THE (SPANISH) INQUISITION:
IN THE LIGHT OF HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE.

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PART II. — THE SPANISH INQUISITION.

As in Part 1, I wish to insist on the fact that if we are to understand the Inquisition, we have to perform the difficult but indispensable feat of detaching ourselves from our present historical context and transferring ourselves into a bygone period, differing enormously from ours in its manners, its customs, its attitude towards heresy, its legal procedure, and the severity of the criminal code.

We distinguished two phases of the Inquisition — the earlier, and the later or Spanish variety. The earlier, established about 1230, operated chiefly in France, Germany, and Northern Italy, and lasted for about two and a half centuries. That was dealt with in the previous part.

The later, or Spanish Inquisition proper, was established in or about 1480, and was more rigorous in its operations than the earlier institution. Looking back to the origin of the Inquisition, we see that the churchmen were at first very reluctant to undertake the task of inquisitors, but circumstances forced their hands. The mediaeval heresies, notably the Albigensian and other offshoots of the Manichean perversion, were of a repulsive and, anti-social type, and almost everywhere was received by the execrations of both rulers and people. Lynchings of heretics by the mob remind us of what has happened so often in our own days of the 20th century in the United States in the case of Negroes guilty or suspected of certain crimes. The Inquisition, by its careful and orderly procedure, saved many innocent lives by substituting statute law for lynch law, or the indiscriminating violence of the rulers. It lessened the number of deaths and protected many innocent persons.

THE MEDIAEVAL EXCESSION OF HERESY.

In his "History of Europe" (a book recommended by our Melbourne University for students in European History), James Harvey Robinson, Professor of History in Columbia University, writes as follows:

"It is very difficult for us who live in a tolerant age to understand the universal and deep-rooted horror of heresy which prevailed not only in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but also down at least to the eighteenth. Too much stress cannot be laid on the fact that heresy was considered treason against an institution which practically all — both the learned and the unlearned — agreed was not only essential to salvation but was necessary to order and civilisation. Frank criticism of the lives of the clergy, not excluding the Pope himself, was common enough. But this did not constitute heresy. One might believe that the Pope and half the Bishops were bad men, and yet in no way question the necessity for the Church's existence or the truth of every one of its dogmas; just as nowadays we might call particular rulers and government officials fools or knaves without being suspected of repudiating governments altogether. The heretic was the anarchist of the middle Ages. He did not simply denounce the immorality of the officers of the Church; he claimed that the Church was worse than useless. He sought to lead people to throw off their allegiance to it, and to disregard its laws and commands. The Church and civil government consequently proceeded against him as an enemy of society and order. Heresy was, moreover, a contagious disease, and spread rapidly and unobserved, so that, to the rulers of the
times, even the harshest measures appeared justifiable, in order to prevent its dissemination.”

WHAT A MAN WILL FIGHT FOR.

Man is a combative being. There are many matters of varying importance for which he is prepared to die or to kill. Rather than yield a yard of his frontier line, he is prepared to see the blood of slaughtered thousands flow like a river. Few even of those who fought in the Great War of 1914-1918, for instance, could tell exactly why they were killing one another. In a general way, no doubt, men understood that the various combatants were influenced by some such motives as the following: — Desire of political or commercial advantages, fear of a successful rival in trade or territory, expansion of empire, and the like. And for these matters men died in millions. According to Mr. Winston Churchill in his book on the Great War (The World Crisis), five millions of the soldiers of the Central Powers, seven millions of the opposing Allies, were slaughtered, to say nothing of the millions of "minor" casualties, such as the loss of limbs, eyes, and reason. Through some defect of historic judgment, this tremendous accumulation of suffering, concentrated into a period of four years, and embracing so many millions of victims, appears to some minds less noteworthy than the deaths of a few thousand heretics who were tried by the Inquisition during the course of several centuries.

