LAMENT FOR MAY-DAY.

Weep, weep thou virgin Queen of May,
Sit down and weep with me;
Forgotten is thy festal day,
And lost thy name shall be.

Fling down, fling down thy flow'ry crown,
Thy sceptre cast away,
For ne'er again, in vale or plain,
They'll hail the queen of May.

No maiden now with glowing brow
Shall rise by early dawn,
And bind her hair with chaplets fair,
Torn from the blossom'd thorn.

No lark shall spring on dewy wing,
Thy matin hymn to pour;
No cuckoo's voice shall shout rejoice,
For thou art Queen no more.

Beneath thy flower-encircled wand,
No peasant trips in advance;
No more they lead with sportive thread,
The merry, merry dance.

The violet blooms with modest grace
Beneath her crest of leaves;
The primrose shows her pale face;
Her wreath the woodbine weaves.

The cowslip bends its golden head,
And daisies deck the lea;
But ah! no more in grove or bower
The Queen of May we'll see.

Weep, weep, then, virgin Queen of May,
Thy ancient reign is o'er;
Thy votaries all are lowly laid,
For thou art Queen no more.

MEXICO AND THE MEXICANS.

Recollections of Mexico.—By Waddy Thompson, Esq. late Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States at Mexico.—New York: Wiley & Putnam.

A work like this, coming from hands that may be well supposed capable of the task, and worthy to be considered as one of authority, would at any time be received with welcome in the Republic of Letters; but at this peculiar juncture when the amicable relations between the United States and Mexico are unhappily suspended and the two countries are placed in hostile array against each other, there is probably a more than usual curiosity to know anything new, to get any additional glimpse into the characters, manners, and social as well as political affairs of the Mexicans. Mr. Thompson's position as American Minister at Mexico at a very interesting period gave him many opportunities to learn much, and his apparent candour and fairness toward those whom he describes, will allow his readers to rely greatly on what he observes.

At this moment, however, the most interesting topic concerning them is, in all probability, their military character, their resources, their discipline, and their notions on the pending disturbances; and the author having touched these points rather as abstract questions than as probable foundations for immediate use in action, is less likely to be misled with his prejudices than if he were with an eye to present and speedy contention. We shall extract a passage from his book on these subjects.—

That which is in all respects the greatest nuisance, and the most insuperable barrier to the prosperity and progress of Mexico, is the army. They will tell you there that it amounts to forty thousand men; but they have never half that number. I have no doubt that the accounts at the Department of War exhibit nearly the number stated, but a large proportion of them are men of straw—fictitious names fraudently inserted for the benefit of the officers who pay them. They are paid every day, or rather, that is the law; but the pay is just as fictitious as the muster rolls.

They have more than two hundred generals, most of them without commands. Every officer who commands a regiment has the title of general, and is distinguished from generals who have no commands by the addition of "General effectivo." The rate of pay is not very different from that of our own army. Each officer and soldier, however, is his own commissary, no rations being issued; and they are well satisfied if they receive enough of this pay to procure the scanty rations, which was very rarely the case, except with Santa Anna's favorite troops, whom he always kept about his person, and this made it their interest to sustain him.—In one of the last conversations which I had with him, I told him that the army would remain faithful to him just so long as he could pay them, and no longer, and that I did not see how it was possible for him to pay them much longer.

The result proved the truth of both predictions, and that I have no doubt, was the cause of the revolution which overthrew him. It was not alone with the French *sans culottes* that "la liberte et la peine" is a cry of fearful potency. Shortly before I left Mexico, an officer in the army came to the city and settled his accounts with the War Department, and received a certificate that twenty-five hundred dollars were due him; after hawking it about among the brokers, he sold the claim for a hundred and twenty-five dollars, which was five cents on the dollar.

