

raised by any one of the Colonies ;* nor was it done, even then, without reluctance.

The concession of privileges, much inferior to those enjoyed by the former Colonies of Great Britain in the United States, would have satisfied the Creoles, and placed their treasures for years at the disposal of Spain. They would have purchased, at almost any price, the right of Colonial assemblies ; which were very justly regarded, by the most enlightened men amongst them, as the greatest blessing that could be conferred upon their country. They might indeed, (and probably would,) have prepared the way for ultimate independence, by initiating the New States in the art of self-government ; but their emancipation must have been gradual, and would have been effected, at last, on terms highly favourable to the Mother country : while the Crown, acting as a centre of union in America, would have prevented all those desultory struggles for systems, or for power, which have involved the whole Continent in the calamities of civil war, and rendered its fairest provinces a scene of desolation.

Unfortunately, both for Spain and for the New World, any project of distinct Colonial legislation was incompatible with that exclusive system, with

* The Declaration of Independence of Venezuela (which was the first) did not take place till the 5th July, 1811,—seven months after the blockade.

regard to trade, which the Mother country had always conceived it to be its interest to maintain. This was the great bar to accommodation on both sides. Pecuniary advantages might have afforded a compensation for the loss of a portion of that authority, which could hardly have been retained much longer, under any circumstances, in its former extent : but freedom of discussion and commercial monopoly could not exist together. Ignorance was its basis, and the strong arm of power its support. To allow of inquiry or interference on the part of the Colonies, (and who was to check them, if once a Legislative assembly were granted ?) was virtually to abrogate the prohibitory laws ; and against this, the pride and the prejudices of the Peninsula alike rebelled.

Neither the Constitution of 1812, nor the overthrow of that Constitution in 1814, nor its re-establishment in 1820, created any material difference in the Colonial policy of Spain : the King, on his return from captivity, though he reprobated all the other acts of the Cortes, adopted their system with regard to America, and even pursued it with additional vigour. General Murillo's expedition against Carthagená took place a year after the restoration, (1815,) and a second expedition, upon a still larger scale, was, as is well known, preparing in 1819, and led to the Revolution of 1820.

It is unnecessary to enter into the details of this contest, which possess but little interest for the

European reader : it is sufficient, for my present purpose, to state, that in Columbia, Mexico, and Peru, the war has been prosecuted with all the energy that the exhausted state of the finances of the Peninsula would admit of; and that, at the close of a struggle of seventeen years, the result has been every where the same. Throughout the whole continent of America, Spain does not retain one single inch of ground: her troops, after a gallant resistance, have been driven from their last strongholds, both on the Eastern and Western coasts, (St. John of Ulloa, and Callao,) and her flag is proscribed on those shores, where, for three hundred years, it waved without a rival. This mighty change has been slowly, but progressively, accomplished. It is not the work of intrigue or faction, but the natural effect of a change as mighty in the minds of men. To recede is now impossible; not because the Republics of the New World have discovered that standard for regulating political opinions, which has been sought in vain in the Old; but because, whatever differences may prevail as to *form*, the consciousness of a political existence, and a sense of the advantages of an unrestrained intercourse with foreign nations, when once acquired, can never again be lost. It might rather, indeed, be a matter of surprise, that, with such inducements before them, and so great a superiority of numerical strength, the Colonies should not have brought the contest to an earlier termination, did not their position with regard, both to the Mother

country, and to each other, sufficiently explain the causes of the delay.

Scattered over a vast continent, separated by impenetrable wildernesses, or by chains of mountains still more impassable, and kept purposely, under the old system, in a state of ignorance with respect to each other, the New States commenced their contest for freedom without the advantage of any previous combination, or concert.

Even at the present day, the natives of Mexico and Chil ,—of Buenos Ayres and Bogot ,—know as little of each other, as the Neapolitan peasant and the Lapland boor; and, in most cases, England would present the only medium of communication between them.* At the commencement of the Revolution, their estrangement was still greater, and it may be questioned whether the fact of the existence of some of the New States was at all generally known to the rest. With each other's resources, and means of defence, they certainly had no acquaintance. Each therefore, individually, pursued its object, unconnected with the rest; and each was obliged to cope, singly, with whatever force Spain could bring to bear against it.

* A letter from Buenos Ayres to Mexico, would be sent by the double line of packets now established between London and Rio de la Plata, and London and Veracruz. And, although there may be, once or twice in the year, a direct intercourse between Mexico and Peru, or Chil , by the Pacific, letters, at all other times, would be forwarded by the English mail.

In addition to this, they had internal as well as external enemies to contend with: the old Spaniards, (known, in the annals of the Revolution, by the names of Gächüpīnēs, Gōdōs, Patriotas, and various other designations,) distributed throughout the possessions of Ultramar,—wealthy, powerful, and connected by intermarriages with the most influential families amongst the Creoles themselves,—were a check to all their operations.

Where they did not openly oppose, they sowed the seeds of discord amongst the leaders of the Independent cause: while, from their intimate acquaintance with the resources of the country, they were enabled, both by their counsels, and the liberality of their donations, to render the most essential services to the Royalist generals.

