But at last even the Holy See itself relented. After Spain had consented by treaty to recognize the independence of Mexico, a Mexican envoy, who had been knocking at the Vatican gates for several years in vain, was officially and graciously received in 1837 by Pope Gregory XVI, who promised to send an *internuncio* in return.[1]

[1] Rivera, *Historia de Jalapa*, III, 320.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PEOPLE OF MEXICO

THE nation which had thus acquired an acknowledged independence occupied a territory covering almost one million seven hundred thousand square miles,[1] and inhabited by some seven millions of people.[2] The area of this imperial domain was nearly fourteen times larger than that of Great Britain. It was more than eight times the area of France; nearly nine times that of Spain; and was approximately equal to the then area of the United States.[3]

With respect to the number of their population, the United States and Mexico had probably been much on an equality near the beginning of the century. But while the Mexican population had very slowly increased—the natural growth

[1] The exact area was not then known, or indeed ascertainable, for the boundaries between Mexico and its southern neighbors, Guatemala and British Honduras, had never been fixed. The northern limits were in like manner quite unknown until they were settled by the Florida treaty in 1819. The exact area of modern Mexico *plus* her lost provinces, as given by the United States government authorities, is 1,697,916 square miles.—(Romero's *Mexico*, 5, 8.) Humboldt, in giving the boundaries of New Spain, took into account only those portions of the continent which the Spaniards occupied, and his estimate amounted to only 900,000 square miles.

[2] The statistics of the Mexican population were extremely vague. Humboldt, basing his calculations on an imperfect official census of 1793, concluded that the total number of inhabitants in 1803 was *not less* than 5,837,100.—(*Essai Politique*, I, 53–65.) Another estimate, made in 1810, gave a total of 6,122,354.—(Bancroft, *History of Mexico*, III, 736.) Poinsett in 1822, using Humboldt's figures and his calculations of the rate of natural increase, and allowing for the destruction caused by twelve years of civil war, estimated the population at about 6,500,000.—(*Notes on Mexico*, 110.) From precisely the same data Ward in 1827 concluded that the population must amount to 8,000,000 (*Mexico*, I, 21); but as the official estimates only showed a population in 1839 of 7,016,300 (Dublan y Lozano, V, 154) it is probable that Ward's figures were much too high.

[3] This must be understood as excluding the "Oregon Country," then jointly occupied by the United States and Great Britain, and as assuming the northeastern boundary to be that subsequently fixed. The area of the territory so bounded was 1,817,888 square miles.—(*The National Domain*, 12, 29.)



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being checked by a constant and peculiarly savage warfare—the inhabitants of the United States, living in peace and plenty, and aided by a large immigration, were increasing at a rate of about thirty-five per cent every ten years. In 1825 they probably numbered over eleven millions.[1]

The two countries were, moreover, very different in respect to the composition and distribution of their population. The only portion of the dwellers within the boundaries of the United States of which its census took account had sprung exclusively from European and African immigrants. Settling originally on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico, they had gradually pushed their way inland along the more accessible and fertile valleys. The densest population was in the New England and Middle states, with a diminishing ratio of inhabitants to the square mile in the South and on the eastern slopes of the Mississippi valley. The mountainous regions and most of the country west of the Mississippi were practically uninhabited except by "Indians not taxed." In Missouri and Arkansas there was a population of perhaps a hundred thousand, of whom about five thousand were in the flourishing town of St. Louis.

In Mexico, likewise, the *Indios bravos*, the wild Indians, were not enumerated, but the rest of the population was composed in the main of the descendants of those whom the Spanish conquerors had found in possession three hundred years before. Their grouping had not materially changed in that time. The hot, unhealthy country on the coasts was thinly settled. The densest population was still found in the interior along the high central plateau from Oaxaca on the south to Zacatecas on the north. The intendancy of Vera Cruz, which stretched for nearly six hundred miles along the Gulf of Mexico and included the only important seaport on the Atlantic side, had not more than five inhabitants to the square mile.[2] Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts,

[1] The census of 1800 showed a total of 5,305,941 inhabitants; that of 1810, 7,239,903; and that of 1820, 9,638,191. According to Gilman's formula (*Science N. S.*, XXXII, 276) the population in 1825 was 11,134,000.