They say they are obliged to have a standing army, and that they can only enforce their laws "by the grace of God and gunpowder." This may be true, but I doubt it. But if this be, is there any military man who will deny that five thousand soldiers well-paid, fed and disciplined, would be more efficient than fifty-thousand such troops as they have? It has been the policy of all great commanders not to take doubtful and undisciplined troops into a great battle. I do not hesitate to say that if I was in command of an army of ten thousand disciplined troops, and was going into battle and was offered ten thousand more Mexican troops, that I would not take them. Napier, in his history of the Peninsular War, describing some battle, uses this expression "The British army was strengthened or rather *weakened* by twenty thousand undisciplined Spanish troops." The inequality is much greater with large masses, and I do not think that any commander could perform a tactical evolution with five thousand Mexican troops. I do not believe that such an one—a manœuvre in the face of an enemy—ever was attempted in any Mexican battle; they have all been mere melees or mob fights, and generally terminate by a charge of cavalry, which is, therefore, the favorite corps with all Mexican officers. I should regret, from the diminutive stature and feebleness of their riders, as utterly inefficient against any common infantry, I said so in conversation with Colonel B——n, an officer who had seen some service, and had some reputation. I was not a little annoyed at his reply. He admitted that squares of infantry were generally impregnable to cavalry, but said it was not so with the Mexican cavalry, that they had one resource by which they never had any difficulty in breaking the square. I was curious to know what this new and important discovery in the art of war was, and wished impatiently the "posh of his one thing," when to my infinite amusement he replied—the Lasso; that the cavalry *arme'* with lassos rode up and threw them over the men forming the square, and pulled them out, and thus made the breach. I remembered that my old nurse had often got me to sleep when a child, by promising to catch me some birds the next day, by putting salt on their tails, which I thought was about as easy an operation as this new discovery of the Mexican colonel. I had read of "kneeling men's and charging squadrons," but this idea of lassoing squadrons were altogether new to me. Bonaparte fought and gained the battle of the Pyramids against the best cavalry in the world, Mamelukes, entirely in squares. He lost the battle of Waterloo because the British squares were impenetrable to the next best—the French cavalry—during all of that long and awful conflict. The idea, however, of the lasso did not occur to the Mamelukes in Egypt, nor to Bonaparte at Waterloo. I was reminded of the equally novel attack of the Chinese upon the English, when they were all formed in battle array and the Chinese threw somersets at them instead of cannon balls and shells.

The Mexican army, and more particularly their cavalry, may do very well to fight each other, but in any conflict with our own or European troops, it would not be a battle but a massacre. Frederick the Great, who was the author, in a great degree, of the modern system of tactics, had three maxims as to cavalry. First, that a cavalry corps should never be charged but should always make the charge. Second, that, in a charge of cavalry, they were not going fast enough unless when hurled from the mouth of the horse struck the rider in the face; and third, which was rather the summing up of the first two, that the spur was more important than the sword—in other words, that the impulse and momentum of the horse was of more consequence than the arm and blows of the rider. What then must be the murderous inequality between a corps of American cavalry and an equal number of Mexicans? The American corps, from the superiorsize of the horses, would cover twice as much ground, and the obstruction offered by the Mexicans on their small and scrubby ponies would be: they cause their horses to stumble in riding over them; to say nothing of the greater in quality of the men themselves, five to one to be set in individual combats, and more than twice that in a battle. The infantry would be found even more impotent.

I do not think that the Mexican men have much more physical strength than our women. They are generally of diminutive stature, wholly unaccustomed to labour or exercise of any sort, and as a conclusive proof of their inferiority to our Indians, I will mention the fact that frequent incursions are made far into the interior of Mexico by the marauding bands of Comanches, who levy black mail to an enormous extent upon the northern provinces of Mexico. It is not unusual for bands of a hundred Comanches thus to penetrate several hundred miles into Mexico and carry off as many horses, cattle and captives as they choose; there are not less than five thousand mexicans at this moment slaves of the Comanches—and of all our western tribes the Comanches are the most cowardly,—the Delawares frequently whip them five to one.