If a thinker of the Middle Ages, endowed with prophetic insight, could have visualised our own times, I can imagine him saying something like this: "Well, well: for some paltry territorial advantage, for some sordid commercial or political gain, through fear of the advance of a rival, or other such motives, you turn the plains of Europe into a shambles and scatter wrecks and corpses on the high seas. And, apart from those who have felt the pangs of bereavement owing to the Great War, or who have suffered from national humiliation or great financial loss, there is scarcely one of you on whom the Great War presses as a horrible occurrence. You thought these things worth fighting for. And will you not allow us to fight against an evil that we consider far greater than any commercial or territorial loss? Will you not understand that we considered we had good reasons for repressing those who tended to disintegrate civil society, to destroy the faith of our children, and to encumber the road that leads to man's eternal destiny? And do not forget that in many more than one important skirmish of your Great War there were as many victims as the Inquisition claimed in three and a half centuries.”

THE HISTORY SPECIALIST.

The writer who specialises in a limited phase of history is a dangerous man when dealing with a remote period. If his speciality is war, he is apt to- give to an incautious reader the impression that there was nothing but fighting; if he deals with the criminal law, that there was nothing but repression. This danger is not present when he is dealing with some phase of present-day history, because, from our knowledge of the life that flows around us in infinite variety, we are able to fill up the details omitted by the specialist. If he treats of the wars of our own day, we know that away from the battlefields life went on as usual. While cannon thundered on the various fronts of the Great War, business went its accustomed course in the towns and countryside remote from the battlefields. Harvests were sown and reaped; tailors, boot-makers, plumbers, carpenters, shop-men, lawyers, doctors, and policemen pursued their customary occupations. Cricket and football, dancing, bathing, beer drinking, and even "two up" gambling went on as usual. But when we deal with days long past, we are apt to be misled by the specialist, because, unless we have a rather comprehensive knowledge of the period under discussion, as well as a correct historical imagination, we are unable to fill up the omitted details of the picture. From the specialised details of inquisitorial procedure as given in the elaborate volumes of Henry Charles Lea, the incautious reader is liable to forget that all the while life was flowing uninterruptedly through its thousands of channels, and that the ordinary citizen usually took as little notice of the doings of the Inquisition as our fellow-citizens nowadays take of the proceedings of our police courts. We cannot judge of the Church's tolerance by the Inquisition alone. We must remember, for example, that the first century of the Roman or Medieval Inquisition was also the century of St. Francis of Assisi, of St. Dominic, of St. Clare, of St. Bonaventure, and a great many other saints, who were filled with love even for sinners, and in whom we find the quintessence of the Catholic spirit. (By the way, Henry Charles Lea has gone over the history of the Inquisition in great detail, and with much learning, and, as Nickerson says, he would have been a great historian "had he possessed, a grain of imagination, or the least spark of sympathy with the Middle Ages.” Referring to the bibliography of this subject, I would specially recommend "The Inquisition," by Nickerson, an American Episcopalian, whose work is characterised by the latest historical methods, and which skilfully refers the Inquisition to its proper historical setting.)
THE SPANISH INQUISITION.

As the early Inquisition was coming to an end, having successfully accomplished its main task of freeing Europe from the Albignesian horror, and, moreover, with but little loss of life, the Spanish institution made its appearance (about 1480). Its severity was certainly great, and it had some characteristics not found in the earlier form. Nearly all the uproar about the Inquisition is based on the Spanish brand of it. Now, we are not asked to defend the Spanish Inquisition; we are asked to understand it. Catholics, as much as any others, reprobate and condemn whatever injustice or cruelty may be fairly laid to its account. But the more we enter into the special problems with which Spain had to contend at the time, the more we see that vast layers of controversial garbage have been piled on the institution.

Let us transfer ourselves into Spain in the closing decades of the fifteenth century, and, above all, let us try to enter into the very soul of the Spanish patriot and Catholic.