[2] Humboldt, *Essai Politique*, I, 155. The proportion cannot have varied much between 1803 and 1825.



New Hampshire, and Maine, with a coast-line and area about the same as those of Vera Cruz, had not less than twenty-five inhabitants to the square mile.[1]

North of Zacatecas, in San Luis Potosí, Durango, and Sonora, in Texas, New Mexico, and the Californias, there was no considerable population. Humboldt had estimated the density of population in the intendancy of San Luis Potosí at thirteen, and in Durango at less than two to the square mile.[2] But these were mining regions, and the long wars had done infinite mischief to that industry and before 1825 had brought about a great decrease of population. North of the frontier mining camps there was almost nothing. The vast region from Texas to California was all but uninhabited. There were a few missions, a few ranches, and some little towns like Santa Fe; but the greater part of the country was dominated by the unsubdued Indians, few in numbers but formidable in war. The Apaches and Comanches were always an insuperable obstacle to Mexican expansion.

In another respect the distribution of population was markedly different in Mexico and the United States, and that was in relation to the size of the cities. In 1825 the city of Mexico had over a hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants; the city of New York probably a little more. Guadalajara was larger than Baltimore, and Puebla than Boston. Guanajuato, though nearly destroyed by the civil wars, still remained as populous as New Orleans.[3]

Adam Smith, writing fifty years before, had noticed this tendency to growth in the chief cities of all the Spanish colonies, but he did not attempt to seek its cause.[4] A French economist attributes it to a variety of causes: an inherited Moorish habit, a desire on the part of the small number of white conquerors to keep united for defence, the

[1] 24.19 by the census of 1820.

[2] *Essai Politique*, I, 282–294.

[3] Poinsett gives the population of the city of Mexico in 1822 as 155,000; Guadalajara, 70,000; Puebla, 60,000; Guanajuato, 31,820.—(*Notes on Mexico*, 41, 94, 110.) In 1820 the population of New York was 123,706; of Baltimore, 69,738; of Boston, 43,298; of New Orleans, 27,146.

[4] *Wealth of Nations*, book IV, chap. VII.

fact that the emigrants from Spain were not usually part of the rural population. And he lays it down as a general rule that when the population of a new country is observed to flow to the towns, it may certainly be concluded that production is small; that the majority of the colonists are idlers, speculators, or government officials, and not workers; and that beneath them there is a conquered people whose labor is exploited for the benefit of the victorious class.[1] Such certainly were the conditions in New Spain.

The proportion of persons of pure European descent was almost exactly reversed in the United States and Mexico. In the former, according to the census of 1820, about eighteen persons out of every hundred were wholly or partly of African blood, the rest of those enumerated being of unmixed European ancestry.[2] In Mexico, at the beginning of the century, it was estimated that only eighteen per cent of the population was pure European, while sixty per cent was pure Indian, and twenty-two per cent was part European and part Indian. It may well be doubted whether these estimates were accurate. The native population was notoriously averse to being counted, and Humboldt for this reason added one-sixth to the official figures in order to cover the deficiency; and besides, many persons who passed as white were in reality part Indian. Relatively few Spanish women came to Mexico, so that the children of the immigrants generally were the offspring of a union with an Indian woman, or at least a woman having some proportion of Indian blood. "Few of the middling class," says Ward "(the lawyers, the curas or parochial clergy, the artisans, the smaller landed proprietors, and the soldiers), could prove themselves exempt from it"; but at the same time purity of descent during the Spanish rule was considered so great a mark of superiority that at that time most people would be disposed to deny Indian descent.[3] But whatever the proportion of people of pure European

[1] Leroy-Beaulieu, *Colonisation chez les Peuples Modernes* (4th ed.), 7.
[2] The exact figures were: colored, 1,781,652; white, 7,856,539. This made the colored population 18.49 per cent of the whole. The proportion diminished slightly in the next ten years.
[3] Ward's *Mexico*, I, 20–25.



descent, it probably varied little during the first quarter of the nineteenth century; or, if anything, the percentage of white people diminished.[1]