The soldiers of the Mexican army are generally collected by sending out *recruiting* detachments into the mountains, where they hunt the indians in caverns, and bring them in chains to Mexico; there is scarcely a day that droves of those miserable and more than half naked wretches are not seen thus chained together and marching through the street to the barracks, where they are scoured and then dressed in a uniform made of linen cloth or serge and are occasionally drilled—which drilling consists mainly teaching them to march in column through the streets. Their military bands are good, and the men learn to march indifferently well—indifferently well—they put their feet down, as if they were feeling for the place, and do not step with that jaunty, erect and graceful air which is so beautiful in well drilled troops. As to the wheelings of well-trained troops, like the opening and shutting of a gate or the prompt and exact execution of other evolutions, they know nothing about them. There is not one in ten of these soldiers who have ever seen a gun, nor one in a hundred who has ever fired one before he was brought into the barracks. It is in this way that the ranks of the army are generally filled up—in particular emergencies the prisons are thrown open, which always contains more prisoners than the army numbers, and these felons become soldiers and some of them officers. Their arms, too, are generally worthless English muskets which have been condemned and thrown aside, and are purchased for almost nothing and sold to the Mexican government. Their powder, too, is equally bad; in the last battle between Santa Anna and Bustamente, which lasted the whole day, not one cannon ball out of a thousand reached the enemy—they generally fell about half way between the opposite armies.

Touching the political liberty in Mexico, and the national industry there, Mr. Thompson did not find anything flattering, for although there is not any legalized slavery in the country, there are matters which are more than tantamount to that wretched condition, and the little industry that is to be found among them is exercised under compulsion to the wretched beings who have become amendable to such coercion.

There are a good many negroes in Vera Cruz; more, probably, than in any other portion of Mexico. I did not see half a dozen negroes in the City of Mexico in a residence there of two years, and very few mulattoes. It is a very great mistake to suppose that they enjoy anything like a social equality, even with the Indian population; and although there are no political distinctions, the aristocracy of colour is quite as great in Mexico as it is in this country; and the pure Castilian is quite as proud that he is a man without "a cross," as was old Leather-stocking, even if that cross should have been with the Indian race, however remote. The negro in Mexico, as every where else, is looked upon as belonging to a class a little lower than the lowest—the same lazy, filthy and vicious creatures that they inevitably become where they are not held in bondage. Bondage or barbarism seems to be their destiny—a destiny from which the Ethiopian race has furnished no exception in any country for a period of time long enough to constitute an epoch. The only idea of the free negro of liberty in Mexico, and elsewhere, is exemption from labor, and the privilege to be idle, vicious, and dishonest; as to the mere sentiments for liberty, and the elevating consciousness of equality, they are incapable of the former; and, for the latter, no such equality ever did or ever will exist. There is a line which cannot be passed by any degree of talent, virtue, or accomplishment. The greater the degree of these, which in rare individual instances may exist, and the nearer their possessors may approach this impassable barrier, they are only the more miserable. This may be called prejudice, but it is a prejudice which exists wherever the Caucasian race is found; and nowhere is it stronger than in Mexico. The negro is regarded and treated there as belonging to a degraded caste equally in the United States; much more so than in South Carolina, in quite as great a degree as in Boston or Philadelphia.

Whilst on this subject it may not be impropriate to allude to the system of servitude which prevails in Mexico—a system immeasurably worse for the slave, in every aspect than the institution of slavery in the United States. The owners of the estate (haciendas) receive labourers into their service. These labourers are ignorant, destitute, half naked Indians; certain wages are agreed upon, which the employer pays in food, raiment, and such articles as are absolutely necessary; an account is kept of all these things, and neither the labourer nor his family can ever leave the estate until all arrearages are paid. These of course he has no means of paying but by the proceeds of his labour, which, being barely sufficient for his subsistence, he never can get free; and he is not only a slave for life, and his children after him, unless the employer chooses to release him for his service, which he often finds it convenient to do when the labourer becomes old or diseased. Whatever may be theoretical protection from corporal punishment which the law affords him, the Mexican slave is practically no better off in his respect than is the African slave in this country. All the labourers in Mexico are Indians; all the large proprietors Spaniards, or of mixed blood. I say all; there may be a few exceptions, but there are very few of either. So of the army; the higher officers are all white men, or of mixed blood, the soldiers all Indians.