In the days of Ferdinand and Isabella, under whom the later Inquisition was established, Spain had just emerged from a terrible experience. That experience, I imagine, must be almost unique in European history. For 800 years the Spanish nation was buried in the waters of a deluge. This proud and, obstinate people had come under the yoke of alien hordes of Asiatic and African blood. Through the deplorable divisions of her Ostro-Gothic chieftains she had quickly fallen a prey to the Moorish arms. Over every citadel waved the Crescent; turbaned garrisons occupied every fortress; the gleaming scimitar was ready to strike at the slightest sign of insubordination; the Mosque threw its shadow over the national Church; the Moslem follower of Mahommed as his prophet, the Mahommedan replaced the Christian as the ruler of Spain. And the chains of bondage were riveted for eight hundred years. Seldom has the humiliation of a people been more complete. Few Spaniards can look back to that descent into the abyss without thoughts both deep and dark.

If you have the faintest spark of historical imagination, if your sympathies can be stirred by any problem of the past, enter in spirit the marts of Cordova, Seville, or Salamanca during the Moorish occupation and sound the depths of the Spanish soul. Can you not at least dimly perceive what the Spaniard feels as, striding gloomily through the marketplace, he sees the ever-present signs of his subjection, and notes the tramp of the Mahommedan garrison and the gleam of their arms? Do you note the dangerous glint in his eyes as he passes the mansions and the counting-houses of the Jews - the allies of the Moors? The Jews were more numerous in Spain than in any other country, and nearly all the wealth was in their hands. To the Spaniard the Moor was the alien master, the Jew the traitor within the gates. His feelings towards both can well be imagined.

At last the hour struck and Spain emerged from the abyss. Eight hundred years of humiliation and subjection is a long and perplexing vista. The Spanish nation, dripping with the waters of the flood, found itself, sword in hand, back in the light of freedom, the lost nationality regained. It was the guerilla chiefs, for whom Spain has ever been famous, with their bands of followers, that had maintained the fight for freedom. Men who have lived the lives of outlaws and marauders, and other men who have been delivered from a condition in which they were little better than slaves, are not the most amiable of men. I can well believe that the Spanish character had acquired a dangerous dourness. Rulers and people alike were not in a mood to be trifled with. They were not likely to pamper their former masters and those whom they rightly or wrongly regarded as traitors within the gates. At all events, they would take stern precautions against a return to the abyss.

Though the Spaniard stood erect as a man who had won his liberation by the sword, he was far from feeling at ease in his hour of triumph. His hard-won liberties were not yet assured. The land was still filled with restless Moors and Jews, ready, if the opportunity occurred, to renew the ancient warfare; and, besides, their conquest of his country was incomplete. The Crescent still waved menacingly over the fortress of Granada. The nation was obsessed with the problem of self-preservation. The conviction was steadily growing in the minds of both rulers and people that the Moors and Jews must conform to the national religion or leave the country. Ferdinand and Isabella ruled in Castile and Aragon, and it was under these rulers and in the special circumstances described that the later Inquisition was established in Spain. Those circumstances are glossed over, or even entirely omitted, in the usual controversial accounts of the institution, whereas to the Spaniard they explained and justified it.

A PARABLE.
Let us Australians place ourselves for a few moments in a historical context similar to that in which the Spanish nation found itself in 1450. (Those of other nationalities can exercise their imagination on similar lines.) Australians probably love their country as intensely as the Spaniards loved theirs (though the Spanish love of nation is passionate indeed.). They cannot endure the idea of even a small fragment of Australian territory passing under alien rule. But what if the whole of Australia was occupied for ages by armed intruders, who reduced the native sons to the condition of serfs?

To help us to understand Spain, let us suppose that this very nightmare became a reality. An Asiatic conqueror lands on our shores, subdues city after city, and eventually becomes master of the entire country. Australians become the subjects, almost the slaves, of Asiatic overlords, and the chains of their bondage are securely riveted for centuries. The flag of the conqueror floats from the fortresses of Sydney and Melbourne; tribute is exacted from the conquered people; the temples of Asiatic religions are thronged with alien worshippers. The Australian people have sunk into the abyss.

To complete the parallel with Spain, let us suppose two other circumstances: first, that the Australian people are undivided in professing one faith — to which they are intensely attached — let us simply call it Christianity; and, second, that there is another alien race in the country, possessed of enormous wealth, in close alliance with the Asiatic invaders, and universally regarded by the Australian people as traitors, as allies of the alien masters.

