

Spain and Her King

(By HAROLD BEGGIE in the Daily Mail)

On the character of Alfonso the Thirteenth, far more than on the intellectual resources of the Military Directory, hangs the imperilled destiny of Spain.

For, in spite of all the just criticisms and malignant calumnies of Spanish Socialists living in foreign countries, the King of Spain is easily the greatest figure in Spain and can command at any moment a loyalty which would be given to no other Spaniard. He is the Sovereign, let us remember, of a nation whose ardent loyalty to the Spanish Throne cost it first a great military Empire and afterwards nearly all its many colonial possessions. Of no nation more loyal and long-suffering, and of no Sovereign more unworthy and incompetent, is there any record in the history of mankind.

But apart from his inherited power of appeal, Alfonso is a person who counts in Spain by reason of his intellectual qualities. He is perhaps the most variously accomplished of living Spaniards. Infinitely in this respect the superior of his present Minister, he is also a quickening intellectual force in the life of Spanish aristocracy. It would not be an exaggeration to say that in the presence of his King most of the noblemen of Spain have the appearance of provincials.

Character, of course, is another matter, but it is worth emphasizing the fact that the King of Spain is a person of no little culture, with intellectual sympathies which give at least some weight to the charm of his friendly and unaffected personality. Of his character, on which all turns, this may be said with confidence, that he is a far more serious person than his political enemies would have us believe.

An Anxious Sovereign.

Alfonso is of all Spaniards just now the most anxious. He perceives the peril in which his country stands, he knows that the present system of government cannot continue indefinitely, and he would give almost everything he possesses to know how he should act. He is still on all public occasions the smiling, chaffing, and light-hearted Alfonso who endeared himself to the populace in his boyhood; but in the midst of his family, of which he is the stern master, he is the serious Sovereign of a nation very dear to him, and in these anxious days, his conversations with his advisers, unfortunately a very delicate young man, are often prolonged and solemn.

But seriousness without imagination and imagination without the courage to act boldly and decisively are qualities not likely to ease the difficulties of the King's position or to solve the perplexities of the Spanish people. Whether he has imagination and political courage it is difficult to say; and on this uncertainty hangs Spain's future.

Let us now see what the peril is which confronts the Spanish King and the Spanish people. During the Great War, Spain enjoyed a very considerable economic prosperity. Money came easily, and even a strike or two in those piping times was of small consequence. But her industrial workers, used to high wages easily earned, are not unwilling either to take lower wages or to work harder.

Primo de Rivera has been able to suppress Communism and to stop strikes, but he has not been able to convince the Spanish workman of Spain's urgent necessity for greater production at a lower cost. I asked him if he had appealed to the workmen to take lower wages, and he replied that the cost of living remains so high. The Spaniard, one perceives, thinks that economic law should consult his convenience. The consequences show in figures with which I have been entrusted by one of the ablest economists in Spain. Exports are rapidly and ominously declining and the imports are ominously increasing.

A Ruinous War.

What is now happening in Spain is a lesson to Great Britain. Until Mussolini took charge of Italy's fortunes and appealed to the workers of Italy to regard their labor as an expression of their patriotism, Spain commanded a most profitable market for her manufactures in the Near East. But the Near East buys what is cheapest, and new-born Italy is able to supply her demands at a price far below the cost of Spanish commodities. Therefore, while the workmen of Spain on high wages are suffering, the Italian workmen on lower wages are prospering. Spain's unfavourable balance of trade in 1924 amounted to the huge sum of approximately £35,294,000. For a small nation an adverse balance of this magnitude is a matter for some alarm, especially as her exports show no signs of recovery.

In this dangerous economic predicament Spain has to meet an extremely heavy bill for her adventure in Morocco. How does Primo propose to meet that bill? No one can say. There are rumours that he himself would gladly get out of Morocco and that it is only the Military Party which is determined to continue an inglorious, costly, and apparently interminable

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able campaign at all costs. In any case I am sure that an overwhelming majority of Spaniards is sick to death of Morocco, and that many would gladly see it handed over to the League of Nations. It brings in no money to the peasant, the merchant, or the banker; and it is costing Spain every day, a sum which is staggering.

The problem of Spain's future is intensified by the illiterate condition of the people. The population is 22,000,000, and only 40 per cent. of these millions are really able to read and write. Even among these 40 per cent. the interest in knowledge is amazingly slight. A popular Spanish novel never exceeds a world edition of 5,000 copies, and no newspaper in the country has a circulation of more than 120,000 copies. The 80,000,000 Spanish-speaking people in the rest of the world appear to be equally indifferent to the literature of the Iberian Peninsula, and the greatest thinkers in Spain address an audience of only two or three thousand. The nation is ignorant of economics and is apathetic towards politics.

One desire is common to the whole of the Spanish people and that is to avoid civil war. A traveller may journey in these days from the Pirenees to the Pillars of Hercules without meeting a single warlike politician or anyone who thinks that the welfare of the country should be served by a revolution. Less than a hundred years ago the Spanish people were shouting at one moment, "Long live the Constitution!" and at the next, "Death to Liberty!" plunging in great mobs through the streets of cities to pull down the royal or conservative name of the great square in order to rename it "Plaza de la Constitution," and then, soon after, removing this revolutionary name with bitter cries of repenting loyalty.

