

dence; but if the Episcopate does not give the example of devotion and self-denial, who will give it?"

Mexican aversion to the Priests.

"The Mexicans have cried out loudly against their clergy. But it has not been so much on account of their manner of life, as because they wished to take possession of their property. Before returning to this subject, I ought to say, we ought not to be too pharisaical in our condemnations. Among the twelve apostles, Jesus Christ chose one Judas, in order to show us that nothing is perfect on earth, and that we ought not to be offended at the apostasy of certain ministers of God. This very apostasy exalts and demonstrates the divinity of Catholicism, which maintains and develops itself in spite of the failings of certain of its priests."

"The Mexican clergy have, perhaps, more than one Judas for twelve apostles, but that is a matter more of pity than of blame."

Clerical habits. "If Italy and Spain were visited before going to Mexico, there would be less of a shock at the manner of life of the Mexican clergy. Do not individuals as well as communities bear the stamp of the country where they live? I recollect a case in point, where a French priest was greatly astonished, while in Mexico, that the pastor of a church where he had said mass, offered him a cigarette after the mass. The pastor, in turn, was much scandalized that our priest allowed the train of his cassock to drag upon the ground, a thing unknown elsewhere than in France; and that he arranged his hair before a mirror in the vestry, before and after robing!"

Life among the Priests.

"I have known, in the south and in the north of the Mexican empire, pastors who gave balls at their houses, and never thought the least in the world,

that it would be better to distribute bread to the poor than to give champagne and refreshments to their danseuses."

Celibacy! and paternity.

"The clergy carry their love of the family to that of paternity. In my travels in the interior of Mexico, many pastors have refused me hospitality, in order to prevent my seeing their *neices* and *cousins*, and their *children*. It is difficult to determine the character of these connexions. Priests who are recognized as fathers of families are by no means rare. The people consider it natural enough, and do not rail at the conduct of their pastors, excepting when they are not contented with one wife."

"One of my friends said to the mistress of a pastor, 'Are you not afraid of going to hell? And have you no remorse at living, as a wife, with a man who says mass every day?'

"'Sir,' she replied, with anger, 'I would have you know I am a respectable woman, and that I would not live with the pastor if we had not been lawfully married.'"

"In the State of Oajaca there are priests who marry, in order not to scandalize any one. Although this celibacy of the priests is *purely an ecclesiastical institution*, I do not see how these gentlemen can contract marriages, pretended to be legitimate."

Priests' wives.

"A woman of Oajaca, whom I questioned about these singular unions, said to me one day, 'My country women prefer to live with Priests rather than with the laity, because they are better provided for.' The poor creatures are so wretched, they prefer to seek a house where they are sure to find good clothing and good food."

"Nevertheless, the Priest and the woman are not dishonored. They are respected if they live happily together."

Clerical Fueros. "One day a merchant came to the wife of a Priest of the Diocese of X, to demand pay for a robe which she had bought: 'I have no money,' she said, 'you must wait.'

"'I will not wait any longer,' replied the merchant; 'if you do not pay me now immediately, I will summon you before the court.'

"'Try it,' said the woman. 'Do you know that I belong to the sacred mitre?'

"All who belong to the house of the Bishop deem themselves under special protection.

"Some of the Bishops complain of this state of things, but take no pains to change it; others encourage it, with remarkable good humor.

Holy Fathers. "I remember that one of these prelates, passing through a village near the Episcopal city, the Priest said to him, 'Sire, have the goodness to bless my children and their mother.'

"The good Bishop blessed them. There was a chamber full.

"Another did better still. He baptizied the child of one of his Priests. Can a clergy of such character make saints? I doubt. Nevertheless, they must not be taken for heretics."

THE ABBÉ A REFORMER.

Call for reform. "In order to change this deplorable state of things, it would be necessary to establish in Mexico one or more seminaries, under the care of French Sulpiciens. No person should be ordained a Priest unless presented by the directors of the seminaries. It would be equally necessary that the Pope should send to Mexico an intelligent and wise *French* Ambassador, to induce

the Bishops to reform their clergy, and to adopt measures for this result. An *Italian* ambassador would employ himself forever in the religious politics, the honorary and property interests of the clergy, which must not be confounded with the interests of the church. As to the honor and dignity of religion, the purity and integrity of the worship of God, *the Italians are never concerned.*"

Character of the Bishops.

"The most honored of the Bishops dream more about their privileges and prerogatives, than the improvement of the flock entrusted to their charge. In the few institutions which have only the form and name of a seminary, they permit the teaching of a false theology, which only perverts the mind and conscience of the future priest."

State of the Church.

