

enter into the militia : thus, Brigadier Calleja, (afterwards General, Viceroy, and Conde de Calderon,) who, in 1794, was entrusted with the organization of that body, in the *Provincias Internas*, introduced a regulation, by which, in every town and village,* the Captain of the militia of the place (however ill-qualified for the situation in every other respect) became perpetual Alcalde ; the first and second lieutenants, *Regidores* ; and the first serjeant, *Procurador* (or legal adviser) to the corporation, thus singularly formed ; with due provision for replacing them, when absent, by the next in rank, according to military gradation. By this absurd system, in these distant provinces, where the Municipalities were the only tribunals for the decision of all petty disputes, a corporal, or even a private, in the absence of his superiors, was entrusted with the administration of justice, in villages inhabited by fifty or sixty respectable proprietors, whose only remedy against the absurdities, into which his ignorance might betray him,† was an appeal to the governor of the Province, or to the Audiencia of Chihuahua, which

* *Vide* the Memorial presented to the Cortes of Cadiz, in 1811, by Mr. Ramos Arizpe, deputy for the province of Cohahuila.

† One can hardly credit the possibility of so singular an instance of oppression, and that affecting not an individual, but four whole Provinces, (Cohahuila, New Leon, Santander, and Texas ;) but I have had opportunities of ascertaining the correctness of the statements given by Mr. Ramos Arizpe on the subject, and know that they may be depended upon.

was always attended with the most vexatious uncertainty and expense.

The independence of the Ecclesiastical establishments throughout America, forms a very singular feature in the Spanish Colonial Policy. By the Bull of Alexander VI. dated 1502, Ferdinand II. was constituted, as effectually, the head of the American church, as Henry VIII. was of that of England : and whatever subserviency the Court of Madrid may have shown towards Rome, in other respects, its most bigoted monarchs have displayed great firmness in repelling the encroachments of the Holy See, wherever America was concerned. True to the principle of concentrating every branch of authority in the crown, they would allow no Spiritual jurisdiction to interfere with the Royal prerogative : Papal bulls were only admitted into the colonies on receiving a *Regium Exequatur* from the Council of the Indies ; and the severest penalties were not only enacted, but enforced, against ecclesiastics, who attempted to infringe this wise regulation. The Pope could hold no intercourse whatever with any part of America, except through the medium of Spain, by which means the Cruzada, or distribution of Bulls, became one of the branches of the Royal revenue. The King bought them up at a certain price at Rome, and retailed indulgences, and dispensations, of all kinds, to his American subjects, at an enormous profit. The speculation was managed with as much regularity as the

monopoly of tobacco; and, although several squabbles arose between the Courts of Madrid and Rome, in the course of a traffic, which was as lucrative, as it was discreditable, to both, the Pope, after several ineffectual attempts to obtain a larger share of so advantageous a concern, was forced to leave his Royal partner in possession of nearly the whole of the profits. It was a question, in which not merely the avarice, but the whole policy of Spain was interested. The main-spring of her Colonial System was, to teach all classes to look to the King, and the King alone, for advancement. Spaniards have always been a nation of *employés*, and the surest hold upon them, was to concentrate all their hopes of preferment in one focus: the slightest interference, on the part of any other power, would have disturbed this unity of plan; and, consequently, the designs of the Court of Rome were watched with as much jealousy, and suspicion, as the attempt of the English, or French, to smuggle in their manufactures;—a crime, any participation in which, on the part of a native, was regarded as almost worse than treason itself.

Besides the great establishments which we have passed in review, there was another most important branch, the collection of the customs, and revenue, in which a host of officers were employed, under the direction of the *Intendentes*, each of whom presided over a district, in the extent, and number, of which the territorial divisions of each colony consisted.

In the present order of things, the limits of the old Intendancies have often served to regulate the number of the *States*, of which the new Republics are composed. In all questions respecting the interests of the revenue, the *Intendentes* possessed very extensive powers, and, as their appointment emanated from the Council of the Indies, without the concurrence of the Viceroy, in their own province, they were almost independent.

The command of the troops was vested in the Viceroy in person, who regulated the military operations, and filled up all vacancies; it being understood, that promotions made by him would receive the King's sanction. He was assisted, in this part of his duties, by a Council of war, (*Junta de guerra*,) as he was, in all judicial questions, by a *Fiscal*, or legal adviser, to whom the law of the case was referred: all sentences of every kind bore his signature, nor was there any appeal from his decision.

To each, and all, of these great officers, (not excepting the viceregal dignity,) *all* the subjects of the crown were alike eligible, without any distinction between Americans and Europeans. Indeed, there is hardly any point upon which the laws of the Indies insist so frequently, or so strongly, as this equality, as may be seen by a reference to the *Recopilaciones*.