All that is now changed. The Spaniard is sick of strife, is extremely cynical, and has lost a great deal of his father's faith in the Exaltados of political idealism. In Spain a person like Saklatvala or A. J. Cook would perish of ennui.

But the Spaniard would respond to his King and many people in Spain are now waiting in the hope that Alfonso the Thirteenth may address a word to the nation which will clear the air and show the way to a safer future. It is thought that the cost of the Moroccan campaign will force the King to insist that Primo should summon the Cortes. For the Spaniard is like the Frenchman in his dislike of taxation, and a Military Directory could hardly impose the taxation necessary to meet the bill for Morocco without provoking a most formidable opposition from the financial powers. But if the King called his people together and addressed them with courage and wisdom, it is believed that they would follow him, even if the road he chose for them was one of real sacrifice.

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SIDE TALKS.

By Ruth Cameron.

WHICH IS SHE MARRYING?

Yes, she knows he has always been a terrible spendthrift, but it's all going to be different now. He's promised her that it will be; and he's saved so hard these last few months. Why, he would do anything in the world for her; he's just crazy about her. Everyone admits that. And it isn't as if it were some infatuation either; he's been waiting for her to marry him for two years. And he's really a totally different man. Everyone says so. If he weren't so awfully much in love with her, she would hesitate, but he really is so devoted that she can do anything with him.

This is the substance of what a girl I know says about the man her friends don't want her to marry.

"She Can Do Anything With Him!" She thinks she is perfectly safe because—although his character is not at all the kind she would pick out—he loves her so greatly that she can do what she wants to do with him.

The old, old story! And the old, old mistake! It seems incredible in the light of piled-up experience, that people can keep on making it. Yet they do. They will persist in thinking that they are marrying love, whereas as a matter of fact, what they are really marrying is character.

What the girl is going to live with through all the years is that man's character. And if that character in the past has not been of the sort she approves of and would like to live with, she is taking a long chance in marrying the love with the idea that it will make everything all right.

flourishing agriculture to fall back upon when your exports drop.

I came to the conclusion that Italy, which is capturing the foreign markets of Spain hand over fist, is showing the way of security and achievement to all the other nations of Europe. Greatest of the Latin races at the present moment, she is also the pioneer of a new spirit in nationalism. Certainly, until the economic life of a people is unified and energised by a spirit of vigorous patriotism, its political existence must always be in a state of unrest and its industrial fortunes at the hazard of collapse.

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There's No Guarantee With It. Nor is the fact that he has loved her a long while, and that he is unusually devoted, any guarantee for permanency.

A woman I know has just been cruelly deserted by her husband after ten years of marriage. They used to live in our neighborhood when they were courting and his devotion was the by-word of the neighborhood. She did not love him at first and she refused him again and again and told him to find some other girl. He insisted that he could not be happy with any other woman in the world, and finally after a five years courtship, she married him. When the babies came and he could not have her undivided devotion he became sulky and finally revenged himself in this way.

It is character and not love you are marrying. Or at least, character and not being in love. Love may last, but being in love can't. It is one of those candles that burn at both ends. Its very intensity is guarantee for the fact that it will not last the night. ("But, all my toes and oh, my friends it gives a lovely light!")

And What Would Happen Then? Please God, love may take its place, and that, if given a fair chance, will probably last and to some extent modify character. But being in love—though it is a beautiful thing and though we should hate to think of the world without it—is not a thing to be counted on in the long pull of married life.

If all the "virgines puerisque" would only accept those facts, and marry accordingly, we should surely have fewer divorces. But perhaps we should also have fewer marriages. And what would happen then?

"The Merchant of Venice" at the Casino

Without doubt there will be widespread satisfaction at the announcement made in our advertising columns this evening of the production of "The Merchant of Venice" in the Casino on next Thursday night 17th inst., at 8.15 by the students of St. Bonaventure's College. In former years the St. Bon's boys have shown the people of the city with what skill they can interpret a tragedy. Emboldened by their success, particularly that of last year, they are now launching out into their biggest venture—the staging of one of Shakespeare's most popular plays. In doing so they will not only provide a highly interesting entertainment but at the same time focus attention on the name and genius of the greatest amongst the stars in the firmament of English literature.

During a period of three months no effort has been spared in training the performers, each of whom has been carefully selected as having a special fitness for the part assigned. In addition, the costumes have been carefully designed with a view to giving to the entire production its distinctly Shakespearean atmosphere.

Master F. W. Donnelly, who scored such a marked success in "Veronica's Veil" will impersonate Shylock, while Portia will be played by Master F. McNamara whose interpretation of a most difficult part will be a revelation and a most fascinating feature of the performance. The parts of Bassanio, Gratiano, Lorenzo, Launcelot, Gobbo, Nerissa, Jessica, etc., etc., will also be portrayed in realistic style and will afford incontrovertible evidence of the high standard of histrionic talent that exists amongst the students.

The Mount Cashel Band with a repertoire of popular music will be in attendance to enliven the intervals. Specialties will also be given between the acts by some of the students. Curtain rises at 8.15 sharp. Prices: Reserved seats 75 and 50 cents (can be had at Hutton's), Gallery, 30 cents; Parquette, 20 cents. The object, which is most worthy, is to help on the work of the Christian Brother's Novitiate, and few people are aware how greatly the help is needed.

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