

table Italian, who had followed the fortunes of the empire, and remained in the service, but seemed ashamed of the drivelling manner the department was managed, that a sample of every separate bale was sent by post to Paris in letters, in order to have the value and duty assigned in the offices there. The operations now, however, are carried on chiefly upon a grand scale, in a manner beyond the power of government to check or controul, but by an entire change of system.

The French have possession of the chief foreign trade in the free provinces of the north, and of course, by contraband, command a great deal of inland consumption in the interior districts.

The principal depot of this commerce is Bayonne, which was made free, for the purpose of commanding the trade on the north coast. On the coast of Catalonia and Valencia, considerable contraband trade is carried on from Marseilles. They had an extensive command openly, of the markets in Catalonia during the occupation, but that has now almost ceased, owing to the misery of the country. The soldiers were employed in the fortified places, and, I have heard, even paid for conniving at and assisting the introduction of goods, whilst on their posts. The English direct trade is very small, as in fact nearly every thing is prohibited, but a prodigious quantity of goods find their way into the southern provinces, by means of Gibraltar, and Cadiz.

The merchants themselves have nothing to do with these enterprises, but simply dispose of their goods to dealers and others, who undertake the final disposal of them. A large quantity of English goods is also transmitted from Portugal, the frontier of which cannot be effectually watched.

The mode of conducting commerce practised by these two great nations, is diametrically opposite.

The English merchants deal wholesale, and disdain the petty trade sought after with such avidity by their rivals. Whilst you seldom meet an English commercial traveller, except on a large scale, the country where the French have access, is overrun by numbers of traders, with the smallest possible means. In many instances, one of these persons is deputed by several houses, who are not rich enough to employ an agent singly. To this description of people, the selling any portion of their goods is an object, and they weary their customers with importunities. This is an epitome of the whole French commerce, which, with a small exception, is carried on upon similar principles. The object is to avoid the contingent possibility of a small loss, rather than the bold gain which is the object of the British capitalist. The commerce of France which is next in amount to that of England, is an organisation of minute particles, a vast collection of hucksters and pedlars, with few merchants, in the extended sense of the term, excepting some foreigners and capitalists in the great towns.

The magnificent navy of Spain being now extinct, the government has resorted to the plan of *impresa* or job of *guarda-costas*, which are a speculation of various individuals, but chiefly of Riera, the great farmer of taxes, etc., at Madrid. These vessels are mostly schooners and brigs, and are good models, and of decent exterior, affecting the style of men of war. Their habits are, however, little less than piratical, and they are the scourge of the lawful trader, whilst the contraband is carried on without intermission

under their guns. To this association is confided the prevention of unlawful trade, on the vast extent of the Spanish coast.

By the singular and infelicitous combinations of affairs in this country, the powerful individual who is head of the management of the revenue, is doubly interested in maintaining the disastrous state of commerce here sketched. By the farming, his interest is to uphold the high duties, whilst, in order to gain by the *guarda costas*, the more tyrannic and unjust the law of customs, the greater is the inducement to contraband, and the greater the contingent probability of seizures. He has only to enter on the speculations of roads, to employ the men sentenced in consequence of his own acts, to render complete this new system of political economy.

The smuggling proceedings are now chiefly conducted on a great scale. Files of mules set out from certain places, laden with prohibited goods. It is unnecessary to particularise the channels, which exist with the perfect knowledge and connivance of the people in office, of every rank, from the lowest *guarda* on the beach, to the foot of the throne. By practices universally tolerated, some of these transactions are managed to a very large extent.

I was in a city a few months after the establishment of the *derechos de puertas*, whilst the machinery was new, and might have been supposed to work with at least temporary vigour. In three nights, four hundred *cargas* or mule loads arrived, and were safely housed. When it was nearly finished, the chief manager had information that all was not right. He rose at an early hour, and repaired to one of the gates, when he met a whole guard of his men marching in regular order with

their *capas*, and an officer at their head. On causing them to uncase, he found the whole of their bodies swathed with contraband goods. It is difficult to say where a remedy is to be found for corruption like this. These men were serving, understanding they were to be paid according to their good conduct to their employers. The fact is, from time immemorial, owing to the miserable pay given to the people employed, and the example set by every rank, and almost every individual, corruption may be said to be universal. The pay of subordinate officers, on whom a great deal depends, is a *pese'a* per day, about tenpence halfpenny. It is impossible to suppose men thus situated, can be faithful, and resist temptation. One of the many strange perversions of character to be found in this singular country, is in the management of these proceedings.