We are now in a position to evaluate a dire historical experience through which another nation has passed. From our knowledge of ourselves we know what Australians circumstanced as described would feel; we can understand their dark thoughts, their fierce, but necessarily private, conversations, their “curses, not loud, but deep,” the dangerous glint in their eyes as they brood on the arrogance of their masters, and their vows of vengeance on the enemy if ever they shall regain the mastery.

We know that Australians are a good-natured, pleasure loving people. But we also feel — unless we have no knowledge of human nature — that having re-conquered their liberties, and still heavy with the memories of their age-long humiliation, the Australian people would give short shrift to their former enemy and his traitorous allies. The intruders would all be bundled out of the country, and, not improbably, their departure would be preceded by numerous bloody massacres. I am inclined to believe that Australia, having passed through such a calamity as described, would be far less lenient to her enemies than Spain was.

**A FEW NOTES ABOUT THE SPANISH INQUISITION.**

My object is not to describe the operations of the Spanish Inquisition, but to put it in the historical context that explains it. Nor is my object to inflame or re-kindle nationalist hatreds. But it is important to acknowledge that such passions did historically exist.

In a very summary manner I add a few points, or rather, mere headings, without developing them.

1. From the special problems with which Spain was confronted, and from the policy of the rulers, the Spanish Inquisitors were civil functionaries more than Church officials. “A fair way of putting the case is perhaps this” (says Eliza Atkins Stone, a Protestant writer): “The machinery of the Spanish Inquisition was mainly ecclesiastical; the Vatican had more or less voice in its management, but on the lever was always not the Papal, but the Royal hand.” This much is beyond question: It began its career under the definite censure of the Holy See, and the latter, perturbed at its severity, constantly urged clemency. ("A Brief for the Spanish Inquisition," by Eliza Atkins Stone, a Protestant writer, is a remarkably clever little work, and exhibits an accurate regard for the best historical methods.)

2. After some vain attempts at milder measures, the Jews were given the option of conforming to the national faith or leaving the country. Most of them left, and, as a result, endured great suffering. Many came back and conformed outwardly. The Inquisition courts concerned themselves only with the Jews and Moors who had become Christians and relapsed, or who carried on an active proselytism.
The Moorish and Jewish peril having been removed, the Inquisition, midway in the sixteenth century, turned its batteries against the advancing danger of the Reformation. Forty years earlier, Dr. Martin Luther had, nailed his five-and-ninety propositions to the church door at Wittenberg, and soon the greater part of Europe was convulsed. Wars, commotions, revolutions became the order of the day. As time went on these disturbances assumed a frightfully sanguinary character. England was ablaze; Ireland was submerged beneath a vast tidal-wave of religious persecution; France, for a period of forty years, was almost strangled by the frightful struggles of Huguenots and Catholics; Germany, at the end of the Thirty Years War, had lost half her population. Spain was resolved that the conflagration should not cross her frontiers, or, if it did, that it should be prevented from spreading. She had had her fill of internal war in fact, eight hundred years of it, with disaster to the national existence. And so the machinery of the Inquisition was used to prevent the threatened conflagration. Its success was complete. While the blood of civil war flowed in so many other quarters, Spain was at peace.

“There was not,” says Voltaire, the arch-foe of Catholicism — “there was not in Spain during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries any of the bloody revolutions, of the conspiracies . . . which we see in the other kingdoms of Europe. In fine, except for the horrors of the Inquisition, there would be nothing with which to reproach Spain.” Voltaire does not point the moral, but De Maistre does. “That is to say,” says De Maistre, “that Spain escaped only by means of the Inquisition the horrors that dishonoured all the others.”

The popular supposition, based on the wild assertions of controversialists, that the Spanish Inquisition has a kind of monopoly, or, at all events, pre-eminence in repressive measures, has little support in sober history. The fact is that all the Reformers, whenever they were able to secure the support of the civil authorities, adopted violent methods for the repression of those who were unwilling to conform to their various creeds, and that, too, without the justification which the Spaniards found in the acute national problems with which they were confronted. The Spanish scholar, Balmez, challenged the critics of the later Inquisition to produce the facts and figures of their own repressive measures and compare them with those of Spain. The honours of the comparison, he maintained, would rest with Spain.