The foreigner coming to Mexico from the United States or the West Indies was struck by the fact that there were almost no negroes. Poinsett, coming from South Carolina in 1822, on his first visit to Mexico, noted that the pure negro race was nearly extinct. He had seen not more than twenty negroes in six weeks' travel. The census of 1793 gave six thousand as the total number in the whole of Mexico, most of whom were near the seaport towns of Vera Cruz and Acapulco; but by 1825 the race, in the absence of importation, had probably become practically merged in the predominant Indian population. After two crosses with the Indians, all traces of negro blood seemed to disappear.[2]

The contrast in this regard with the United States was certainly striking. The number of negroes there in 1825 was about two millions, of whom less than three hundred thousand were free.[3] Negro slavery was one of the most conspicuous and disturbing elements in the United States. In Mexico it was practically unknown. Not, indeed, that it was prohibited by law, for in other Spanish colonies, such as Cuba, it had been considered essential; but economic conditions in New Spain never made African labor profitable, and the slave trade had been naturally diverted to Havana and Caracas. Nor did the independent government of Mexico think it necessary to abolish slavery. The Constitution of 1824 was silent on the subject, and the constituent Congress contented itself with passing a law prohibiting the slave trade.[4]

[1] Romero's *Mexico*, 76; Alaman, *Historia de Méjico*, I, 21.
[2] Poinsett, *Notes on Mexico*, 141; Humboldt, *Essai Politique*, I, 130; Ward, *Mexico*, II, 101. But see Thompson, *Recollections of Mexico*, 188, who thinks that there were few mulattoes or zambos in the country, and considers these types remarkably distinct.
[3] The census figures were as follows: In 1820 there were 1,531,436 slaves and 233,396 free persons of color. In 1830 there were 2,009,043 slaves and 319,599 free persons of color.
[4] Dublan y Lozano, I, 710, Decree of July 13, 1824. Hidalgo, by a decree dated Dec. 6, 1810, had required all masters to free their slaves within ten days, under penalty of death; but no one paid any attention to this edict.

The fact was, of course, that the Spanish conquerors had found Mexico well populated by a docile race, of whom they readily made competent workmen. The Indians were good agricultural laborers and soon learned to be quite exceptional herdsmen. As mining was developed, they became miners of a sort. And in general it may be said that without serious exceptions, the Mexican Indians, either pure-blooded or mixed with some small infusion of African or European blood, were the laboring men of the country. In the cities and in some country districts there were white men working for daily wages, but they were relatively few in number.[1]

"These Indians," wrote an American traveller in 1822, "are much darker than those of our borders, their hair is straight and glossy, the lips rather thick, the nose small and the eyes inclining upward like those of the Chinese and Mongols. Their bodies are stout and their limbs nervous. They are not generally tall, but are strong and active. According to our notions of beauty, they are not a well-favored race."[2]

Their intellectual and moral qualities were the subjects of long and eager discussion. The Spanish conquerors, who found a profit in utilizing their labor, considered them as a grossly inferior race and accused them of the most disgusting vices. The clergy, on the other hand, lauded their intelligence and goodness, and appealed to the home government to protect them. Of the seven deadly sins, wrote Archbishop Palafox, there were five of which the Indians were rarely guilty, namely, avarice, pride, anger, ambition, and envy. As for idleness, their masters saw to it that they were cured of that sin. And as for lust, it was only the result of drink, and their self-indulgence extended to drink alone, for they were not gluttons, being very sparing in food. And so, the worthy archbishop concluded, it may be said that out of

[1] The paternal Spanish government was always afraid that the Indians would be ill-treated and corrupted by the whites, and it tried to keep them distinct. It was very early provided that they must inhabit separate villages from which Spaniards and negroes were to be excluded.—(*Recopilación de Indias*, leyes 21–24, tit. 3, lib. 6.) These provisions were, of course, unavailing.