They are frequently on so large a scale, that a great number of people must necessarily be concerned, who live in the expectation, that they will finally share their proportion in the division of the bonus paid. There is no instance of their betraying those with whom they are connected, which they would think a dishonour, whilst they violate their public duty without scruple. Thus the principle of fidelity which is so deeply characteristic of the people, is inverted and acts against those, to whom, if they followed a better system, it would be equally applied. The smugglers who frequent the Portuguese frontier, are chiefly *Manchegos*, and may be seen in bands of two hundred, on horseback, armed and capable of resisting any force they may meet with. Their habits during these long marches are quite orderly, their horses excellent, and they are courteous to the strangers they may meet with. I was informed that since

the farming of the duties, at the instance of Riera, who is in fact dictator in every thing relating to his interests, the government have taken away the horses of the inhabitants of a valley, celebrated as the scene of some of these transactions, thus depriving the people of the means of obtaining their livelihood, by a mode so tyrannical, as never to have been practised in any period of the history of Spain.



JUNTA DE ANDALUCÍA

P.C. Monumental de la Alhambra y Generalife
CONSEJERÍA DE CULTURA

CHAPTER XVII.

Finance.

It is impossible to give any idea of the financial situation of Spain at present, as no certain data exist, and no one, scarcely those in the treasury, are acquainted with the real state of it. There is an accumulation of debt, for a long period back, which every successive change has added to, without diminishing the smallest particle, and the late government most materially increased it, by calling in the French, whose expences are as yet unpaid, and by refusing to acknowledge the loans of the cortes, which placed them in the impossibility of receiving foreign aid, to reestablish the Spanish finances. A system has been commenced, however, and is following up with patient zeal, for cleansing the Augean stable, and they are now likely to know in a few years, what is the real debt, and consequently their ability to pay the interest, and in pursuance of this plan, they are gradually consolidating the unfunded debt, which is the most uncertain portion of the whole. I have been informed that the labour of investigating accounts and claims in such a condition as those of Spain now are, is quite incredible.

A curious state of things arose from the situation of

finances, after the last invasion. By processes I have often heard explained, but could never perfectly comprehend, except in their result, it appears that for a long time after the invasion, the gold which had disappeared in France, was actually lying in chests at Madrid, where it was useless, never having been put in circulation. It was still there when I entered Spain in 1829, and the Napoleons were paid, at Bordeaux, six and seven *sous* each above their real value. No progress can possibly be made in the internal economy of Spain, until steps are taken to regulate the interest of money, and give facilities for transacting business, in making payments, and in raising private loans, when indispensable. The bank at present appears to be on a solid foundation, but it is in the region of convulsions, which have ruined every similar establishment. The concentration of the different branches of revenue, which have been hitherto under different departments, managed independently by their own head, each being subject to any sudden call from the head of the government, without inquiry into the possibility of his demands being complied with, has been effected lately, after considerable opposition, and the minister of finance now directs the whole expenditure. This, and the gradual abolition of monopolies, and exclusive privileges, and the substituting contracts for the ruinous system of working by government itself, are solid benefits, which Spain owes to the late administration. The net revenue of Spain, according to the best accounts I could collect, may amount to six millions sterling; but there are no data for correct affirmation of it. This sum, which is collected with great difficulty, and at a rate ruinous to a large portion of the population, might be paid with