Two wrongs do not make a right. If the Spanish Inquisition was guilty of cruelty and injustice, it is no alleviation of its guilt to point out that Protestant persecutors were as bad or worse. At the same time, it helps to correct false views of history to note that the rigour of the Spanish Inquisition is not an isolated phenomenon, and that there were Protestant inquisitions far more terrible than anything that can be charged to Spain. Taking up the challenge of Balmez, let us, for the purposes of comparison, glance at the attempted repression of the Catholic Faith in Ireland, taking our account from Lecky, a non-Catholic historian. It is a terrible narrative, but it helps us to understand the hard character of the times.

**THE ORDEAL OF IRELAND.**

The repressive measures referred to were begun by Elizabeth, and continued relentlessly for over two centuries. These measures aimed not merely at the extirpation of the Catholic religion but at the extermination of the Irish people. It is a terrible statement to make, but it is a sober fact of history. It cannot be denied. No doubt, the Irish wars of Elizabeth were not ostensibly begun as part of the religious controversy, but in practice it was so, and soon all disguise was thrown off, and the long-drawn record of repression, lasting to the end of the eighteenth century, was openly avowed and recorded in the Penal Code as a measure for the extirpation of Popery. I quote from Lecky ("History of England in the Eighteenth Century"), who was certainly not in favour of the Catholic Faith, and who was a strong partisan of English rule in Ireland. Yet, as a historian of English rule in Ireland, his judgments are carefully measured."

“The great wars of Elizabeth” (says Lecky) “established the complete ascendancy of English law. The suppression of the native race in the wars against Shane O'Neill, Desmond, and Tyrone, was carried on with a ferocity, which surpassed Alva in the Netherlands, and was hardly exceeded by any page in the bloodstained annals of the Turks. A deliberate attempt was made to assassinate the great Irish leader, Shane O'Neill, by a present of poisoned wine . . . . Essex accepted the hospitality of Sir Brian O'Neill. After the banquet, when the Irish chief had retired unsuspiciously to rest, the English General
surrounded the house with soldiers, captured his host with his wife and brother, sent them all to Dublin for execution, and massacred the whole body of his friends and retainers.

"An English officer invited seventeen Irish gentlemen to supper, and when they rose from the table had them all stabbed. A Catholic Archbishop named Hurley fell into the hands of the English authorities, and, before they sent him to the gallows, they tortured him to extract confession of treason by one of the most horrible torments human nature can endure-by roasting his feet with fire.

"But these isolated episodes, by diverting the mind from the broad features of the war, serve rather to diminish than to enhance its atrocity. The war, as conducted by Carew, by Pelham, by Mountjoy, was literally a war of extermination. The slaughter of Irishmen was looked upon as literally the slaughter of wild beasts. Not only the men, but even the women and children who fell into the hands of the English were deliberately and systematically butched. Bands of soldiers traversed great tracts of country, slaying every living thing they met. The sword was not found sufficiently expeditious, but another method proved much more efficacious. Year after year, over a great part of Ireland, all means of subsistence were destroyed, no quarter was given to prisoners who surrendered, and the whole population was skilfully and steadily starved to death.

"The pictures of the condition of Ireland at this time are as terrible as anything in human history.” After various terrible details, Lecky continues: "Long before the war terminated, Elizabeth was assured that she had little left to reign over but ashes and carcasses. It was boasted that in all the wide territory of Desmond, not a town, village, castle, or farmhouse was unburnt; and a high English official, writing in 1582, computed that in six months more than 30,000 people had been starved to death in Munster, besides those who were hung or who perished by the sword. The slaughter of women as well as of men, of unresisting peasants as well as of armed rebels, was openly avowed by the English commanders. The Irish annalist told, with horrible detail, how the bands of Pelham and Ormond killed blind and feeble men, women, boys, and girls, sick persons, idiots and old people; how, in Desmond's country, even after all resistance had ceased, soldiers forced men and women into old barns, which were set on fire, and if any attempted to escape they were shot or stabbed; how soldiers were seen to take up infants on the points of their spears and whirl them about in their agony; how women were found hanging on trees with their children at their breasts." (Lecky says in a foot-note that the substantial truth of the description given by the Irish annalist is only too fully corroborated.)