"The Christian spirit, that is to say, of love of one's neighbor, of poverty, of humility, of zeal for the salvation of souls, of self-abnegation, are so many virtues which the Mexican clergy never learn. So that the Priests go forth with the most erroneous and absurd ideas of morality, and of Catholic truth. They administer the first communion and the rite of confirmation to children of five or six years of age, who have received no instruction, and know not what they do. They make merchandise of the Sacraments, and make money by every religious ceremony, without thinking that they are guilty of simony, and expose themselves to the censures of the church. If Roman justice had its course in Mexico, *one-half* of the Mexican clergy would be excommunicated."

A deplorable picture.

"The well-instructed Priests, disinterested and animated by a truly apostolical spirit, holy souls, whose religious sentiments are of good character, constitute an insignificant minority. Mexican faith is a dead faith. The abuse of external ceremonies, the facility of reconcil-

ing the Devil with God, the absence of internal exercises of piety, *have killed the faith* in Mexico. It is in vain to seek good fruit from this worthless tree, which makes Mexican religion a singular assemblage of heartless devotion, shameful ignorance, insane superstition, and hideous vice. In vain you seek in this country, called Catholic, houses of refuge for the aged and indigent, for penitents fallen through betrayal and misery, or for works of benevolence and mercy, of which there are so many in Europe. You find here no gatherings of ladies of wealth, to work together for the children of the poor."

Faith dead in Mexico.

"In Mexico faith inspires nothing, invents nothing, it does not even imitate. It is a fossil. To visit the poor is a thing never thought of. Sometimes the remains of a repast are given away. On Saturdays, alms are given to the beggar. But to comfort, in his domicile, the infirm, the sick, the dying, in their misery, alas! Mexican pride does not permit it."

IDOLATRY.

Idolatry and abominations.

"The idolatrous character of Mexican Catholicism is a fact well known to all travellers. The worship of Saints and Madonnas so absorbs the devotion of the people, that little time is left to think about God. Religious ceremonies are performed with a most lamentable indifference and want of decorum. The church chants and music are atrocious, really infernal. The Indians go to hear mass with their poultry and vegetables, which they are carrying to market. I have had to abandon the Cathedral of Mexico, where I used to go every morning, because I could not collect my thoughts there. The gobble of turkeys, the crowing of cocks, the barking of dogs, the mewing of cats, the chirping of birds in their nests in the ceiling, and the

flea-bites, rendered meditation impossible to me, unaccustomed to live in such a menagerie."

"It would require volumes to relate the Indian superstitions of an idolatrous character which exist to this day. For want of serious instruction, you find in the Catholicism of the Indians numerous remains of the old Aztec paganism."

RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES.

Devotional dance and masquerade.

"One day I was present at an Indian dance, celebrated in honor of the Patron Saint of the village. Twenty-four girls and twenty-four boys were dancing in the church, in the presence of the priest. An Indian, with his face concealed under a mask of an imaginary divinity resembling the Devil, with horns and claws, was directing the figures of the dance, which reminded me of that of the 'Red Skins.' I remarked to the priest, who, for all that, was an excellent priest, that it was very incongruous to permit such a frolic in a church."

"The old customs,' he replied, 'are respectable; it is well to preserve them, only taking care that they do not degenerate into orgies.'

No Christian instruction.

"Notwithstanding the simple faith of the Indians, it is evident that they have only the tattered shreds of Catholicism. These shreds are better than absolute destitution. But with tact, disinterestedness, and truly Christian instruction, these Indians would make the best Catholics in the world."

"The religious customs of the Mexicans are scarcely less of our times, than are those of the Indians. They lead to the most ridiculous absurdity, to say nothing more."

A sad spectacle.

"During holy week, I have seen processions of three thousand persons stripped and covered

only with sackcloth, so coarse as to show that the individual had not even a shirt. The different phases of the passion of Christ were represented by groups of painted statues, large as life, and by men and women placed upon stages, borne on the shoulders of hundreds of Indians. The bearers, bending under the weight of their burden, would go, from time to time, to refresh themselves at the liquor shops, leaving in the middle of the street, the groups representing the Passion. Jews and Romans, decked with helmets of tin plate, breastplates of pasteboard, and breeches embroidered with silver, made a part of the procession."

"In some cities, there are a great many processions. I remember an instance, in which I saw the Romans in one procession, intoxicated by the Zouaves, attack the Jews in another procession, who were passing the same street at the same time. The Jews left the Cross and the Madonnas they were bearing, and gave the Romans such a drubbing that they bore the marks of it many a day."

"There are cities where they pay a poor Indian to personate Judas, and allow the whole crowd of the 'faithful' to spit in his face during the whole day."