One plough in universal use is that used two thousand years ago—neither more nor less than a wooden wedge, without a particle of iron attached to it. The hoe is a wooden staff, with an iron spike in the end. What is still more remarkable, the only animal used in ploughing is the ox; a planter, with twenty thousand horses and mules (by no means unusual number,) will only use his oxen in the plough. "I guess why this is, the only answer I can give is, that the Spaniard never changes his habits, nor anything else but his government. All the passion for change which exists in other men, with him is concentrated in political changes.

It is this peculiar characteristic which has tended more than any and every cause to produce the present degraded state of Spain. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Spain might justly be regarded as the most powerful of the nations of the earth: she had not only expelled the Moors, but conquered a large portion of Africa; discovered America, and was in possession of its untold and seemingly exhaustless treasures, with a galaxy of great men; which all the rest of the world would scarcely equal. What is she now? a byeword amongst the nations; whilst other countries have been moving on in a constant career of improvements in every way, she has folded her arms in sullen pride; and, as she has refused to advance, she has of necessity retrograded, for nations cannot, long remain in stationery.

I believe that it is true, and it is most remarkable if true, that there is not in the world such a thing as a railroad in any country where the Spanish language is spoken, with the exception of a short one in Cuba, which owes its existence to American enterprise. During my residence at Mexico, constantly as the contrast between everything there and in my own country was presented to me, the feelings which were excited were not so much of pride and exultation in our own happier destiny, and superiority in everything, as the most generous one of a profound sympathy for the wretched condition of a country upon which a bountiful Providence has showered his blessings with a more profuse hand than upon any other upon the face of the earth. Whilst in our cities and towns you hear the busy hum of incessant industry, and the shrill whistle of the steam-engine, there you hear nothing but the drum and the fife; whilst we have been making railroads, they have been making revolutions.

A more striking proof of the unconquerable repugnance of the Mexican to labour cannot be given, than the fact that short staple cotton sells there at from forty to forty-five cents per pound, while they have climates as well adapted to its culture as ours, and these lands dirt cheap; yet they never make enough for their own small consumption. The importation of cotton is positively forbidden by law; but this law is often relaxed, by selling the privilege to mercantile companies to import a certain number of bales. If such prices could be obtained at home our northern people would discover some plan of raising it profitably in hot-houses.

Although the whole road from the city of Vera Cruz to the city of Mexico passes through a country inexpressibly picturesque and beautiful, yet the ignorant, idle, and degraded population, the total absence of cultivation and improvement, and a general appearance of wildness and desolation, produced with me feelings partaking of gloom and melancholy. Neither in going nor returning did I see one human being, man, woman, or child, engaged at work of any sort. The great mass of the population doze out their lives with no higher thoughts or purposes than the beasts which perish around them.

Robbers are numerous, but they are on the whole cowards. Not a few of the offenders are persons who having lost their all at the gaming table take to the highway to replenish their purses and some of them are even of rank and consideration in society. Take the following.

Shortly before I left Mexico, the stage was robbed near Puebla. The robbers all had the dress and bearing of gentlemen. When the operation of rifling the pockets and trunks of the passengers were finished, one of the robbers said to them,—"Gentlemen, we would not have you to suppose that we are robbers by profession; we are gentlemen [somos caballeros], but we have been unfortunate at monte, and that has forced upon us the necessity of thus discommoding you, for which we beg that you will pardon us.' Innumerable are the stories of robberies which one hears in Mexico, some of them of thrilling interest and romantic character. The case of Colonel Yanes, who was executed a few years since, is full of incident of character deeply dramatic. I will briefly sketch them as they were told to me.