Similar methods were carried on by Cromwell, and later were enacted in cold blood in the Penal Laws at the end of the Revolution which dethroned the Stuarts.

The reading of those Penal Laws, so cruel, so universal in their operation, and so degrading, is enough to make one shiver at the lengths to which the persecuting spirit can carry men. In the words of Edmund Burke, speaking of the Penal Laws: “It was a complete system, full of coherence and consistency, well digested and well composed in all its parts. It was a machine of wise and, elaborate contrivance, and as well fitted for the oppression, impoverishment, and degradation of a people, and the debasement in them of human nature itself, as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man.” The judgment formed by Dr. Johnson is similar. “The Irish,” said he, “are in a most unnatural state, for we there see the minority prevailing over the majority. There is no instance, even in the Ten Persecutions, of such severity as that which the Protestants of Ireland have exercised against the Catholics.”

Mr. Hilaire Belloc (in "First and Last") says: “The preservation of the Faith by the Irish is an historical miracle, comparable to nothing else in Europe. There never was, and please God, never can be, so prolonged, and insanely violent a persecution of men by their fellow-men as was undertaken for centuries against the Faith in Ireland: and it has completely failed. I know of no example in history of failure following upon such effort. And so amazing is it that they did not attain their end, that perpetually as one reads one finds the authors of the dreadful business now at one period, now at another, assuming with certitude that their success is achieved. Then, after centuries, it is almost suddenly perceived — and in our own time — that it has not been achieved and never will be.”

May I be allowed, in passing, to say it? When one reads, digests, understands, the tragic story of Ireland; when one sees this people “bruised, broken in shards,” creeping at last from the desolate trenches in which for
centuries they had withstood the barrage of death, confiscation, and national humiliation, still unsubdued and loyal to the sacred ideals of their traditional Faith — may I be allowed to say it? — if any of my readers has a drop of Irish blood in his veins, he may well he proud of his Irish ancestors.

A COMPARISON.

Now, whenever the Spanish Inquisitors were guilty of cruelty and injustice they deserve to be reprobated, and with all my heart I loathe and condemn any inhumanity that may fairly be laid to their count. But let us not be one-sided in our judgments. When I compare the rigours of Catholic Spain with those of Protestant England, it seems to me the claims of Balmez are vindicated. In Spain the measures taken against Jews and Moors, and later against of the doctrines of the Reformation, arose after a historical crisis of almost unprecedented magnitude, and while the nation was obsessed with the problem of self-preservation. In England and in other countries that adopted the Reform there was nothing of the kind. The Irish did not menace the existence of England; they were a separate nation; they had every right to manage their own affairs, and, certainly, to practise their traditional religion. The very liberty of belief claimed by the Reformers would seem to entitle the Irish people to adhere to the Faith of their fathers. But no such concession was allowed them. The whole nation as such was outlawed, and, unless it conformed to an alien creed, practically sentenced to death.

When we compare the two Inquisitions, the one that operated in Spain and the other that operated for over two centuries in Ireland — and when, moreover, we weigh impartially the circumstances in which each arose and carried on its work, the Spanish, in the comparison, comes out with clean hands.

A FEW FIGURES.

How many were sentenced to death in the Spanish Inquisition? Llorente, whose figures have been the most quoted, gives the total as 30,000 for a period of 300 years. No one nowadays accepts Llorente's figures; indeed, for reasons we cannot now discuss, he must be entirely set aside as a trustworthy historian. (The article on the Inquisition in the "Encyclopedia Britannica," largely based on the mendacious Llorente, belongs to the now discarded dust heap of exploded historical methods.) Monsignor Landrieux gives the latest German calculations as 10,000 for three centuries. Lower figures are quoted, but probably 10,000 is near the mark.