[2] Poinsett, *Notes on Mexico*, 80.



these deadly sins the Indians fall into half a one only, while the rest of us are so much afflicted by all seven.[1]

The native population was indeed singularly abstemious in respect to eating. The banana, raw or fried, was the one great resource wherever it grew. In all parts of the country *tortillas*, a kind of corn-cakes or flapjacks, were a perpetual reliance; and *frijoles*, or stewed beans, were nearly as common. Meat, when eaten at all, was generally stewed with formidable quantities of chili—for pepper was as necessary to the Mexicans as salt. A very admired dish was the *puchero*, a compound of all sorts of meat and vegetables consisting, as one disgusted American declared, "of about as many different things as were contained in the sheet which St. Peter, with less reason than we had, thought unclean." [2]

The most notable defect of the Mexican Indians was their love of strong drink. They were also indolent and untrustworthy, and they did not always exhibit a lively sense of the respect which is due to other people's property. They were naturally of a gentle disposition and crimes of violence were rare among them.

"To the honor of the Indian race," says a Mexican author, "and for the good fortune of the country, it may be affirmed that no other race in the world has been more provoked to wrong-doing by speech and by example, and more removed from well-doing by ignorance, oppression and poverty, and that nevertheless has committed fewer crimes."[3]

But back of the apparent apathy of the Indians there was a steadily burning flame of hatred to the Spaniard, and it was this feeling which, in large measure, brought together the ragged multitudes that followed Hidalgo to kill and plunder the whites.

With these dispositions it was natural that the Indians

[1] "*Parece que puede decirse que de siete vicios, cabezas de todos los demás, solo incurren en el medio vicio, cuanto á los demás tanto nos afligen todos siete.*"—*Don Juan de Palafox y Mendoza*, 255 (García, *Documentos Inéditos*, VII).

[2] Thompson, *Recollections of Mexico*, 143.

[3] Portilla, *España en México*, 91–98, where the subject of the character of the Mexican Indians is discussed at length.

should live from hand to mouth in a condition of abject poverty. They showed no desire to accumulate property or to better their condition by emigration. In the larger towns, as well as in the country, their condition was indeed deplorable. Thus Humboldt draws a gloomy picture of a visit to the woollen factories of Querétaro, where Indian and half-caste workmen were exclusively employed. He was disagreeably impressed, not only by the extreme imperfection of the technical methods used, but more particularly by the unsanitary conditions of the buildings and the ill-treatment to which the workmen were exposed. Convicts were farmed out and set to work side by side with freemen. All were half-naked, thin, and haggard. The factories were like gloomy prisons, the doors of which were constantly kept closed, for the men were not allowed to leave the buildings. Those who were married could only visit their families on Sunday. All were liable to be pitilessly beaten if they were guilty of the least breach of discipline.

"It is hard to understand," he adds, "how the owners of the factories can act thus toward free men; how the Indian workman can suffer the same treatment as the convict. The fact is that the rights asserted by the owners are acquired by fraud. The manufacturers of Querétaro employ the same device that is used in some of the cotton factories of Quito and in those farms where, for want of slaves, labor is very scarce. Those natives are selected who are the very poorest, but who have some capacity for work. A small sum of money is advanced to them. The Indian, who loves to get drunk, spends his advance in the course of a few days. Having become indebted to his master he is locked up in the factory under pretence of paying off his debt by the work of his hands. He is allowed for wages only a real and a half, or twenty cents, a day; but instead of paying him in cash, care is taken to supply him with food, spirits and clothing, on the price of which the manufacturer makes fifty or sixty per cent. The hardest working laborer, by this means, remains constantly in debt, and his masters exercise the same rights over him that are supposed to be acquired over a purchased slave."[1]

This was the notorious system of peonage, a system which lingered in many places long after Mexican independence

[1] Humboldt, *Essai Politique*, II, 667–668.



had been achieved. Under it the Indians were in many places nothing but serfs attached to the soil.[1]

Legally, the Indians were placed by the Spanish government in substantially the same category as minor children, and in many ways the law endeavored to protect them from the consequences of their own acts. After independence they were men before the law, but mentally and morally they remained children.