Such is the outline of that mighty fabric, by which the authority of Spain, in the New World, was

so long supported. Its defects, in theory, are by no means so great as many have supposed; the evil consisted in the *practice*; and in the application of the whole political power of the crown to the maintenance of a system of revenue laws, by which the interest of the Colonies was entirely sacrificed to that of the Mother country. Upon both these points it will be necessary for me to enter into some details.

With regard to the first, (the difference between the theory and the practice of Spain, in her Colonial system,) the history of the last two centuries sufficiently proves, how entirely the conciliatory intentions of the first framers of the laws of the Indies were lost sight of, by the total exclusion of the Creoles from any participation in the government of their respective countries. Every situation in the gift of the crown, from the Viceroy to the lowest custom-house officer, was bestowed upon an *European*; nor is there an instance, for many years before the revolution, either in the church, the army, or the law, in which the door of preferment was opened to a native.* It became the darling policy of Spain to disseminate, throughout her American dominions, a class of men, distinct from the natives in feelings, habits, and interests; taught to consider themselves

* The promotion of Don Antonio Perez, now Bishop of Puebla, to that See, took place after the King's return in 1814, when the necessity of conciliating the natives began to be admitted.

as a privileged *caste*, and to regard their own existence as intimately connected with that of the system, of which they were the principal support. In return for their supposed devotion to the crown, all the offices of government were theirs; and, by a regular scale of promotion, they rose in dignity and rank, the opportunities of enriching themselves increasing at every step, until they were enabled, at last, to retire in affluence to the Peninsula. Nor was it to government officers alone that this preference was confined. The superior advantages enjoyed by Europeans, threw the whole trade of the country into their hands, for the good understanding which they were enabled to cultivate with their countrymen in the custom-houses on the coast, and the facility with which they obtained licenses from the Viceroy for the introduction of prohibited articles, rendered competition impossible.

It is difficult to conceive any thing more universal than the corruption which prevailed throughout the revenue department of the colonies: the Viceroys themselves gave a splendid example, for both in Peru and Mexico, with a nominal salary of only 60,000 dollars, they kept up all the pageant of a court, and, after distinguishing themselves, for some years, by their magnificence, as the Representatives of Royalty, they returned to their native country with a fortune of a million, or a million and a half of dollars, the whole of which, it was notorious that they must have derived from

some unfair mode of turning the advantages of their situation to account.

The distribution of quicksilver, which was a Royal monopoly, was, in Mexico, one source of these illegal profits.)*

The sale of titles, and distinctions, which the King usually granted at their recommendation, was another; but the most lucrative of all, was the power of granting licenses for the introduction of any article of foreign produce, during a limited period, to which I have already alluded: for these, enormous sums were paid by the great commercial houses of Mexico, and Veracruz; or a share in the profits of the speculation was given to the Viceroy's agent, without any participation in the risk. This system of dilapidation, beginning with the chief, extended through every branch of the government; the inferior offices swarmed with hangers on, and candidates for preferment, all Europeans, and all expecting, by means best known to themselves, to make a rapid fortune. That these expectations were not disappointed, may be inferred from the fact, that, under the administration of the Prince of Peace, government situations, *even without a salary*, were in great request, and were found to be a sure road to affluence.

The complaints of the Creoles, and the endeavours

* The supply seldom being equal to the demand, the miners paid large sums for the privilege of being allowed to purchase, in preference to others:

of some of the more enlightened amongst the Europeans themselves, to bring the most notorious offenders to justice, were equally fruitless. They were frustrated, partly by the rank and influence of the transgressors, and partly by that spirit of *clanship*, (I can find no other word to express what I mean,) by which the Europeans, of every description, were united amongst themselves. One must have been in America, to have any idea of the extent to which this feeling was carried. It became, at last, a passion, which induced them to prefer the ties of country to the ties of blood. The son, who had the misfortune to be born of a Creole mother, was considered as an inferior, in the house of his own father, to the European book-keeper, or clerk, for whom the daughter, if there were one, and a large share of the fortune, were reserved. "Eres Criollo, y basta:"—(you are a Creole, and that is enough!) was a common phrase amongst the Spaniards, when angry with their children; and was thought to express all the contempt that it is in the power of language to convey. It was a term of ignominy, a term of reproach, until time taught those, to whom it was applied, to use it rather as an honourable distinction, and to oppose it to that of *Gachupin*, as designating the party of those infatuated men, who imagined, that the circumstance of having been born in the arid plains of Castille, or La Mancha, gave them a moral, and intellectual superiority, over all the inhabitants of the New World. Not the least remark-

able trait in the Revolution of America, is the sort of proscription which the name of Spaniard now entails upon those, who formerly found it the only passport to preferment : but the violence of the reaction, is, perhaps, the best proof of the excess of the evils by which it was occasioned.

