of Reform, all the measures conquered and sanctified by the blood of so many Mexicans, laws enacted in order to re-