Christmas Eve almost incredible. "The mysteries of the middle ages are utterly outdone by the burlesque ceremonies of the Mexicans. The accouchement of the Virgin on Christmas night appears to me indecent. In France, the police would forbid the ceremony, as a shock to public morals. But public morality being a thing unknown in Mexico, the custom of representing the accouchement of the Virgin in many of the churches offends no one. No father of a family objects to taking his daughter to see the procession, where Mary appears, *enciente*, marching round the church. After the procession, the Priest takes from beneath the

skirts of the Virgin the infant Jesus, in swaddling bands, who is first placed upon the altar, and then marched around the church. In the diocese of Puebla, the color and figure of the infant, and the manner of holding it, made our troops think that the man, who carried the child was a musician; accustomed to march with an ophicleide and streaming ribbons."

Burial of the dead.

"Modesty of soul is an exotic plant that does not thrive in Mexico. It withers and dies before it is born. In Europe, the Catholic church has such respect for the body of man sanctified by its sacraments, that it blesses even the earth that receives, the mortal remains of a Christian. In Mexico, man is buried like an unclean animal, without priest, ceremony, or prayer. Four men, relatives or friends, bear the body on a bier or a hurdle, and lay it in a ditch."

"Being one day at Notre Dame de Guadalupe, I saw borne in upon a cross made of two planks, the dead body of a man covered with a sheet. After some prayers repeated in haste, the cloth was removed and the body entirely exposed. It was then placed in a corner of the church, awaiting its interment. If there had been any women near me, I believe I should have made a scene with that sacristan, so indignant was I at his want of propriety."

Burial of infants.

"The custom is well-known of decorating dead infants, adorning them with the wings of geese, paper crowns, ribbons and flowers, then marching them about on a chair, or laid upon a table, and burying them with the noise of fire-crackers and the sound of instruments playing polkas and quadrilles."

Speculation in dead bodies.

"In Mexico, as well as in the interior of the empire, I have seen more revolting things

than these. The '*pulque*' merchants hire dead bodies, called '*angelitos*,' as a means of attracting customers. At first they pray, then they drink; and the young girls make appointments with their paramours. The dead body often thus serves several merchants, and is not interred as long as it can be endured."

MEXICAN FAIR FOR THE DEAD.

The idea of death.

"The idea of death has no terror to Mexicans. They die with as much indifference as they live. In Mexico, 'All-Saints Day' should be called the 'Fair for the Dead.' It is the 'New Year's day' of the country. The shops are in holiday dress. Merchants of bon-bons and cakes, the theatres, marionettes, &c., are all alive. This *fair* lasts eight days. In the shops you see death's heads in sugar, jointed skeletons, cadavers in spring boxes, catafalques in miniature, the tombs of bishops and priests with weeping women around. Every good Mexican attends this *fair*. A lover buys for his maiden a death's head in sugar, as big as your *fist*. A mother buys for her child a complete burial scene. The husband regales his wife with a sepulchre in black and white. Every one goes home as happy as possible. Gayety and folly! Little gifts cherish friendships. And these gracious presents foster this strange indifference to death."

The marriage ceremony.

"One of the greatest evils in Mexico is the exorbitant fee for the marriage ceremony. The priests compel the poor to live without marriage, by demanding for the nuptial benediction, a sum that a Mexican mechanic, with his slender wages, can scarcely accumulate in fifty years of the strictest economy. This is no exaggeration. The consequences of the excessive demands for perquisites in general, are as lamentable to public mo-

rality as to religion. One of the first duties of the Mexican Episcopate should be, in my opinion, to reduce the fee for baptisms, marriages, dispensations, and everything else indispensable to the performance of religious duties."

"Formerly the monks of the Church of Buffa, situated on one of the highest eminences of Zacatecas, performed the marriage ceremony for a more moderate fee than the priests in the city. The poor of course naturally went, for economy's sake, to be married at the chapel on the mountain, rather than in the parish church. But if the fee was small, still there was a fee. If the parties had not a crown, as there is no credit in Mexico since the independence, they pawned their little jackasses, and left them with the monks. The sacristie became a novel pawn-broker's shop. The asses being somewhat bulky on deposit, and expensive withal, when strolling about doing nothing, the monks put them to service in carrying water to Zacatecas, from a spring near the chapel. It being the only good water there, they sold it at two sous a load. The asses not reclaimed, and multiplying, the sacristan has continued the religious industry of the order; and the water has yielded more than a million of francs since the traffic began."

A Sunday market.

"One Sunday, a market-day at Zacatecas, I was noticing from my balcony, the crowd of buyers and sellers. The exhalations from their tattered dresses quite overcame me. The noise of the market men and women, in calling attention, and praising their articles, was deafening beyond expression. But the exhibition of dress and of manners so attracted my attention, that I could not but stay, in spite of the noise and the smells. Some were killing the vermin from their clothes or persons with their vegetables—a frightful massacre.