

with powers only the more formidable because, under the supposed reign of the law, no legal bounds were prescribed for them: their re-admission into the Colonies was insisted upon, as a preliminary to any accommodation;* and yet, although these onerous conditions were not accompanied by any one practical concession, the Creoles were assured "that they were Spanish citizens, inhabiting one of the component parts of the Monarchy, and equal in rights to their brethren of the Peninsula."†

From such a system as this, nothing good could result. Had the demands of the Creoles been fairly met, some arrangement might have been possible; but dissimulation only gave rise to distrust, and thus, amidst reciprocal assurances of the most amicable intentions, preparations were made for an appeal to arms, by which it was but too soon evident that the question must ultimately be decided.

In this war of words I do not mean to accuse either party of unnecessary hypocrisy; there was perhaps as much of the good faith, which both professed, on the one side, as on the other, (and this is not saying much for the aggregate;) but each

* *Vide* Correspondence between the new Viceroy Elio, and the Junta of Buenos Ayres, 15th January, 1811, in which the dissolution of the Junta, and the immediate recognition of Elio, as Viceroy, are required.

† *Vide* proclamations of Regency, passim; and particularly those already referred to.

was desirous to make out a case, and with this view the Cortes held out hopes, which they never intended to realize,* while the Colonies replied by professions of a fidelity, which they could hardly pretend to feel. In point of fact, from the commencement of 1811, independence on the one side, and the re-establishment of the old system, with as little modification as possible, on the other, were the real objects in view.

The Spaniards urge, that this state of things was the natural consequence of the first steps taken by the Insurgents, which could lead to nothing but the emancipation of the Colonies, and were consequently opposed, from the outset, by the Mother country.

This is perhaps true; but it is not less so, that, until driven to it by actual hostilities on the part of Spain, the war-cry of Independence was not

* I do not wish to animadvert upon the conduct of the Cortes with unnecessary severity. They have fallen themselves "from their high estate," and their misfortunes are their protection. But, in considering the feelings of the Americans towards this assembly, it must not be forgotten that the Cortes were the first to sanction the barbarous principle that, "with rebels, and Insurgents, no engagements were binding." They approved of the violation of the capitulation of Caracas, by Monteverde, in 1812; the first of a long series of similar breaches of the public faith; and, with such facts as this before them, it was hardly to be expected that the Americans should place much confidence in their professions of amity, equality, and brotherly love.

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 Carthagena 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 *Gächūpīnēs*, *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.

SECTION II.

COMMENCEMENT OF REVOLUTION IN MEXICO,
FROM 1810 TO THE DEATH OF MÖRELÓS.

MANY of the causes of disaffection which I have pointed out as existing generally throughout the Spanish Colonies, did not extend to Mexico by any means in the same degree as to the rest. Her superior population gave her importance, while her mineral treasures, and her vicinity to the Peninsula, ensured to her a constant supply of European manufactures. The very process too, by which these treasures were drawn from the bosom of the earth, gave value to the landed property of the Interior, from the intimate connexion that must always subsist between mining and agriculture; and this concurrence of favourable circumstances diffused a degree of prosperity throughout the country, which few Colonies have ever attained, none, certainly, exceeded.

This prosperity, however, was due to the natural resources of the country alone; the government could not check, but did little to encourage it:

for all the abuses inherent in the Spanish system,—the monopoly of the Mother country, the preference given to Europeans for all public employments, and the corruption which prevailed; both in the administration of justice, and in the collection of the revenue,—existed to as great an extent as in any other part of South America; and were perhaps only felt the more, because Mexico had already acquired that consciousness of strength, which, sooner or later, must, under any circumstances, have proved fatal to the dominion of Spain in the New World. Humboldt describes the irritation which was occasioned amongst the higher classes of the Creoles in 1803; by the political insignificance to which they were condemned; and from what he says of “the sullen hatred with which they regarded the Mother country, and the contempt in which they held her once formidable resources,” it seems evident that, even at that early period, the germ of all that has since taken place existed, and only required a favourable opportunity to call it into action. Still, in Mexico as elsewhere, these feelings were confined to a comparatively small circle; for the same intelligent observer adds, “that the great majority of the people were indifferent to political rights, and not at all likely to join in any effort to acquire them.” I believe this picture to have been perfectly correct, although it is difficult to reconcile the apparent apathy of the people, with the energy which it displayed a few short years afterwards, in its

struggle for those rights, which it was supposed to be incapable of appreciating; unless, indeed, we allow that there are, in nations as in individuals, particular periods, at which a general fermentation takes place throughout the system, rendering intolerable the pressure of some evil, which has been long, and patiently supported, and inspiring an irresistible longing for the attainment of some particular blessing, the importance of which has not been before so acutely felt.

Some great moral change of this description must have taken place in Mexico, at the commencement of 1810, to render so general that disposition to rise against the established order of things, which was displayed in every part of the country, the moment that the standard of insurrection was unfurled. Men unconnected with the capital, or with politics; landowners resident upon their estates in the most remote provinces; *Curas*, whose lives had been passed in the midst of their parishioners; and young men educated for the law, or the church, and just emerging from the university;—all flew to arms, and embarked at once in a contest, for which no one conceived them to be prepared. Nor were the feelings which led to this step, light, or evanescent, in their nature. The war was carried on for years under most unfavourable circumstances, by the Insurgents, with a spirit that set all attempts to reduce them at defiance; and we shall see one of the most distinguished supporters of the cause of Spain (the

Viceroy Calleja) confess, in 1814, (at the very moment when his arms had given him a temporary ascendancy,) that this spirit remained unchanged, and could be restrained by nothing but an immense superiority of force. But a rapid outline of the Revolution itself, will best explain its character, and progress.

