

On one occasion, this prodigy of vice gave a splendid entertainment, within the walls of the Vatican, to no less than fifty public prostitutes, at which entertainment, deeds of darkness were done over which decency must throw a veil. And yet this monster of vice was, according to papal claims, the legitimate successor of the Apostles, and the "Vicar of God," upon earth, and addressed by the title, "His Holiness!"

It is less than three centuries since Alexander VI. conveyed to their Catholic majesties of Spain and Portugal our whole continent from the pole to the cape, not excepting the United States and Mexico. And Catholic powers, it would seem, to this day claim their right of possession under the grant.

The character and manners of the Kings, Popes, and Priests of Europe, were transferred to Mexico. There were, undoubtedly, good men in the pale of the church;—as godly and noble souls as ever contended for truth and righteousness. But the whole spirit and life of the age were characterized by deeds of darkness, shame and death. A cry arose from all Europe for "Reform," everywhere, in the Vatican at Rome, in the Palaces of Kings, in monasteries and convents, and among the professedly celibate ecclesiastics of every order and name. The "Roman Church" is as much indebted to the Great Reformation of the 16th century, for the reform in the lives and manners of its clergy, as Protestantism is, for its purer faith. But the Reform, either in faith or manners, never crossed from Spain to Mexico.

## PART II.

### MEXICO UNDER THE DOMINION OF SPAIN. 1520-1808.

#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE GOVERNMENT OF THE VICEROYS.

Colonial  
policy.

As soon as the Spaniards had plundered the wealth of the empire of the Aztecs, they turned their attention to the government of the colonies they planted. The King granted almost regal and absolute power to the Governors and Viceroy's entrusted with the establishment of the first governments. This power was so abused that he was soon obliged to curtail these privileges.

Repartimi-  
entos.

As early as 1495, the germs of the colonial system of oppression and slavery had fairly taken root. The first seeds were the Letters Patent from the "crown," authorizing the officers of the colony to partition the *lands* of the Indians among their conquerors,—called *repartimientos*. The second plant, was the inauguration of the system of *tribute*. Every Indian, old and young, from the highest cacique down to children of fourteen years of age, was compelled to pay tribute. Children over fourteen, near any of the mines, were obliged to pay, every three months, a little bell full of gold; all others, a certain amount of cotton. Next came the requisition of *service* from the Indians, ex-

acting their *labor* for the tillage of their lands. Then followed a regular system, authorizing the Spaniards to take Indians from any place to any other place, to work on compulsory, unrequited labor, without any restriction.

In 1503, Ferdinand and Isabella authorized one of the Governors of the colonies "to compel the Indians to have dealings with the Spaniards—to work for them on such wages as he should think fit; to work, also, under the guidance of their caciques (a kind of compulsory overseership), and that they should go and hear mass, and be instructed in the faith; and, finally, *that they should do all these things 'as free persons, for so they are!'*"

The first fruits of these beginnings was the adoption, by this same Governor, of the system called by the mild name of "*encomienda*." He distributed the Indians, the *men themselves*, as a gift to the Spaniards, for considerations unknown, to be veritable slaves. The formula ran, "To you, Don Juan \* \* \*, is given an *encomienda* of fifty, or one hundred Indians, with such a cacique, *and you are to teach them the things of our holy Catholic faith.*"

There only remained the perpetuation of this title. At first it was only a life estate; next, it was extended through the son's life; then for two lives; and then unending, irrevocable slavery of parents and their offspring.

Las Casas said the poor Indians had *four* masters: "the crown," their own "caciques," the "*encomiendero*," and his "overseer," "who weighed upon them more than a hundred towers."

Last of all was the system of the "*Mita*." By this, *four out of every hundred* of the Indians were taken and compelled to labor, a certain portion of every week, or month, or year, in the mines for the benefit of their Spanish masters. The amount of cruelty and suffering, as

well as of wealth, for "viceroys" and the "crown," as the fruit of this system, is almost incredible.

To such an extent was the oppression of the Indians carried, that the Pope finally issued a decree declaring that the Indians were "really and truly men, and capable of receiving the Christian faith."

