

SLAVERY AND LAS CASAS.

In the trail of the bloody conquest of the Spaniards, followed the deep and damning guilt of numan slavery. "Indians were slaughtered by the hundred, burned alive, impaled on sharp stakes, torn to pieces by bloodhounds. Little children were flung into the water to drown, with less concern than if they had been puppies. It was cheaper to work an Indian to death than to get another to take care of him." These atrocities awoke the indignation of the pious Las Casas, who organized the first anti-slavery crusade in the history of mankind. In the long struggle to end this sin against God and crime against man, he crossed the Atlantic fourteen times. His last act in his ninety-second year, was to secure a royal decree promoting the welfare of the natives of Guatemala.

"In contemplating such a life as that of Las Casas," says our author, "all the words of eulogy seem weak and frivolous. The historian can only bow in reverent awe before a figure, which is, in some respects, the most beautiful and sublime in the annals of Christianity since the apostolic age. When now and then in the course of the centuries, God's providence brings such a life into this world, the memory of it must be cherished by mankind as one of its most precious and sacred possessions. For the thoughts, the words, the deeds of such a man, there is no death. The sphere of their influence goes on widening forever. They bud, they blossom, they bear fruit from age to age."

A strange Nemesis seems to have followed the cruel agents of Spanish tyranny, for almost all of them died an untimely and bloody death.

In a closing chapter, our author treats briefly the work of two centuries in exploring this new world. The sketches of Gomez, Cartier and Roberval, Ribaut and the Huguenots in Florida, Menendez the last of the crusaders, of that gallant hero Champlain, of Marquette, Joliette,

Father Hennepin, La Verendryre, Lewis and Clark, Davis and Hudson, Baffin and Behring, are of surprising interest.

In some striking paragraphs Professor Fiske shows the effects of the dark superstition of Spain, the expulsion of the Moriscos and the persecution of the Inquisition, in the deterioration of national character.

"When we contrast the elastic buoyancy of spirit in Shakespeare's England, with the gloom and heaviness that were then creeping over Spain, we find nothing strange in the fact that the most popular and powerful nations of the New World speak English and not Spanish. It was the people of Great Britain, that, with flexible and self-reliant intelligence, came to be foremost in devising methods adapted to the growth of an industrial civilization, leaving the middle ages far behind. Wherever, in any of the regions open to colonization, this race has come into competition with other European races, it has either vanquished or absorbed them, always proving its superior capacity. Sometimes the contest has assumed the form of strife between a civilization based upon wholesome private enterprise, and a civilization based upon government patronage. Such was the form of the seven years' conflict that came to a final decision upon the Plains of Abraham, and not the least interesting circumstance connected with the discovery of this broad continent, is the fact that the struggle for the possession of it, has revealed the superior vitality of institutions and methods that first came to maturity in England, and now seem destined to shape the future of the world."

Important appendices and an admirable index increase greatly the value of these volumes. The graceful style, the apt illustrations, the fine scholarship of Professor Fiske, add to the solid character of his book a fascinating literary charm. His account of the copious bibliography of early discovery is very full of interest.