There can be little doubt, that the Spanish Government fomented this mutual antipathy between the two most influential classes of its subjects, on the same principle that led it to encourage all the distinctions of *caste*, and *colour*, which I have mentioned in the second section of this book. This was not the case, however, with the other abuses which I have had occasion to enumerate : wherever her financial interests were at stake, the Mother country was remarkably vigilant, but then she, but too frequently, took a wrong mode of effecting what she had in view. Instead of attempting a reform, by introducing into the general system something like simplicity, and uniformity of plan, every succeeding year rendered the machinery still more complicated. Whenever abuses were discovered in any office, a new office was established, as the only means of correcting them ; thus, wheel within wheel was added, and check upon check introduced, until the action of the whole was impeded, and the confusion became so great, that nothing could remedy it. Mexico, the most important of all the Colonies, only remitted six millions of dollars annually to the Peninsula : the remainder of a revenue of twenty

millions of dollars, was swallowed up, either by the government charges, which (including dilapidations) amounted to eleven millions, or, by remittances to other Colonies, (the Havanna and the Philippine Islands,) the revenues of which did not cover the expenditure.

Under such a system as that which I have described, it was not to be expected that much should be done for the improvement of the people, destined to be ruled by it. Spain felt that her power depended in a great measure upon their ignorance.— By disseminating the blessings of education amongst her subjects, she would, virtually, have undermined her own authority, and made them impatient of a yoke, which comparison would have rendered doubly galling. They were, therefore, taught to believe that the fate of all mankind was similar to their own : or rather, that they were pre-eminently fortunate, in belonging to a monarchy so much superior in power and dignity to the rest of the world. Spain was to them the queen of nations : *hablar Christiano*, (to speak a *Christian* language,) was the privilege of those by whom her dialect was used ; while English and French, Germans and North Americans, were all involved in one indiscriminate condemnation, as Jews, heretics, and unbelievers, with whom no good Catholic could hold intercourse without contamination.

The Inquisition was constituted the guardian of this belief, and discharged the duty with a zeal,

which proved how fully its importance was felt. The works of Luther were not more rigorously proscribed, than modern histories, or political writings; and, even as late as 1811, by a strange anomaly, the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people was denounced as a damnable heresy in Mexico, at the very time that it was solemnly sanctioned by the Cortes in Spain. Some particular studies, however, were encouraged amidst this general tendency to stifle inquiry; especially scholastic divinity, which was considered a very harmless amusement, and the mathematics. Some attention too was paid to the arts of drawing and sculpture, and, in the mining districts to mineralogy, which, in Mexico particularly, was patronised with kingly munificence: but there can be no doubt that this was done, principally with a view to divert the attention of the Creoles from more dangerous pursuits: the spirit of the system was to exclude information, and to check the progress of the human mind.

Nothing can illustrate this more strongly, than a Royal decree, of 1785, addressed to the Viceroy of Peru, by the *enlightened* Galvez, (as Humboldt deservedly calls him, on account of the many practical reforms which he introduced into the administration of the Colonies,) who was, at that time, President of the Council of the Indies. This decree states, that in consequence of the many representations made to the King, respecting the bad effects produced by the college for the education of noble

Indians, at Lima, the subject had been taken into serious consideration; and that His Majesty, "convinced that, since the conquest, no revolution had been attempted amongst the Peruvians, which had not originated with some one better informed than the rest," had determined that the question should be referred to the Viceroy, with orders to give an opinion, as soon as possible, respecting the propriety of reforming, new-modelling, or entirely suppressing the said college."

Upon the same principle, liberty to found a school of any kind was (latterly) almost invariably refused. The municipality of Buenos Ayres was told, in answer to a petition in favour of an establishment, in which nothing but mathematics was to be taught, that learning did not become Colonies.* The Padre Mier (author of a very curious work on the Mexican Revolution) enumerates various instances of a similar kind. In Bögötä, the study of chemistry was prohibited, though permitted in Mexico: and in New Grënädä, the works of the celebrated Mutis, though purely botanical, were not allowed to be published. Permission to visit foreign countries, or even the Peninsula, was very rarely granted, and then only for a limited time. A printing-press was conceded, as a special privilege, by the Council of the Indies, and that only to

* *Vide* Brackenbridge, Voyage to South America, by Order of the Government of the United States.

the three Viceroyalties, Mexico, Buenos Ayres, and Peru; to Caracas, and many other considerable towns, it was denied altogether.