In 1511, Ferdinand established a special board for the management and control of all affairs pertaining to the conquered provinces in the New World, but it was not fully organized until the reign of Charles V. in 1524.

The "COUNCIL OF THE INDIES" was invested with supreme jurisdiction over all the possessions of the Spanish crown in the West. The "COUNCIL" consisted of a President who was the King, four Secretaries, and twenty-two Counsellors, generally chosen from among those who had been viceroys, or high officers abroad. The Council was empowered, in compliance with the nomination of the Crown, to appoint all the colonial officers of every degree, and to make all laws and regulations for the government of the colonies.

This was a grand political, legislative, and financial machine. The power of the "COUNCIL" was absolute in all matters civil, religious, military, legislative, judicial, and executive, subject only to the nominal approval of the Crown. Its decisions, however, were invariably approved, right or wrong. The whole scheme and policy of law and administration were devised, not to carry out the principles of national and human rights, but to derive the utmost profit to the Spaniards from the lands, the mines, and the labors of the Indians. The viceroys exercised unlimited power over the lives, property and liberty of the people. They were generally selected from families of high rank and great influence, and wielded

The Council  
of the Indies.

Power and  
policy of the  
Council.

the delegated and arbitrary authority with a pretension and pomp scarcely equalled by their sovereign. They had their palaces, retinue, and guards of honor, and sought by the ostentatious display of mimic royalty in the provinces, to awe and intimidate the subjugated natives. The will of a Viceroy was Mexican law. It was absolute, individual control over all things temporal and spiritual.

Administration of justice. The administration of justice was intrusted to two "COURTS OF ROYAL AUDIENCE," one at the Capital, and the other for the Northern Provinces. The judges and officers of these Courts were appointed by "the COUNCIL OF THE INDIES," or, with their sanction, by the Viceroy. They were required to be native-born Spaniards, and were forbidden by law, on the genuine principle of the code of the Jesuits, to hold lands, to marry in the colonies, or to form any attachments in the land they were sent to govern. The justice they administered was such as conquerors give to captives, and masters give to slaves. Throughout the colonies, every officer, military, revenue, or municipal, was a European. Native Mexicans were prohibited from holding any office of trust, profit, or honor. All the subordinate offices were sold at Madrid, and were a source of large revenue to the Crown.

Social restrictions. All intercourse with foreigners was prohibited by the most rigid laws. Passengers and crews of ships were placed under the surveillance of a military guard. They were not allowed to carry arms, and became utterly incapable of self-defence. The very laws even by which they were governed, were unknown to any but the Europeans who presided in the Courts, and who strained and perverted them with little regard to the people for whom they had no sympathy, and with supreme regard to

the exactions for themselves of a bountiful revenue of gold and silver.

The very worst features of the feudal system of Europe were transplanted here, in their most despotic and revolting forms. They were intensified and aggravated by the vast disparity between the conditions and relations of the Spanish magistrate, and a helpless, defenceless Indian.

The system of "Fueros." The whole administration of justice was utterly corrupt, venal, and oppressive. There was no equality before these tribunals. The system of *fueros*, or privileges, made endless discriminations in favor of the Spaniard and against the native. There were privileges of corporations, of the professions, of the clergy, regular and secular, monks, canons, inquisitions, colleges, universities; privileges of the military, of the marine, of those in the revenue service, and of great variety, all working to screen and benefit the European, and oppress the Indian. It was an inextricable labyrinth of corruption, bribery, intrigue, delay, denial of justice, and outrage.

General Colonial administration. Under such a system for the enactment of laws, and for their administration, justice had no place or name in Mexico. Of a long succession of *one hundred and seventy Viceroys* who governed the colonies of Spain, *four only* were Americans; and of *six hundred and ten Captains-General* and Governors, *all but fourteen* were natives of old Spain. The civil, criminal, and fiscal administration, indeed the whole political system, was a gigantic monopoly in the hands of foreigners. The natives had no voice, direct or indirect, in legislation, or any function or exercise of government. Law and execution came from Spain. Freedom was crushed with relentless severity. Any attempt to win it was repressed with unheard-

of cruelties. Taxes, duties, tithes, were ubiquitous burdens. Courts of law were mere farces. Prisoners and prisons were only the sport of unscrupulous and irresponsible power.

