

you had in your pocket? And did you not know there were yet six dollars in your desk, and that the quarter will be paid to us in less than eight days?" She then added, with much feeling, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body what ye shall put on. Behold the fowls of the air; they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them."

I kissed my wife, while tears ran down my cheeks. "Thanks, a thousand thanks, for this humiliation."

I turned to my desk, took from it six dollars, and opened the door to call in the poor widow. All darkened around me at the thought that I had been so forgetful of the omniscience of God as to say to her, "I cannot help you." Oh! thou false tongue, thou false heart! If the Lord should mark iniquities, O Lord! who shall stand?

"Here is what you need," I said, addressing the widow. At first she seemed not to understand what I meant, and thought I was offering her a small contribution, for which she thanked me, and pressed my hand; but, when she perceived I had given her the whole sum, she could not find words to express her feelings. She cried—

"Dear sir, I cannot repay it. All I possess is this little book, and it is old."

"Keep your book," I said, "and the money too, and thank God, and not me, for verily I deserve no thanks, after having so long refused your entreaties. Go in peace, and forgive an erring brother."

I returned to my wife with downcast looks, but she smiled and said—

"Do not take it so much to heart, my friend. You yielded at my first suggestion; but promise me, so long as I wear a gold ring on my finger, (and you know that I possess several besides,) you will never allow yourself to say to any poor person, 'I cannot help you.'"

She kissed me, and left the apartment. When I found myself alone, I sat down and wrote this account in my diary, in order to humble my deceitful heart—this heart which no longer than yesterday dictated these words:

"Of all characters in the world, there is none I would more anxiously avoid being than a hypocrite. To preach the whole moral law, and fulfil only the easy part of it, is hypocrisy. Merciful Father! how must I wait, and reflect, and struggle, ere I shall be able to rely on the perfect sincerity of my profession!

"I read over once more the chapter I had read this morning with too little benefit, and felt more and more ashamed and convinced that there is no peace except where principle and practice are in perfect accordance. How peacefully and happily I might have ended this day, had I acted up conscientiously to the blessed doctrine I professed. Dear Saviour, send the Holy Spirit into this benighted heart! Cleanse it from secret sin, and teach me to employ that which thou hast committed to my charge to thy glory, and a brother's welfare, and my own salvation!"

DOMESTIC SLAVERY IN MEXICO.

All that concerns Mexico, her character, her people and her institutions, have become matters of public interest. The correspondent of the St. Louis Republican, who it is believed is an officer in the army, in giving an account of one of the "domestic institutions" of the Mexicans, says:—

At the hacienda Hermanas there are one hundred and fifty peons. The services of these peons are hired, together with the land. On some haciendas there are more than a thousand peons.

This system of peonage is one of the most singular characteristics of Mexico. By the constitution of Mexico, which went into operation in 1824, "slavery is forever prohibited in Mexico." Yet notwithstanding this provision, there is no country in the world where the slavery of mind and body is more abject than in Mexico. It is true there are none called slaves—the title is "domestic servants."

A Mexican may become a peon in two ways—voluntarily, by contract, agreeing to become a peon for wages agreed on between the peon and his master to whom he sells himself; or involuntarily, where a Mexican is sold for debt, or is sold by a parent for debt or other consideration.

When a man wishes to get a sum of money or some articles,

he applies to a wealthy man for them. A bargain is struck by which he becomes indebted to his more wealthy neighbour in a certain sum. This sum he agrees to liquidate in domestic servitude, at a stipulated price per month, which in Northern Mexico ranges from two to six dollars per month. When a man has become indebted to another, and is unable to pay, he often has no alternative but to make a similar agreement.

If a debtor is unable or unwilling to pay, his creditor goes to an alcalde and makes his complaint. The alcalde directs him to notify the debtor to come before him. This notice is given, and if not obeyed, the debtor is sent for and punished for contempt. The parties are thus brought summarily before the alcalde, who hears the statements of both parties, sometimes under oath and often without administering any whatever; when there is a difference in the statements of the parties, so as to make the alcalde doubt, he hears witnesses. If he is satisfied what decision he should make, he decides upon the verbal statements of the parties. If the decision is against the debtor, he is ordered to pay the amount due the creditor at once, and if he is not able to do it, he is forthwith imprisoned in the calaboose. If the debt still remains unpaid and the creditor requests it, the debtor is brought up and sold for the amount of the debt, which he is to pay in wages of from two to five dollars a month. The debtor thus becomes a peon until he discharges the debt.

Peons have the privilege of changing masters by getting some one else to pay the debt they owe. When this is done, a transfer of the right to the peon takes place, and he has to serve his new master as he had his first owner.

I am aware that this system of selling men for debt is said to be against the laws of Mexico. But I know, beyond all question, that it is the universal custom in Northern Mexico, and that under it thousands are held in bondage for life. Neither is there any chance of redress by appeal, as a poor unfriended man stands but a bad chance for justice in a Mexican court.

Women become peons in the same way as men, but most generally by contract.

When a man becomes a peon, he removes his family, if he has one, to some house, or rather hut, provided for him by his master. By law or custom, (the latter being of much the most validity) there are allowed to each peon two almodes or cotts (about half a bushel) each week, which is given to him usually on Sunday morning. This is all the provision a master has to make for his peon. All his other food, and all his clothing, the peon has to provide for himself. This want of provision for the clothing and sustenance of the peon leads to another aggravation of his condition.

If the master furnishes his peon any food or clothing, or other articles, a regular account is or should be kept of them, and they become an addition to the debt which the peon originally owed. And before he can obtain his freedom, he has to pay these new debts as well as the old one. No one will trust a peon except his master, for he has no means of payment. The Mexicans are notoriously an improvident, extravagant people. When they see an object, even a bauble, which they desire, they will seek to attain it even at the expense of freedom. And thus, by supplying the actual wants, and pandering to the vitiated taste of the peons for gaudy finery, the master keeps his peons in perpetual subjection.

It is very rare when a man once becomes a peon, that he ever after attains his freedom. The extremely low rates of wages, the small price paid for the products of the soil, and for stock of all kinds, and his real wants and besetting extravagance, retain the peon in unending bondage.

The custom of the country requires that there be some time during the week allowed to the peons who reside in the ranchos and haciendas, to labour a portion of their time for themselves in gardens which are allotted to them. By this means, and by the help of their wives and children, some peons have an abundance of vegetables. They do not, however, seem to desire many. If they have a good patch of red peppers, it seems to supply all their wants, as fully at least as potatoes do the wants of the Irish. Their principal food consists of tortillas and peppers. Meat is rarely eaten by the peons. Some of them have fowls, goats, sheep, and cows of their own, and from these occasionally supply themselves. Yet they are not fond of meat, like the Americans, and eat but little of it. Wheat bread is an article they taste but little.

When a peon misbehaves, he is subjected to the lash, but if