The life of great cities was disastrous to the Indians, and those in the city of Mexico were much more degraded and drunken than anywhere else in the country.[2] They formed indeed the whole of a distinct and most unprepossessing class of beggars and vagabonds. Not even in Naples were there such swarms of idlers. It was believed that in the city of Mexico, out of about one hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants, there were no less than twenty thousand who had no permanent place of abode and no ostensible means of gaining a livelihood.[3]

These people were locally known as *léperos*—lepers or outcasts. Their existence was due to a variety of causes. The Indians and half-breeds, of whom they were composed, hated work and had the simplest needs. They ate little meat and wore few clothes.[4] Begging was encouraged by a strong religious feeling that the sight of poverty and the giving of alms were good for the soul's health; and accordingly the convents indiscriminately succored those who crowded around their doors, the churches allowed privileged beggars to occupy year by year their regular seats at the church doors, and the exhibition of all sorts of disgusting deformities was permitted in the streets in order to stimulate the zeal of the charitable.[5]

[1] American slave-holders thought the Mexican proprietors merciless to the peons, attributing this to the fact that they had no property interest in the men themselves or their families.—(Mayer, *Mexico as It Was*, 202; Thompson, *Recollections of Mexico*, 7.)

[2] Beltrami, *Le Mexique*, II, 263.

[3] Poinsett, *Mexico*, 49, 73; Ward, *Mexico*, II, 50–52; Mayer, *Mexico as It Was*, 41, 55.

[4] Their nakedness was more covered when foreign trade made clothing cheaper, after 1825.—(Ward, *Mexico*, I, 17.)

[5] The official recognition and encouragement of mendicity was distinctly Spanish. "*La mendicité avait pris en Espagne le caractère d'une véritable institu-*

In the country districts the Indians lived in the rudest huts, and even the better class of houses in the great haciendas and in the villages were of a very simple construction. The only really substantial buildings usually found were churches and convents. But in the principal cities, amid many flimsy buildings, stood great houses of the rich Mexicans, built of stone in the Andalusian style, round a *patio* or court-yard. They were generally of not more than two stories, but as the ceilings were eighteen or twenty feet high the façades were not disproportionately low. There was but a single door to the court-yard, and about it were grouped, on the ground floor, the porter's lodge, the stable, kitchen, and other household offices. It was not uncommon to have the front on the street used for shops. Stairs from the *patio*, open to the weather, led up to the family quarters, which were connected by covered galleries that ran round the inner walls, and were often filled with shrubs and flowers. The flat, paved roof, or *azotea*, served the purposes of a veranda, and its heavy stone parapets were just of a height to be convenient for street-fighting.

Nowhere in the world were there greater contrasts of wealth and poverty than in Mexico. In the United States, in 1825, wealth was not accumulated in one place or in a few hands, but was diffused over the whole community. In Mexico, on the other hand, a few owners of mines and ranches, and a few rich dignitaries of the church visibly enjoyed nearly all the wealth of the nation.

Almost the only well-to-do people were to be found in the cities, for life in the haciendas was, as a rule, too lonely and sometimes too dangerous for any one who could afford to live elsewhere. The city of Mexico, as the seat of the old viceregal court, was the social as well as the political centre, the other towns being but pale provincial copies of the capital.

Social life in the capital was a well-regulated and simple affair. At five in the afternoon the whole fashionable world turned out in the Alameda, the women in the great painted

*tion nationale."*—(Desdevizes du Dezert, *L'Espagne de l'Ancien Régime*, I, 246.) As to the efforts to suppress it in Spain, see Rousseau, *Règne de Charles III*, II, 279–283.



Spanish coaches which were just beginning to be exchanged for smart London or Paris carriages, now become attainable, the men on horseback, dressed in gaudily embroidered jackets and equipped with amazing spurs and bridles and saddles of the most showy and expensive kind. In the evening everybody went to the theatre. The single men had their stalls, families their boxes. Pretty much the whole house smoked through the performance—the men and the women, the pit and the boxes.

The theatre was the general meeting-place of society, for dinners and dances were rare, and the evening parties (*tertulias*) can hardly have been gay. Unmarried young ladies were not expected to speak to young men; but they could dance, while their elders generally played cards. The pleasantest entertainments were *al-fresco* dances in the suburbs. There were also masked balls two or three times a year in the theatres, but it was not thought very proper to be seen there.

Marriages, as a matter of course, were arranged by the parents, and often a bride hardly knew her husband by sight when they stood before the altar. Yet such marriages generally turned out well. Family relations were close and affectionate, and the women for the most part found their happiness in their households and their children. It was not considered at all necessary that they should be well educated.