To guard against the importation of books, was, as I before observed, the special province of the Inquisition; and the whole ingenuity of this odious tribunal was exerted, in order to check it: not only were vessels subjected to a vigorous examination upon their arrival in port, but the captains were rendered, personally, responsible for the correctness of the list of the books on board, which they were compelled to give in. In the interior, domiciliary visits were resorted to, and denunciations encouraged amongst members of the same family; with what success, may be inferred from the fact, that, as late as 1807, a Mexican, called Don Jose Roxas, was denounced by his own mother, for having a volume of Rousseau in his possession, and confined for several years in the dungeons of the Holy Office. He was fortunate enough to effect his escape, but died, in 1811, at New Orleans.* These instances of extreme severity, however, were rare, and were less felt, because, in theory at least, the jurisdiction of the Inquisition was as extensive in the Mother country as in the Colonies. In practice, its prohibitions were disregarded in both, by the higher classes, who were, in general, acquainted

* *Vide* Brackenbridge, who lived in the same house with him, and was in the possession of his papers after his death.

with all the most violent publications of the earlier days of the French revolution, to the study of which, the very anxiety that was shown to exclude them, gave an additional zest.

The first proclamations of all the new Juntas bear evidence of the extent to which this passion was carried; they are mostly mere transcripts, of the rights of man, with as little real tendency to improve mankind as the original; for they invariably led to the adoption of some impracticable theory, and pointed out the overthrow of all existing institutions, as the first step towards amendment.

It is curious to observe how little progress was made by any of the New States, after the first declaration of their independence, until experience had taught them a sounder doctrine, and led them to model their institutions upon those of the United States; which, with some slight variations, will, in all probability be adopted, ultimately, by the whole of Spanish America.

It now only remains for me to terminate this sketch of the Colonial Policy of Spain, by an account of the commercial restrictions which she imposed upon her American subjects, and which I consider as the great cause of the Revolution. It is in the endless grievances, vexations, and abuses, to which these restrictions gave rise, that we must seek the seeds of that discontent, by which the minds of all classes were indisposed towards the Mother country.

The political preference given to Europeans, might rankle in the breasts of those Creoles, who, from their birth or fortune, conceived themselves to be entitled to a share of that authority which the old Spaniards engrossed; but it was a matter of indifference to the great mass of the people. The commercial monopoly of Cadiz, on the contrary, came home to all; and, from the enormous price to which every article of European produce was raised by it, it bore hardest upon those least able to support it. Like the insolent air of superiority affected by the Europeans, it created a degree of irritation, which nothing but prudence, lenient measures, and timely concessions, on the part of the Mother country, could have calmed; and these (unfortunately) were words, which the vocabulary of Spain did not acknowledge.

“Des principes d'après lesquels on arrache la vigne, et l'olivier, ne sont guerre propres à favoriser le commerce ou les manufactures”:—such is the manner in which Humboldt commences his account of the trade of New Spain, and nothing, certainly, can be more appropriate than such an introduction, to such a subject. If a system of absolute prohibition could ever prove a good one in the end, or ever be made to answer, by the greatest strictness in enforcing it, the policy of Spain might be held out, as an object of admiration to all future ages. From the first, she reserved to herself the exclusive right of supplying all the wants of her Colonies. No fo-

reigner was permitted to trade with them, or foreign vessel to enter their ports;—no American could own a ship. In Spain itself, the trade was confined, for upwards of a century, to the single port of Seville, from which every vessel chartered for America was ordered to sail, and to which it was compelled to return. Death was the penalty denounced against any infringement of these stern laws; and a formidable establishment of Guarda Costas was maintained, for the express purpose of enforcing them.

In order to increase the wants of the Colonies, they were forbidden to manufacture any article that the Mother country could supply; and were even compelled to forego the advantages, which they might have derived from the superior fertility of their own soil, and to draw from Spain necessaries, with which Nature furnished them almost at their own doors. The cultivation of the vine and the olive, for both of which the climate of America is admirably adapted, was prohibited; and even the growth of the more precious articles, of what we term colonial produce, (as cacao, coffee, and indigo,) was only tolerated, under certain limitations, and in such quantities as the Mother country might wish annually to export. Nothing could exceed the distress, to which those parts of the Spanish dominions, which were not enriched by veins of gold or silver, were reduced by these regulations. The whole coast of Venezuela was sunk in poverty, in the midst of