How many perished in the French Terror during a period of only three years? Vastly more than in all the Inquisitions during more than three centuries. M. Taine, a distinguished authority, gives the following figures in his "Revolution Francaise": Guillotined, 17,000; shot at Toulon, 2,000; drowned at Mantes, men, women, and children, 4,800. Then there were the murders by the mob — about 10,000 were killed without trial in the province of Anjou alone. “We may reasonably estimate,” says Taine, “that the number of the dead of all ages and both sexes comes very nearly to half a million.”

Figures such as these, as well as Lecky's account of the Penal Laws of Ireland, which we have already considered, and other instances that might be given of the persecution of Catholics, justify the challenge of Balmez already referred to; while, coming to our own day, the “War on the Anti-God Front,” in progress at the present moment in Russia, seems to eclipse in its devastating comprehensiveness all the persecutions of the past. [The reference is to the soviet persecution of religion which reached heights of horror in the 1930’s and was still raging in the 1950’s in Russia, and behind the Iron and Bamboo Curtains.]

The following passage from "My Magazine," edited by Arthur Mee, who is also the editor of the well-known "Children's Encyclopedia," is not without interest as throwing light on the past. It occurs in an article on Bunyan, author of the "Pilgrim's Progress," and represents a state of affairs which, if substantially true, causes the Spanish Inquisition to pale into comparative insignificance.

“The England of Bunyan (says the article in question) was devil-ridden and witch-possessed. Prince and peasant believed it; Bunyan and Shakespeare and William Harvey believed it. The king on his throne, the judge on the bench, Cromwell at the head of his army and in the secrecy of his chamber, all believed that Satan stalked the land with agents in every town and, hamlet, sworn to do his will. Any woman upon whom age had laid a heavy hand, any woman with a curious oddity of any sort, was in danger of being burned, hanged, or drowned as a witch. Elizabeth set up a gibbet at Windsor for the execution of anyone who dared to venture there from plague stricken London; James the First had a
gibbet, a fire, or a pond ready everywhere for the agents of Satan and workers of mischief.

“When a storm at sea disturbed his royal digestion, James knew that old John Fian had been at work, a malignant Prospero, who, for raising the storm, had his nails torn from their fingers and his limbs crushed to fragments in the presence of the king.

“James was most thorough in his ferocious folly, and caused an Act to be passed, extending over the whole lifetime of Bunyan, which made it an offence punishable with death to remove or conjure up an evil spirit; to consult, covenant with, or feed one; to take up a dead body for use in magic, to seek for treasure or lost or stolen goods, or to injure cattle by means of charms. Before Bunyan died, 70,000 people had been martyred under this Act. Cromwell's hosts were not more free from this obsession than James and his creatures. Three thousand witches were put to death by Cromwell's Ironsides, one of them in the still watches of the night before the battle of Naseby.”

Facts in focus - Cruel Times.

The Times of the Spanish Inquisition were very different from our own. We need to understand them in their historical perspective. They were cruel times, by our reckoning, but they were seen as normal by those who lived through them. Let us review them a little through the eyes of the non-Catholic historian, Lecky. Lecky, always conscientious, has apparently no sense of humour, and no understanding of the real life of the Middle Ages. He is useful, however for the marshalling of various facts.

"When Blackstone, the distinguished jurist, wrote, (in the latter half of the: eighteenth century,) there were no less than 160 offences punishable with death," says Lecky, “and it was a very ordinary occurrence for ten or twelve culprits to be hung on a single occasion; for forty or fifty to be condemned at a single assize.”

“The law which condemned a prisoner who refused to plead on a capital charge to be laid naked on his back in a dark room, while weights of stone or iron were placed on his breast till he was slowly pressed to death, was enforced in England in 1721 and 1735, and in Ireland as late as 1740. The law was repealed in 1771.” (Lecky.) The torture was prolonged till the resistance of the prisoner was overcome, and might last a week. A case occurred in England in 1741, and this, I believe, was the last occasion on which a man was subjected to this torture, which was, perhaps, as terrible as any ever included in a penal code. The pillory, which was very common, was often a prolonged torture, and several perished in it. The penalty was rendered more severe when the victim in certain cases had his ears sliced off by the executioner, or received no protection from the violence of the mob. “Men, and even women, were sill whipped publicly at the tail of a cart through the streets, and the flogging of women in England was only abolished in 1820.” (Lecky). Women who were guilty of poisoning or of other offences comprised under the heading of high or petty treason were sentenced to be burnt alive by a law which was not repealed till 1790.