> "Generally speaking," said an acute observer, "the Mexican Señoras and Señoritas write, read and play a little, sew, and take care of their houses and children. When I say they read, I mean they know how to read; when I say they write, I do not mean that they can always spell; and when I say they play, I do not assert that they have generally a knowledge of music. If we compare their education with that of girls in England or in the United States, it is not a comparison, but a contrast." [1]

There was great outward decorum in the relations of the sexes, and, whatever might be suspected, it was always difficult to perceive any evidence of wrong-doing.[2]

[1] Calderon, *Life in Mexico*, 179. The author, Madame Calderon de la Barca, was a Miss Inglis, of New York.

[2] *Ibid.*, 181.

The Mexican ladies dressed for great occasions with lavish splendor, and made a great display of jewels. The possession of diamonds or pearls was, however, no proof of great wealth, for precious stones were regarded as a safe and convenient form of investment in which a man's fortune might be locked up.

There were then, of course, no clubs, in the English sense of the word. Men met and heard the news and talked politics in cafés. The nearest approach to a social or political organization was to be found in the Masonic lodges, which had been successfully established near the very beginning of independence. The fundamental principle of that order—the fraternity of all men—and the apparent indifference of its members to theological beliefs had always arrayed the Roman Catholic Church against it, and indeed against all secret societies. *Damnantur clandestinae societates*, were the words of an infallible Pope;[1] and so long as ecclesiastical authority was in full vigor in New Spain Freemasons were not tolerated in the kingdom. But when Mexican delegates sat in the Spanish Cortes under the Constitution of 1812, some of them were initiated under the ancient Scottish rite, so that in 1820 and afterward Masonic lodges were established in Mexico, and came to be exceedingly influential bodies.

As in all Spanish tropical possessions, cock-fighting was the most popular of amusements. Bull-fighting, in the true Spanish sense of the word, had not yet found a place in Mexico, for though the bull might be lanced by picadors and stabbed by banderilleros, his horns were blunted and often he was not killed. In the country districts the *rancheros* amused themselves by exhibitions of their skill in roping and throwing and riding wild cattle. Even in the bull-ring these feats were performed, to the horror, one may imagine, of the Spaniard educated in the classic school of tauromachy.[2]

[1] Pius IX, in 1864, in the bull *Quanta cura*.
[2] A ludicrous account of a Mexican bull-fight as performed at Monclova will be found in the *Life of Benjamin Lundy*, 71–73.



Outside the cities, and wherever water could be found, bathing was a frequent amusement. The traveller as he rode along found groups of both sexes bathing in rivers, lakes, tanks, or fountains, and generally, as British observers thought, with very few scruples as to publicity.[1] The Indians in many parts also made use of a rude steam bath called the *temezcalli*,[2] which was not unlike that used by the Sioux.

Gambling was universal.[3] Beggars gambled in the streets, coachmen and footmen at the doors of the theatres while waiting for their masters. There were said to be hundreds of small gambling-houses in the metropolis, always open. In accordance with a long-standing tradition the feast of Whitsunday was always celebrated at the village of San Agustin de las Cuevas, a suburb of the city of Mexico, by the opening of public tables for a period of three days. The most respectable people were to be seen there, and the crowd was mostly well dressed, although there were tables where the stakes were in coppers, while at others the lowest bet permitted was a gold ounce.

All the institutions of New Spain had naturally and necessarily been derived from the mother country, as those of the United States had been derived from England; but New Spain was a much older country than the British colonies. Within fifty years after the first discoveries of Columbus the Spanish King had established in his colonies a complete administrative, economic, and religious system. Great cities, well planned, with solid buildings in the grave and serious character of Spanish sixteenth-century architecture—forts, aqueducts, palaces, theatres, cathedrals, convents, and hospitals—existed in the Spanish colonies before the huts of Jamestown and Plymouth had been raised by the ill-equipped and undisciplined English settlers. Empires had been created and laws had been established by the paternal government of Spain before English

[1] Lyon, *Mexico*, I, 318. [2] Calderon, *Life in Mexico*, 134.
[3] As it was in Spain in the eighteenth century.—(Desdevizes du Dezert, I, 243.)