its natural riches ; and in Buenos Ayres, wheat was actually used to fill up the holes in the streets, and marshes in the vicinity of the town.* The inhabitants, whose only wealth consisted in their agricultural produce, were condemned to vegetate in hopeless indigence, debarred from all the advantages of civilization, and reduced to a state but little superior to that of the Indians, at the time of the conquest. I know of few more touching appeals to the feelings, and good sense of a government, than that addressed to the Viceroy of the provinces of the Rio de la Plata, in 1809, by the Apoderado (Agent) of the Landed Proprietors of Buenos Ayres. It contains an admirable *exposé* of the system, by which the interests, both of the Colonies and of the Royal Treasury, were sacrificed to those of a few overbearing European merchants ; as well as of the fruitlessness of any endeavours to obtain redress, even in cases where the advantage of the government (if rightly understood) was perfectly in harmony with that of the colonist. I subjoin a few extracts, which will be found in the Appendix.

The reforms which had been gradually introduced into the Colonial System in Mexico, the Havanna, and Peru, did not extend, in the same degree, to these ill-fated countries. The precious metals were so exclusively the object of the attention of Spain, that but little attention was paid to

* *Vide* Representation of Landholders to Viceroy. Appendix, Letter A. (Page 479)

any of her possessions that did not produce them. She had no idea of creating a balance of trade, by encouraging the natural resources of the colonies ; nor of becoming herself the carrier between them and other nations, with whose manufactures she was, indeed, obliged to keep them supplied, but to whom she furnished in return but few of those productions, with which her American possessions abounded. The fact was, that, perhaps with a view of rendering it less difficult to keep the whole of the importations and exportations in her own hands, she never aimed at increasing the number of consumers, but rather contrived to enhance her profits, by limiting the supply. The luxuries of life were only to be obtained by the wealthy : the lower and middling classes could not aspire to a share of them ; and it would be curious to be able to point out, in an authentic shape, the very limited number of those, amongst whom the importations of each Colony were distributed. To render the management of this extraordinary system less embarrassing, the channels of communication with the Mother country were reduced as much as possible. Until the year 1700, the whole of the supplies destined for America were introduced through the ports of Portobello, and Veracruz ; from the first of which, remittances were made through Pänämä, (on the opposite side of the Isthmus,) to the whole line of coast on the Pacific, comprising Güyăqūil, Qūitō, Chilē, and Pērū. During the war of Suc-

cession, the trade with Peru was opened to the French; and many Americans are of opinion, that, to this temporary enjoyment of the sweets of foreign intercourse, the present revolution may be traced. At the peace of Utrecht, (1713,) Great Britain, with the Asiento, (or contract for the supply of slaves,) obtained a direct participation in the American trade, in virtue of the permission, which was granted her, to send a vessel of five hundred tons annually to the fair of Portobello. This privilege ceased with the partial hostilities of 1737, but Spain found herself compelled on the restoration of peace, in 1739, to make some provision for meeting that additional demand, which this comparatively free communication with Europe had created. Licenses were granted with this view to vessels, which were called register-ships, and which were chartered during the intervals between the usual periods for the departure of the galleons. In 1764, a farther improvement was made, by the establishment of monthly packets, to the Havana, Portorico, and Buenos Ayres, which were allowed to carry out a half cargo of goods. This was followed, in 1774, by the removal of the interdict upon the intercourse of the Colonies with each other; and this again, in 1778, by what is termed *the decree of Free Trade*, by which seven of the principal ports of the Peninsula were allowed to carry on a direct intercourse with Buenos Ayres, and the South Sea.

It cannot be denied that these ameliorations were attended with the happiest effect; but still, they were insufficient. The growing importance of the Colonies required more than the Mother country was able to supply; while the concessions which had been made, only rendered the restraints still imposed more insupportable. To receive all their supplies through the medium of the Peninsula would not have been a hardship, had she taken, in return, those products, in which the colonies abounded, and upon which the whole wealth of some of them depended. But this she would only do to a very limited extent.* Payments in specie were the great object of the Spanish merchant, and to this every other commercial advantage was sacrificed.

The exclusion of foreigners from concurrence, in a market thus organized, was essential to the very existence of the system pursued. Their willingness to receive produce in lieu of silver, in exchange for their manufactures, and to be contented with a moderate rate of profit upon those manufactures, provided they could dispose of them in sufficient quantities, would have rendered competition, on the part of Spain, impossible; at the same time that it must have increased the difficulty of keeping the Colonies in subjection, by augmenting their resources too ra-

* A return of the importations and exportations from the colonies, would prove how very small was the amount of colonial produce exported from each, (with the exception of the Havana,) and how constant the drain of specie.