Commercial  
Restrictions.

The "Council of the Indies" interdicted all commercial intercourse between the colonies and the rest of the world, and with each other. All imports and exports were restricted to Spanish vessels. All supplies to come from Spain, and the colonies forbidden to raise or produce any article the mother country could supply. They were forbidden to trade with foreigners or with neighboring states, under any pretext whatever. The penalty was death. One of the grievances of Hidalgo, the first to raise the banner of independence in Mexico, was the destruction of his vineyard and his silkworms by command of the government, under the most unjust and oppressive law, that the natives must produce nothing that could be brought from Spain.

The revenue  
system.

The internal administration of this system was as foul as its conception was infamous. An illustration of the systematic plunder of the natives is found in the grand scheme of extortionate taxation. There was

#### THE ROYAL REVENUE.

The King had,

- I. One fifth of all the gold and silver, and his monopolies, tobacco, salt, and gunpowder.
- II. The colonial offices, civil and ecclesiastical, were openly sold on his account.
- III. His "Stamp act" and "Stamped" paper were as odious and productive as those of George III.
- IV. Every Indian was required to pay a poll-tax.
- V. To crown the infamy, he exacted an extensive rev-

enue from the religious rites and superstitions of the people. The necessities and luxuries of life, the sacraments and offices of religion, and the fears and hopes of immortality, were made to yield a royal income to the King of Spain.

#### "THE REVENUE 'BULLS.'"

As a specimen of these, there was

1. "*Bulls de cruzada.*" The possessor of this Bull was absolved from all crimes, except heresy, and could not be suspected even of this deadly sin. He was exempt from many of the rigorous fasts of the Church. Two Bulls at the same price, had double the virtue of one.
2. "*Bulls de defuntos*"—the Bull for the dead—was a passport for a sinner's soul from purgatory. The fears and sympathies of the poor and ignorant classes were wrought upon to induce them to buy this ticket of release for themselves, or their friends, from the pains of purgatory.
3. "Bulls for eating milk and eggs during Lent."
4. "Bulls of composition." This "released persons who had stolen goods from the obligation to restore them to the owner, provided the thief had not been moved to commit his crime in consequence of the belief that he might escape from its sin by consequently purchasing the immaculate 'Bull.'" It had power "to correct the moral offence of false weights and measures, tricks and frauds in trade, the obliquities of principle and conduct, by which swindlers rob honest people of their property; and, finally, whilst it converted stolen articles into the lawful property of the thief, it also assured to purchasers the absolute ownership of whatever they obtained by modes that ought to have brought them to the gallows. The price of these 'Bulls' depended on the amount of goods stolen, but only

fifty of them could be taken by the same person in a year."

Such are some of the features of the enlightened government of the Christian King and "Church" of Spain.

But this is not all. There were

#### THE ECCLESIASTICAL REVENUES.

The "HOLY CHURCH" held all its prerogatives and appointments directly from the King. Its ultimate, actual influence and power emanated from the sovereign. The erection of cathedrals, parish churches, monasteries, hospitals, native chapels, or other religious edifices, without the express license of the monarch, was strictly prohibited.

All ecclesiastical revenues went to him. The power and resources of patronage were incalculable. The religious jurisdiction of church interests and tribunals extended to monasteries, priests, donations, legacies for sacred purposes, tithes, marriages, and all *spiritual* concerns.

#### CLERICAL FUEROS.

The *fueros* of the clergy, and their varied privileges and prerogatives, made Mexico the very *el-dorado* of ecclesiastics. As early as 1501, the system of tithes was established and regulated by law.

1. Every article of primary necessity was subject to tithes.

2. All the artificial and ornamental productions were also titheable.

3. Every object of luxury and comfort was subject to the same tax.

Clerical financiers. The clergy thus became the royal collecting agents of this *spiritual* revenue. The aggrandizement of the clerical body, and the accumulation of

their wealth was almost incredible. Churches and convents, estates and treasure, diamonds, gold, and silver, swelled the accumulations to an aggregate of not less than one hundred millions of dollars. The monasteries of the Dominicans and Carmelites acquired immense riches in real estate, both in town and country. The religious establishments of the monks and nuns in the city of Mexico, were said to be the owners of *three-fourths* of the private houses in the capital, and proportionably, of property in the different states of the Republic.