The Swiss consul resided in the street of St. Cosme.—About twelve or one o'clock in the day time, a carriage drove up to his door, and three men got out, one in the dress of a priest; they were admitted by the porter, and the door closed, when they immediately seized and gagged him, went into the house, and robbed and murdered the consul. The only clue for the discovery of the murderers was a metal button with a small piece of blue cloth attached to it, which was found clenched in the fingers of the murdered man, and which he had torn from the coat of one of the robbers. Suspicion at last rested upon a soldier who was seen with more money than he could account for. His quarters were searched, and the coat from which the button had been torn was found there. He was convicted, but he relied with the utmost confidence upon a pardon, as Colonel Yanes, the favorite aid-de-camp of President Santa Anna, was his accomplice. He was brought out to be executed, and had actually taken his seat on the fatal bench, with the collar placed round his neck, and the crank about to be turned, when he said—"Hold! I will disclose who are my accomplices—Colonel Yanes is the thief!" The execution was suspended, and on searching the house of Yanes, a correspondence in cipher was discovered which fully established his guilt in this and in other robberies. Yanes was the paramour of a woman in Mexico very nearly related to one whose word was law, and whose influence over her relative was known to be very great, and upon that reliance was placed for a pardon at least; but she was not disposed to trust to that, and let her lover suffer the disgrace of conviction—she went to the judge with whom the cipher had been deposited, which furnished the evidence of the guilt of Yanes, and offered him a large bribe to give it up.

He was an honest and an upright judge; he sternly refused the bribe, and firmly resisted the entreaties of this powerful woman. In a day or two he died suddenly, as all supposed by poison. A successor was appointed of principles less stern, who accepted the bribe, and proceeded to destroy the paper: but when, in conformity to his priest, he exposed his corrupt conduct, the worthy man prevailed upon him, if he had not destroyed the paper, not to do so, and he did not. Yanes, in the meantime, was informed that this evidence would not be produced against him, and that the prosecution would rest entirely upon the testimony of his accomplice. Upon his trial, with the habiliments of command of an officer, and the habiliments and submission of the common soldier, Yanes browbeat and confused his accuser to such a degree, that he left the stand in a rage. At this moment the fatal paper was produced, and he was condemned and executed. He is not less guilty perhaps who resides in the city of Mexico.

The National Pawn Shop, and the revolutionary habits of the Mexicans have created a singular species of economy in the country; there is consider able good with some evil in the institution and the causes which has arisen from the combined causes.

I should not omit to notice the great national pawn shop of Mexico, Monte Pio, the funds of which are supplied by the Government, an institution under the superintendence of Don Francisco Tagle, a distinguished and virtuous man. Persons who are pressed for money, and have anything whatever to pawn, take it there and have it valued, and receive in money two thirds of the sum at which it is valued. They are allowed to keep the money for six months, at an interest of six per cent. when, if they are not able to redeem the article which they have pawned, it is sold, provided the sum advanced with interest is bid for it; if that is not the case, it is not sold. Whatever sum above that amount the article is sold for, is paid over to the owner.

A very large and splendid building, on the public square, which was built by Cortes, and which, I believe, is still owned by his descendants, is appropriated to this institution, very many rooms of which are filled with the infinite varieties of articles which have been pawned; all of which the superintendent very kindly showed me. In one room are hung up old garments of the Indians, the larger portion of which are literally of no earthly value but to a paper manufacturer; in another, the swords, epaulettes, and uniforms of military officers, plate of every description, snuff-boxes set in diamonds, and sets of pearls and brilliants, one of which I saw being valued at ten thousand dollars. The effects of this institution are altogether beneficent, as many necessitous and ignorant people are saved by it from disastrous bargains, pawnbrokers and usurers.

The habit of accumulating jewels is always most common in revolutionary times and countries as wealth is more perishable, and, what is more important, more easily concealed in that than in any other form. I was very much struck with one instance of this, which came under my observation. There was an old Indian woman, who sold vegetables at the house at which I stayed when I last went to Mexico, she never wore stockings, nor any other articles of clothing but a chemise and petticoat, and rebozo (a long shawl). I noticed on her neck one day a strand of beads which looked like pearls, but it was very difficult for one not accustomed to them to distinguish the genuine pearls from the cheap imitations. I said to my hostess, "Of course they are not real pearls which that old woman wears." "Indeed," said she, "they are." I asked what was their value, and was told fifteen hundred or two thousand dollars. All the balance of her worldly gear was, doubtless, not worth ten dollars.—I entered into conversation with the old Indian woman, asked her why she had not laid out her money in something more useful, a house, for example. "Yes," said she,