All these facts are of common knowledge, and may be read in any detailed history, such as Lecky's “History of England in the Eighteenth Century.”

The Inquisition, both Spanish and Roman, did not Monopolise Persecution.

Mr. Lecky, who, I need hardly state, was not a Catholic, draws a striking contrast between Catholic and Protestant Intolerance:

"Catholicism was an ancient Church. She had gained a great part of her influence by vast service to mankind. She rested avowedly on the principle of authority. She was defending herself against aggression and innovation . . . She might point to the priceless blessings she had bestowed on humanity; to the slavery she had destroyed; to the civilisation she had founded; to the many generations she had led, with honour, to the grave. She might show how completely her doctrines were interwoven with the whole social system; how fearful would be the convulsion if they were destroyed, and how absolutely incompatible they were with the acknowledgment of private judgment.”

“But what shall we say of a church that was but a thing of yesterday, a church that had as yet no services to show, no claims upon the gratitude of mankind; a church that was by profession the creature
of private judgment, and was in reality generated by the intrigues of a corrupt Court; which, nevertheless, suppressed by force, a worship that multitudes deemed necessary to their salvation; and by all her organs and with all her energies persecuted those who clung to the religion of their fathers?

“What shall we say of a religion which comprised at most but a fourth part of the Christian world, and which the first explosion of private judgment shivered into countless sects, which was, nevertheless, so pervaded by the spirit of dogmatism that each of these sects asserted its destructive doctrines with the same confidence, and persecuted with the same unhesitating violence, as a Church that was venerable with the homage of sixteen centuries?

“So strong and so general was its intolerance that for some time it was, I believe, truly said that there were more instances of partial toleration being advocated by Roman Catholics than by orthodox Protestants.” ("Rationalism in Europe," Vol. I., p. 51).

CONCLUSION.

In these notes on the Inquisition I have endeavoured to throw light on what is really a perplexing problem to modern minds, by referring the earlier and later institutions to the historical contexts which enable us to understand them. The later Inquisition, the Spanish, was far more severe than the earlier, the Roman, and accounted for a greater number of capital sentences. But the Spanish Inquisition is by no means an isolated phenomenon of repression. Moreover, it was connected with special and acute problems, weighted with the memories of 800 years of awful subjection to alien enemies, and the ever-present obsession of a possible recurrence of national disaster. The urgent call for self-preservation may be said, without exaggeration, to have forced the Spanish nation into repressive measures against the Jews and Moors, and later against the advancing peril of the Reformation. This, I think, has been made clear.

But when all is said and done, when we look back to those by-gone days, certain names stand out in golden characters in our recollection of our ancestors of our Faith: Dominic and the other Dominican saints including St. Thomas Aquinas, Francis of Assisi, and the other saintly Franciscans, St. Clare, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Bonaventure — all of the century in which the first Inquisition was established — and with these we must associate the mighty Dante; and, coming to the period of the later Inquisition, we have the glorious names of St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Francis Xavier, St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross — all Spaniards — and numerous other men and women of the highest and holiest ideals. These we commemorate; of these we have the happiest recollection; on these we willingly linger; while we only disinter from the past the records of the Inquisitors to examine them as part of a complicated, and, happily, transitional problem of a day that is done. And this is as it ought to be. Because, though the Inquisitors were men engaged in using the stern machinery of the criminal codes of that distant day for what they sincerely regarded as the defence of religion and civil society against the deadly enemies of God and man, still it is in the lives and ideals of those saints who were the contemporaries of the Inquisitors that we find the quintessence of the Catholic spirit by which Catholics strive to square their lives.

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