The government of Mexico, at the commencement of 1808, was entrusted to Don José Iturrigaray, whose authority as Viceroy, supported by a host of European officers, and settlers, whom the riches of the Colony attracted, appeared to be as firmly established as at any former period.

The country was flourishing, and tranquil; mines, and agriculture affording to the whole population, (which did not exceed seven millions,) occupation and wealth: nor did any thing announce the approach of that storm, by which the whole fabric of society was so soon to be overthrown.

The first symptoms of agitation, appeared upon the receipt of the disastrous tidings from the Peninsula, which announced the occupation of the capital by the French army, and the captivity of the King.

The Viceroy, uncertain as to the line which he ought to pursue, and doubtful (it is said) of the fidelity of many of the old Spaniards about him, communicated this intelligence in the Government Gazette, without a single comment to guide the feelings, which it was so well calculated to excite. A very few days, however, convinced him of his

error, and he issued a second proclamation, soliciting the support of the people, and declaring his determination to preserve, to the last, his fidelity to his, and their, Sovereign.

This declaration was received with enthusiasm. It was the first time that the *people* of Mexico had been taught to consider their voice of any importance, and they availed themselves of the opportunity with an eagerness, which proved, that they felt the value of the right, which they were called upon to exercise.

The Ayuntamientos, every where, became the organs of the people, and addresses poured in from every quarter, in which provinces, towns, and even villages, expressed their devoted loyalty, and their resolution to support the authority of the representative of their captive Sovereign.

This interchange of congenial sentiments, created a kindly feeling between the Viceroy and the Creoles: and advantage was taken of his wish to conciliate them, by the Ayuntamiento of the Capital, composed of men of the first influence and respectability in the State, to propose the creation of a *Junta*, in imitation of the Mother country; and even the convocation of a National Mexican assembly, to be composed of deputies from the different provinces.

This suggestion was not unfavourably received by Iturrigaray, but was protested against by the Audiencia, as contrary to the privileges, both of the

Crown and of the Europeans. Disputes ran high between the Municipality and this body, during the months of July and August, and the beginning of September (1808), when the Audiencia, finding that the Viceroy was inclined to side with their opponents, and to admit the Creoles to a share in the government, determined to arrest, and depose him, in order to cut short a project, which they regarded as fatal to their own authority. This resolution, the principal promoters of which, were the Oidores Aguirre and Bataller, was carried into execution on the night of the 15th of September, when Iturrigaray was surprised in bed, in his own palace, by a band of Europeans, (mostly merchants,) headed by Don Gabriel Yermo, a rich Spaniard, the proprietor of some of the finest sugar estates in the valley of Cuernavaca. No resistance was made by the guards, who would not fire upon their countrymen, and at midnight the Viceroy was conveyed to the prisons of the Inquisition, while his Wife and Family were confined in a neighbouring convent.

To the populace, a suspicion of *heresy* was assigned as the cause of this measure; while, to the better informed, the Audiencia attempted to justify it, by one of the laws of the Code of the Indies,*

* Seg. 36. titº. 15. lib. 2. which says, "Que excediendo los Vireyes de las facultades que tienen, las Audiencias les hagan los requerimientos que conforme al negocio pareciere, sin publicidad; y si no bastase, y no se causase inquietud en la tierra, se cumpla lo proveido por los Vireyes, ó Presidentes y avisen al Rey."

by which it is provided, that in cases where the Viceroy exceeds his powers, the Audiencia has a right of interference, in order to preserve the tranquillity of the country. But all attempts at concealment were vain: the Creoles knew that the removal of Iturrigaray implied their exclusion from power, and they consequently regarded his cause as their own. These feelings were rather confirmed, than checked, by the pains which were taken by the Audiencia to repress them. Juntas of public security were formed by its orders, and armed bands of Spaniards organized, who, under the curious denomination of *Patriots*, exercised a most rigorous surveillance over all whose opinions were suspected of being favourable to the imprisoned Viceroy. Many persons of note were arrested, who had voted in favour of a Mexican Junta in the Ayuntamiento, of whom some were banished to the Philippine Islands, and others sent to Spain, to be there tried, or confined in the Castle of St. John of Ulloa. The Viceregal authority was confided, for the time, to the Archbishop Lizana, and an account of all that had taken place transmitted to Spain, for the approbation of the Central Junta.

But although the Mexicans submitted at the moment to these innovations, they were far from viewing them with indifference. The moral change which a few months had produced was extraordinary; they had learnt to think, and to act; their old respect for the King's Lieutenant was destroyed

by the manner in which his authority had been thrown off, and his dignity profaned by his countrymen; and they felt that the question was now, not one between their Sovereign and themselves as subjects, but between themselves, and their *fellow-subjects*, the European Spaniards, as to which should possess the right of representing the absent King.

The insolent manner in which this right was claimed, as exclusively their own, by the Europeans, increased not a little the general irritation. The Ayuntamiento of Mexico was told by the Audiencia, in reply to some remonstrance in favour of the Viceroy, "that it possessed no authority, except over the leperos (*lazzaroni*), of the capital;" and it was a favourite maxim with the Oidor Bataller, "that while a Manchego mule, or a Castilian cobbler remained in the Peninsula, he had a right to govern the Americas."

These sentiments were re-echoed by all the Europeans, both in the Capital, and in the principal towns of the Interior: they every where formed *Patriotic* associations for the defence of what they termed their *rights*, and armed themselves against the Natives, whose spirit these very precautions contributed to arouse. The Archbishop, whose moderation and conciliatory policy accorded but little with these views, was allowed to retain the reins of government but a short time. He was replaced, in 1809, by the Audiencia, to whom the supreme authority was entrusted by the Central Junta; and