#### THE ALCABALA.

There was an impost called the "*alcabala*," upon all purchases and sales. "Every species of merchandise, whenever it passed from one owner to another, was subject to a new tax. Merchants, shop-keepers, and small dealers were obliged to report the amount of their purchases and sales, under oath." The largest transactions and the smallest, from the transfer of an estate to the purchases from the green-grocer, were subject to this tribute.

In addition to the *alcabala*, duties were exacted for the privilege of transit through the country, by which, it has been said, that European articles paid a tax or a duty thirty times before they reached the consumer.

Spirit of the Colonial Government. Is it to be wondered at, that six or eight millions of Mexicans, crushed under such a despotism as this by half a million of foreigners, should at length grow weary of the yoke? No voice in making their laws, no part in executing them, no representation of any kind, the most exorbitant and extortionate taxation, the most unreasonable restrictions upon social intercourse, a tyrannical interdiction of trade, the utter suppression of important domestic productions and manufactures, the compulsory

purchase of Spanish goods, tithes of everything, with the most unjust exemption of the whole governing class,—the Church party and a Spanish aristocracy—from burdens imposed upon the people, and from all accountability to the laws enacted for their victims, together with the long list of Fueros of the clerical, military, and privileged classes, make a fair counterpart to the catalogue of wrongs of Americans recited in our own Declaration of Independence!

## CHAPTER II.

## THE POLITICAL RELATIONS OF SPAIN AND MEXICO.

French Inter-  
vention in  
Spain.

IN 1808, Napoleon I. announced "that the House of Bourbon had ceased to reign in Spain," placed his brother Joseph on the throne, and assembled a junta of 150 delegates, to form a new constitution, which was adopted and sworn to by the King and the Delegates July 6th.

Alliance of  
England and  
Spain.

England took sides with the "old regime," recognized Ferdinand VII. as King, and supported the "Spanish people" in resisting the Napoleonic dynasty. A central junta at Seville guided the Spanish forces. The English armies were under the command of Sir John Moore and Wellington. The French forces were under the inspiration of Napoleon and Marshal Soult. The Peninsular War of the Spanish nation, under the "Old Bourbon Dynasty," with England as an ally, against the designs of France, raged with varying fortunes to the combatants until 1812.

The Constitu-  
tion of 1812.

The Spanish Cortes, in the progress of this contest, in which the elements of the old political and ecclesiastical despotism, French intervention,

and liberal, republican principles were strangely blended, had adopted a new constitution, embodying fundamental reforms, known as the Constitution of 1812.

The reaction-  
ary movement.

Ferdinand, on his restoration to the throne by Napoleon, pursuant to the treaty of 1813, annulled all the proceedings of the Cortes; abrogated the Constitution; re-established the old despotism, with all its abuses; revived the Inquisition, and persecuted with relentless rigor all who had sought to secure constitutional freedom. All the members of the Cortes who had participated in framing the Constitution, or who had supported it, were arrested, tried by court martial; and sentenced. Not a few were executed. Hundreds of the most illustrious were imprisoned in dungeons at home, or in Africa. The most fortunate were exiled.

Tyranny of  
the king.

Six long years Spain was the scene of a bloody tragedy; until the perfidious cruelty of the revengeful tyrant roused such universal reprobation, that the army gave the signal of insurrection.

Revolt of  
the army.

In January 1820, the whole national forces revolted against the despotism, proclaimed anew the Constitution of 1812, compelled Ferdinand on the 9th of March to convoke the Cortes, and swear himself to support the Constitution he had seven years before annulled. A new ministry was formed, the press declared free, the Inquisition abolished, and within a few weeks a new order of things was acknowledged throughout Spain.\*

Duplicity of  
the king.

On the 9th of July, at the re-opening of the Cortes, Ferdinand renewed his oath to the Con-

\* Honors, gratuities, and pensions were showered upon the generals and officers of the army, who had so successfully initiated and achieved the revolution in favor of liberal principles and Constitutional freedom.