Nor was this all: the first movements of the Insurgents had indeed been eminently successful; and, (as we have already seen,) with the exception of Mexico, a single year had sufficed to wrest, from the hands of the Europeans, the authority of which they had so long been the sole depositaries. But this was the only point upon which any sort of unanimity prevailed amongst the Creoles. Left to themselves, they knew not how to dispose of the power, which they had so unexpectedly acquired, and it became the apple of discord amongst all who had any pretensions to a share of it. They were totally inexperienced in the science of govern-

ment, and had no good model to follow:* it is not surprising, therefore, that they should have engrafted upon the stern despotism under which they were brought up, the wildest theories of the French school, nor that their ardour, in the cause of liberty, should have cooled, amidst the many evils which these theories brought upon them.† They soon learnt that tyranny was not, as they had fondly supposed, an heir loom in the family of the Kings of Spain, but might be exercised, just as effectually, in the name of the Sovereign people, by any man, or set of men, to whom that people was supposed to have delegated its authority; and, in their despair at not being able to fix, at once, a balance of power, many would almost have purchased tranquillity, by submitting again to that yoke, to which time had lent its sanction, and given respectability.

* Spain was their only model, and to her most of their errors may be traced. The want of fixed principles, the preference of theory to practice, the dilatory habits of those in power at one time, and their ill-judged strides towards impracticable reforms at another,—all are of the modern Spanish school, as are the bombastical addresses to the people, the turgid style which disfigures most of the public documents of the Revolution, the intolerance, and jealousy of strangers, which are only now beginning to subside.

† It is melancholy to reflect how soon the Americans were initiated in all the cant of Revolutions, and taught to distrust the bewitching terms of patriotism and public felicity, under the sanction of which they found themselves a prey to private ambition, anarchy, and distress.

I shall not, I hope, be accused by the friends of American Independence, of a wish to colour this part of the picture too highly; but if I should be suspected of any such intention, a reference to the first acts of any of the new Juntas, will be sufficient to clear me from the imputation.

It will be found, I believe, that, in almost every instance, they exercised the power with which they were entrusted, in the most wanton and oppressive manner.* Not only opposition to their will, but hesitation in the adoption of their political creeds, (however exaggerated, or absurd,) was visited with the severest penalties. Nor was it to their own territory alone, that this spirit of proselytism was confined; the instant that a Province, or State, had determined upon the principles to be adopted for its own guidance, it endeavoured to force these same principles upon its neighbours, and stamped the least demur in conforming to them, as treason to the common cause.

Sovereigns by the grace of "Adam and Eve,"

* See, as an instance, an order of the day published at Buenos Ayres on the 6th December, 1810, by which a citizen who had, *when drunk*, given a toast, at a dinner, offensive to the President, *was banished for life*.

† *Vide* a "Declaration of the Rights of the People," sanctioned by the Congress of Venezuela, 1st of July, 1811, followed by a law for regulating the *liberty* of the press; by the nineteenth article of which, any one who should publish any political writing contrary to the system then established in Venezuela, *was condemned to death*: 25th July, 1811.

(as Blanco White somewhere says of the Cortes,) "they ought to have reflected upon the injustice of attempting to dictate to others, who, by the same undeniable title, were free as themselves:" but, far from this, the great object of every Junta throughout America, appears to have been, to extend its own authority, and its own creed as to the abstract rights of man, on the plea of the public good. In it, as in the natural diversity of opinions, which prevailed, where no previous understanding existed, and no fixed principles were known, we find the real cause of that protracted struggle, by which the country was desolated; Buenos Ayres wished to prescribe laws for Montevideo, and Pötösī,—Cărăcäs for Sântă Fē,—Chile for Pērū. Each district, and family, again, sought to extend its jurisdiction, or influence: none would recognize any sort of superiority on the part of the others: the sword was the universal arbitrator in every difference: predatory bands were organized, and lived at large upon the country: the common cause was lost sight of amidst these interminable disputes, while the common enemy, whose object was, at least, clear and well defined, took advantage of them to re-establish an authority, which, under other circumstances, must have sunk at once.

Such are the general features of the contest between Spain and her former Colonies. To throw off the yoke, in the first instance, was a task comparatively easy; but to re-organize society after the dis-

solution of all earlier ties, to curb passions once let loose, to give to any party, or system, a decided ascendancy, where claims, (or pretensions) were equal, and superior talent rare,—this was an art that nothing but experience could teach; that nothing, at least, but the most bitter experience has ever been known to teach, in the annals of mankind.

Fourteen years of anarchy and bloodshed, have brought the Americans to something more like unity of plan, and will, probably, give stability to the system which they have, with some slight modifications, universally adopted. With regard to their Independence, the question has long been decided; differences of opinion may exist upon other points, but, upon this, unanimity certainly prevails; and I believe that any hostile demonstration on the part of Spain, would, every where, be found a sovereign remedy for domestic feuds. These feuds too, however embarrassing in their effects, ought to be rather matter of regret, than surprise, to those who reflect that no nation has ever yet attained any reasonable portion of civil liberty without them. They are a part of that fearful process, by which it appears that, while human nature remains what it is, abuses, even when past endurance, can alone be corrected. Our own history, as well as that of our neighbours, attests this melancholy truth; and, after the lapse of more than a century, the party distinctions of the day still bespeak the fury of the party-spirit of our ancestors. The same scene,

modified only by differences of climate, and rendered less interesting by the want of early education amongst the principal actors, is now representing in the New World. The struggle, like every one in which the passions of the people are engaged, has been accompanied by its usual attendants, bloodshed and desolation; but humanity may console itself with the hope that the storm is now gone by, and that future prosperity, however dearly purchased, will afford a compensation for all past sufferings.

The extent of these sufferings throughout Spanish America, (for, in every part of it the contest has borne the same character,) a *précis* of the Mexican Revolution will enable us more fully to appreciate.