ease, by any one of the larger provinces, were the country in the state it ought to be. The cost of collection, I have generally heard from the best authorities, amounts to seventy per cent, but the loss by fraud, and connivance at abuses, cannot be estimated. The principal heads are, the customs, the *derecho de puertas*, monopolies of salt and tobacco, the land tax, under various denominations, the subsidy paid by the free provinces, and the contribution paid by the clergy, who contribute one fourth of the whole taxes of the kingdom, as is mentioned under the respective head. It is impossible to know what quantity of foreign goods is consumed, owing to the fraudulent introduction which supplies the greater part of the demand of several provinces. Regular budgets are now published, a quite recent practice, but it is, from the want of check, next to useless labour. According to that of 1832 the value of imports was twenty six millions of reals, about two hundred and seventy thousand pounds. Of exports about one hundred and fifty five millions. The latter is certainly the nearest the truth, as the contraband is less. These sums include the returns of the Balearic Islands. The system they are now pursuing, goes rapidly to decrease these miserable proceeds from the richest country, naturally, in Europe. The tobacco, which is almost an article of necessity, but of which the use is decreasing, owing to the system followed, is taxed at forty eight to one, that is, the tobacco which can be purchased at Gibraltar for one real, must be paid by the Spanish peasant, if he obey the law and go to the *estanco*, forty eight reals; the consequence is obvious. I visited the magnificent building commenced for the custom house of Malaga, before the French revolution,

which was lately finished, and ordered to be fitted as a tobacco manufactory. They had been at work for two years. The cigars were accumulated to the amount of several millions, and they had sold two or three boxes only. Any of the wastes of lower Andalusia would produce tobacco of excellent quality, and probably more than sufficient for the consumption of all Spain, whilst they pay a large sum for the miserable refuse of a country, with which they have scarcely any other connexion, and the people are deprived of a necessary of life, and demoralized by smuggling, or occasionally sent to pass their lives *in presidio*, for thwarting this wretched system. I believe inquiries have lately been made, as to the practicability of growing tobacco on the banks of the Guadalquivir, in the plain above Seville, which there is no doubt is practicable, but very probably the *vega* of Malaga, or some of the country near Gibraltar, or some parts of Catalonia, which are the soil of the red sandstone, might be better suited to its cultivation. The ground also across the river, and in the Sierra Morena, is the finest possible, and superior to the alluvial deposits of the vale of the "Great River." In Estremadura are vast quantities of the finest land, and Aragon, and many parts of the Castiles appear equally suited to it. The greatest loss probably of the whole of the neglected branches of agriculture, is that of the mulberry. It is almost confined to Valencia, Catalonia, Murcia, and a part of Granada. A small quantity is also grown in Aragon, where I understood the fine Chinese silk worm had been tried with perfect success. On no subject is there more prejudice than in this, and the government seems borne away by the torrent; the usual decrees not being published, and the subject being apparently, out of the routine of the

offices. The whole of Estremadura, of upper and lower Andalusia, of lower Navarre, and of lower Aragon, and the interior of the Sierra Morena, are admirably suited to the culture of trees which would be a mine of wealth, if attended to. There are peculiarities in the climate; the remarkable equability and steadiness of it, after the vernal rains have passed, are only counterbalanced by the parching drought, which in all these districts, dries and withers up the vegetation. This makes it indispensable to have water to enable the tree to recover, and reproduce its leaves, as it would otherwise perish. From the effects of habit, more than from any other cause, there is a reluctance to engage in enterprises which afford only a moderate profit. This requires the attention of government, so powerfully is it rooted in society. Of course it is fatal to agriculture, which at present gives only a slow return.

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The system of letting land varies very much. In many parts the lands are regularly let, by money rent. In general, however, the destructive and improvident mode of management by agents is the practice. In others the *metairie* or dividing system, the parties sharing the produce, as in Tuscany, might be found. In very many places, the peasantry are masters of the soil, and pay very little rent. In a portion of the vast possessions of Medina Celi, which came under my observation, one ninth only of the value of the rental was paid to the landlord, the rest being consumed in taxes and other expences. With this proportion, and the paying exorbitant interest when money is required, it is impossible the proprietors

can be otherwise than poor. Agriculture is, in most parts, in the rudest state.

