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THE SPANISH INQUISITION:

History of the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, the Catholic. By William H. Prescott. 3 vols. 8vo. pp. 411, 509, and 496. Boston, fifth edition, 1939.

The history of no country, perhaps, is invested with greater interest than that of Spain. Her annals are varied in incident, rich in moral, and full of instruction for the philosopher and Christian. No country of Europe has preserved the spirit of mediæval chivalry so pure, or for so long a time. This spirit is impressed on all her institutions, and is yet visible in the high character and lofty bearing of her people. The type of her national character is still, to a great extent, that of the ancient knights of St. Iago of Calatrava and of Alcantara; the only difference is, that it has been softened down to suit the more pacific tendencies of the present age. Her whole history is replete with strange vicissitudes and startling occurrences.

No country, perhaps, has exercised a more powerful influence on civilization in Europe, or done more to extend its boundaries into regions remote and before unknown. But for the liberal enterprise and enlightened policy of her sovereigns, the ardor of Columbus might have cooled, and America remained undiscovered for centuries. With the names of Alfonso the Wise, of Sancho the Great, and of Ferdinand and Isabella, among her princes and legislators; with those of Don Rodrigo Diaz del Bivar, the renowned *Campion* or *Cid*, and of Gonsalvo de Cordova, the "great captain," among her generals; and with those of Calderon, Lope de Vega, Cervantes, Herrera and Garcilass among her *literati*, not to mention many others, she has little to fear from comparison with any other nation. The calendar is crowned with the names of her saints, St. Dominic, St. Vincent Ferrer, Teresa, St. Peter of Alcantara, St. Ignatius, St. Francis Xavier, and hosts of others are her patrons in heaven.

The interest in Spanish history and institutions is greatly increased by the present distracted condition of that unhappy country. The storm which is now sweeping over Spain, threatens to destroy almost every monument of her former greatness, and to carry away every vestige of the middle age. Though not so violent as that which desolated France fifty years ago, yet it is similar to this in many other respects. It was an evil-day for Spain when her soil became the theatre of a sanguinary struggle between the hosts of France and England. All her present evils date from that ill-fated period. The Peninsular war sowed upon her soil the seeds of French infidelity and English Protestantism, and these seeds are now producing their bitter fruits. And it is remarkable, that the late startling proceedings in Spain have been accordingly distinguished by the fierce fanaticism of the French revolution, tempered with the cold, calculating policy of the reformation in England under Henry VIII. We trace the policy of England in the invasion of church property, and in the destruction of her monasteries; and that of France in

the massacre of the monks at Barcelona and elsewhere.

What will be the final result of this great struggle, the future alone can reveal. Whether the ardent faith of the Spaniard will come out of the fiery ordeal warmer and brighter than ever, or whether that faith will grow cold or be obscured in the furnace we are not at present prepared to say. One thing is certain. The climate of Spain is too warm for Protestantism: on her soil the Protestant sects would be exotics which could have but a sickly growth at best, and which would soon wither and die. The only climate at all congenial with Protestantism is the cold, calculating north; it is too dreary, too devoid of feeling and soul, to suit the ardent temperament of the south. (1) The Spaniards are too thoroughly Catholic, ever to be tainted, at least to any great extent, by the errors of the last three centuries. The late appeal of the sovereign pontiff in behalf of suffering Spain, has met with such a response, in the bosom of millions all over the world, as bespeaks Catholic unity, and tells of the depths of that sympathy, which flows from Catholic charity! Only the Catholic Church can present the spectacle of the whole world thus forgetting every sectional and political difference, and, at the voice of one old man, kneeling before one common altar, and in divine unison of faith and feeling, praying, for one great object! That prayer will be heard, and Spain will be preserved to the Church!

Mr. Prescott has selected for the subject of his work the most interesting and brilliant period of Spanish history. The age of Ferdinand and Isabella is to Spain, what that of Louis XIV was subsequently to France; and what, immediately after, the pontificate of Leo X was to Italy and to the world. It was the era in which she laid broad and deep the foundation of that solid glory, which made her for more than two centuries the first country in Europe. It was the age which witnessed the glories of Ponce de Leon, and of Gonsalvo de Cordova, in the field, of Cardinals Mendoza and Ximenes, in the cabinet; and of Christopher Columbus on the broader field of the world—discovering a new continent. Mr. Prescott could scarcely have chosen a loftier theme. And he has brought to the execution of his task a great amount of learning, as well as much industry and care in the arrangement of his copious materials. His work manifests a degree of research into Spanish history highly creditable to the author; the more so, as in its preparation he had to encounter for a time the almost insuperable obstacle of almost total blindness. (2) Such works may often be met

with in Italy and Germany, and occasionally in France or England, but they are extremely rare in our light and frivolous age, and yet more so in our republic, where the utilitarian system of estimating everything in dollars and cents, has perhaps taken deeper root than any where else in the world. The United States may well be proud of two such historians as Prescott and Bancroft.