The spring corn is generally thrown on the ground, which has not been touched, and has all the winterweeds remaining in it. It is then scratched in with a miserable plough, and left to nature. The dryness of the climate causes this to be a trifling evil, for the heat sets in, the corn ripens, and the weeds perish together.

It is not uncommon in the south, to see men returning from plough, seated on a mule, or even on an ass, with their whole apparatus tied on by their sides. Every thing is in the same proportion. If you ask them why they do not improve, the answer would be, who is to pay the expense? We have already more corn than we can sell or consume, and we follow the plan of our ancestors. We should pause before condemning this reasoning when we see in England, four horses and a bullock, dragging one plough, yoked in a line, and four magnificent horses to a wheel plough as in Hampshire, where they can only plead in part the same excuse. The oriental scriptural practice of ploughing with many yoke together, is very much practised in Andalusia, where I have counted the number of twelve, as in the calling of Eleazar.

There are three great state jobbers or public undertakers, who are indispensable in the present state of insecurity of property, and the difficulty of prevailing on individuals to enter into speculations, or produce funds to execute public works. The public treasurer Remisa, is one, whose operations are on the smallest scale, being chiefly confined to roads, and to some affairs in mines. The greatest is Riera, a Catalan of obscure history, whose means appear gigantic, although it is probable, like every one connected with government, in this country, his final ruin

will be the result. It is next to impossible to escape the meshes, in which every one who deals in public contracts, is enveloped. Besides the *derecho de puertas*, described under the head of revenue, he farms the royal arsenals, the government having wisely given up the management of these expensive establishments, and consigned the trifling work now necessary, to contract. He has a large share in the *impresa* of the *guarda costas*, of which it is doubtful, if in the end, it pay the expense; and he has speculations in lands, etc. Aguado, the court banker, who resides at Paris, is returning a part of the enormous fortune he has made in a few years, by outwitting the French stockbrokers, and by successful management in the intricate paths of speculation in loans, and other financial operations, in a mode which will probably cause his name to be remembered, when the impure origin of his fortune is forgotten. He has undertaken to complete the canal of Castile, or, as it ought to be called, of old Castile, which the government could never have effected in these times, on conditions which appear fair and equitable. The canal is to be finished in seven years, of which two are expired, the contractor and his posterity enjoying a fixed rate of toll for eighty years. The work is principally done by *presidarios*, or convicts, of which the present state of law in Spain affords an ample supply. These are furnished by government, but the expenses, under certain regulations of diet, etc., are paid by the contractors. The canal commences near Reynosa, in the montaña de Santander, fifteen leagues distant from the port of the same name, to which there is a project of making a rail way of communication. From thence it passes by Palencia to Valladolid, and then, by two branches, to Rio Seco, and Prados de Alburnes. The

whole will be about seventy miles in length, the branches included; a small distance in the plains of Castile, but of vast importance, as the commencement of a system, which may be increased to the improvement of those unproductive wastes. Beside this great enterprise, are those of draining marshes in lower Andalusia, another plan of great utility, and certain profit, in which both Aguado and Riera are concerned.

Mode of collecting the Revenue.

The ordinary collection of the revenue, is vested in the *intendentes*, who have appointments at will, of provinces varying in size and importance, but it is generally understood that, unless in cases of misconduct, the duration is for five years. Their powers are very great, and their office can scarcely, in the present state of Spain, be performed, without giving dissatisfaction, and creating discontent.

This class of functionaries are almost invariably men of low origin, very many of them having been originally escribanos. They rise gradually, their interest increasing in the ratio of their wealth and their success in management; that is, of their robbery. The maritime districts are the most sought after, owing to the enormous gains which result from the favouring contraband dealings.

Their functions are nominally independent of the Captain general, or chief military authority, but, for various reasons, they are sometimes at variance, sometimes yielding to, or acting in concert, whilst at times they beard him with impunity.

Besides the intendente, there is a treasurer or receiver

general of the province. These two functionaries are naturally in close contact, and in general have an understanding together; but it sometimes happens that the integrity of one is a check in the rapacity of the other. The office of military paymaster was formerly sometimes united with the chief executive authority, but of late it has been wisely separated, and now merges in the intendencia.

As in every other department, the jealousy of authorities so nearly balanced, is a constant source of prejudice to the public service. The most arduous part of their duty is to enforce the payment of arrears of taxes, which is a matter of extreme difficulty in a country where universal distress and inability to pay exist, where the people are naturally slow, and skilled by long practice in procrastination and evasion, where the fiscal is considered a common enemy, and every one is ready to assist his neighbour in eluding and defeating the claims of it. In some parts it is customary for the people, in order to avoid personal litigation and oppression, to agree with the intendentes for a certain sum, which is then levied amongst themselves, and paid in the mass. These districts are termed *Encabezados*. When the arrears are not paid, an expensive process is carried on against the district, in the manner of an exchequer suit, and the whole community are frequently involved in difficulty, or probably ruined. It is still worse when individuals are singled out in these places, which have not made the contract. In these cases, after the preliminary forms have been gone through, a posse of the scum and offal of the human race issue forth, like the destroying angel, or the simoom of the desert, blasting and withering every

thing they touch. They seize on the unhappy victim, sell his furniture, his oxen, or his mules, the only capital he possesses. The product is consumed in the expences, and in feeding these harpies; the state gains nothing, and a valuable subject is reduced to utter and irretrievable ruin, and is either forced to emigrate from his native place, or probably, if he be of a bold and active turn, to join a band of robbers. Where matters are not carried to this extremity, the evils are very great by processes, which fall on the richer inhabitants, or those who occupy the better houses, which are rated by classes. Many of them are obliged to retire into smaller, or leave the place. Thus the burdens are increased of those who remain, and struggle to maintain their rank amongst their neighbours, as no abatement or reduction is ever made, and the demands are enforced, until the whole village is reduced to beggary, and gradually disappears. Financial troubles are aggravated by the difficulty, next to impossibility, of raising money, but on terms ruinous to the borrower.

These causes are in silent but ceaseless operation over most parts of Spain, and are yearly abstracting valuable capital from the common stock, and adding *despoblados* to the vast tracts which already fall under that denomination, many of which, a few generations ago, were flourishing and populous, and full of towns and villages. These evils are augmented by the character of the people, who submit to misfortune with most enduring patience, not stupid apathy or indifference, nor the mode common in some countries, of distorting the view, and believing misfortunes to be advantages, but from the operation of what is termed in France, *heureuse organisation*, a buoyant cheerfulness

and elasticity of mind, possessed in an equal degree by no other.

If the occurrence of such things were mentioned at Madrid, they would plead necessity, the "sturdy adversary," as the French republicans defended the issue of their assignats and other acts. They would ask the inquirer, how the revenue was to be raised? who was to pay the army and the charges of the state? How were you to deal with regular combinations to resist, under every pretext, the payment of the fiscal, who was considered, by general consent, a common enemy? They might probably add, in the official phrase when the worst decrees are promulgated, that the *paterno corazon del Re seria conmovido*, at the recital of such distresses, but where was the remedy? They might produce the instructions to the intendentes and other authorities, who are enjoined, in the most eloquent language, to temper justice with mercy, to be kind, patient and charitable to the people, and ask how it were possible such things should pass, under a system, where, certainly every virtue is ordered to be exercised by the functionaries.

The charges on the land are so high in most parts, that it is quite incredible how the *labradores*, or cultivators can exist at all. There are the tithes, from which very few parts are exempt. The *voto de Santiago* which is a rate levied on each plough before it is put into the ground. This tax is paid to the chapter of Santiago, in grateful recollection of the services performed by the saint, who appeared on a white horse at the battle of Clavijo, and assisted in destroying the Moors, in the manner of Castor and Pollux at the lake Regillus. This tax is confined to the provinces, then in possession of the infidels, and the possessors of lands are thus doomed