It is not our purpose to furnish a lengthy review of Mr. Prescott's history. It is before the American community and may speak for itself. In our opinion the style is more natural, and better adapted to historical narrative than the more florid manner of Bancroft, who seems to have caught no little of the *Bulwerian* and *transcendental* infection of the age. What is, however, most pleasing in the history of Ferdinand and Isabella, is the array of learned references, by which each statement is sustained. Nor is every original document and work cited, but the very edition and page are carefully marked, so as to facilitate, in a high degree, the researches of the scholar who might feel disposed to verify the quotations. The statements of the author may be relied on, wherever he confines himself to facts, unless he views them through the improper medium of undue prejudice, or is misled, as to the facts themselves, by prejudiced authority. Then he either greatly miscolors, or wholly perverts the facts. We will endeavor to show that he has committed both these faults in the seventh chapter of his first volume, pp. 230—267, where he gives a detailed history of the "modern Inquisition" in Spain; and our remarks on his history will be confined to this chapter.

That he was greatly under the influence of anti-catholic prejudice, we infer from the whole tenor of the chapter, which is in fact as virulent a libel upon Catholicity as we have ever chanced to read. To prove that the establishment of the Spanish Inquisition was in accordance with the principles of the Catholic Church, he repeats (3) the stale calumny that a Catholic principle is embodied in the odious proposition, "*the end justifies the means*." He turns out of his way to attack the Catholic doctrine of confession, which he designates (4) "an artificial institution" of priests, to gain influence with the people; and to show how Isabella's repugnance to the establishment of the inquisition was overcome, he relates a very simple, if not absurd anecdote of what passed between her and her confessor, Talavera. (5) In opposition to all history, he still asserts that St. Dominic was the founder of the ancient Inquisition, or at least maintains that if he was not, in point of fact he *ought* to have been. (6) He tells, in a satirical tone, of the divine eloquence and wonderful miracles by which St. Vincent Ferrer, in the fourteenth century, converted to Christianity thirty-five thousand Spanish Jews. (7) The sufferings of this unfortu-

nate people enlist his deepest sympathy. The Moors of Grenada have also his warmest feelings; these two people seem to have exhausted his stock of humanity, and he has no sympathy to throw away upon the Catholic Christians of Spain. Nor is he alone in this respect. It is the fault of most Protestant historians. Their sympathies run strongly in favor of Jew, Turk, or dissenter of every shade of opinion, while for the Catholic, they reserve the vials of their wrath! Is it, that there is a kindred spirit among errorists of every hue; a certain relationship, which makes them have a *tender* feeling for one another? It would seem so. The chief severity of this remark consists in its *truth*; and we have only to open Protestant historians *passim*, to become persuaded of it. Mr. Prescott furnishes abundant evidence of this spirit throughout his work.

It was scarcely to be expected that, roared as he evidently had been, in all the prejudices of Protestantism, Mr. Prescott should have become wholly divested of the early impressions of the nursery, so as to approach the subject of the horrible Spanish Inquisition with a calm mind and a steady nerve. It was difficult to dispel the "bloody phantoms" of slaughtered victims, which had haunted his early days, and to get rid of the opinions in regard to that tribunal which had been fastened on his mind by the teachings of the press and of the pulpit. But at least, as a faithful historian, he should have exhibited its redeeming as well as its odious features; and to have qualified himself for this task, he should have read both sides, and not have suffered himself to be misled by violently prejudiced writers.—That many of those whom he has followed are of this character, we will endeavor to show, and then we will glance rapidly at the principal works written in defence of the Inquisition, which Mr. Prescott seems either not to have seen at all, or not to have read.

The historians of the Spanish Inquisition most in favor with Protestants, are Limborch and Llorente. Mr. Prescott cites them both, and bases most of his statements upon the authority of the latter, who is so great a favorite with him as to merit a special biographical notice at the close of his chapter on the Inquisition. To ascertain how far they are to be relied on, as historians of the Inquisition, we must see who they were—under what circumstances they wrote their respective histories, and what motives prompted them to the task.

Philip Limborch was a native of Holland, and belonged to the sect of the Remonstrants or mitigated Calvinists. He was a disciple of the famous scholar, Vossius, who with Grotius had suffered so much from the intolerant synod of Dort, which in 1619 had consummated the division of the Dutch Calvinists. He attained to considerable eminence in his sect, in which he became a minister, and subsequently a professor of theology at Amsterdam. He was not, however, very rigid in adhering even to the slight standard of orthodoxy required by his own

1. See a late work by Mr. J. Balme, published at Madrid in 1840, a large extract from which appears in the January number of this Magazine. The writer of this article not long since conversed with a very intelligent Spaniard, the son of a distinguished Spanish nobleman, who amply confirmed this statement; and added that the vast majority of the Spanish nobility and grandees were not only thoroughly Catholic, but were also distinguished for their piety.

2. See his preface.

3. Vol. 1, p. 245. 4. Ibid. p. 346. 5. Ibid. 6. This is the purport of his reasoning (p. 232, note.) See La Cordaire's late work, "Apology for the order of St. Dominic," in which this charge is ably refuted by undeniable evidence.

7. Vol. 1, p. 240.