to pay for the misfortunes of their ancestors, although many of them aided in the expulsion of the Mahometans. In some parts, there are manorial rights on the produce of the soil, like the old customs of mills in England, and other charges and obligations of the same sort. There are the ordinary and extraordinary land taxes paid to government, which are enormously heavy, and were considered ruinous, but have lately been increased, to pay for the *joyeuse entrée* of the duke d'Angoulême. The province of the kingdom of Aragon has always paid a heavy general land tax, under the name of *cadastro*, which was considered a full equivalent to the charges on the lands in other parts of Spain, under different denominations, and even to bear heavier than in most of them. A demand was lately made of the general rates of Castile, in addition to the old tax, not a particle of which was proposed to be remitted. When I was at Zaragoza, the proprietors were opposing this iniquitous imposition on lands of which the produce was almost unsaleable, and the owners in a state of ruin, but with very little chance of success. When the corn is trodden out, which is done immediately after it is gathered, the Franciscans, and other mendicant friars appear with humble, supplicating looks and kind words, and as they often perform the real work of the upper ranks of the hierarchy, and are generally popular among the distributors, they are seldom refused a share, especially if it be a good year. Next comes the sending to market, often at great distances, on roads only practicable for mules; the *derechode puertas*; the dues of the *alhondiga*, or corn market; a forced right of metage; the whole crowned by ruinously low prices, and uncertain demand, which in some provinces causes it to be a problem,

whether a good crop or a bad one be the greater evil, and that the people are starving in the midst of abundance. In some parts they have to pay what is called *primicias*, consisting of the entire produce of the first year on lands newly brought into cultivation, a fatal impediment to the improvement of the soil in parts where it is most required. In addition to these charges are those of cultivation, the wages being high, in a country where hands are scarce, and the men who raise the crop have often to travel great distances to arrive at the scene of their operations. A statute of limitation to the claims of the treasury is very much wanted. There are processes at law going on, at a cost ruinous to the parties, to recover the amount of taxes claimed as arrears unpaid, at the time the lands were actually in possession of the French during the war of independence, and subject to the exactions of war and military execution; the parties in many instances being long since dead, or the property having passed into other hands. A decree came out in 1832 on this subject, in answer to some new quibbles raised by the *escribanos*, expressing with the utmost *naiveté* the king's surprise that any further objection should be made to pay claims so evidently just and reasonable, admitting however that proofs of requisitions made, and assistance afforded to his allies, during that period, should be considered equivalent. The villages which consist entirely or chiefly of *labradores*, mentioned before; and whose consumption of articles furnishing direct revenue, is so small that it amounts to little or nothing, are occasionally subject to a peculiar mode of contribution. A calculation is made of the quantity of tobacco and salt (the principal exciseable articles), which they *ought* to consume. These are transmitted to them,

without being required or demanded, and are placed under the charge of the *alcalde*, who is made responsible for the amount. The people are forced, from want of means of paying, to do without, or obtain supplies from contraband dealers at a cheaper rate. There is consequently no sale, and the officer at the stated time being called on for payment; is frequently ruined by the sums thus exacted from him. Amongst the extra charges on the rural communes, in some parts there are a set of vermin, who live by performing peregrinations with proclamations, issued at intervals, in the manner of ours against vice and profaneñess. The proclamations are against theatres and other amusements, and are carried about by these heralds, to places where a theatre was never heard of. They are paid very heavily for their work by the people whose morals they are intrusted with the care of preserving.

Amongst the extraordinary modes of raising revenue is one, which is happily rare, and is illegal, but it has been in practice very lately in a province, where the people drew it on themselves by adhering to a worthless cause, which would leave little subject of regret, but that in such cases the guilty and innocent inevitably suffer together. The Captain general, or chief military commandant, makes a progress or tour of inspection to examine the condition of the provinces under his command. On arriving at certain places, he expresses dissatisfaction with their state. What is called a protest is drawn up against them. A sum is ordered to be paid forth with under pain of much worse consequences, and is summarily levied in the manner of a war contribution. The money thus raised is divided into three parts, one of which goes to the king, one to the levying officer, and the

remainder to pay the law expences, and feed the jackals and vultures who follow the camp, and assist in winding the prey. The province is thus successively cropped by a mode which is purely oriental, and seems the connecting link of administration between the governments of Europe with those of Asia and Africa.



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