

### THE RECORD OF SPAIN AND HER FUTURE.

Lord Salisbury in a recent speech spoke of some nations as "dying." Amongst them it is universally understood that the British Premier included Spain. It does not, however, necessarily follow that a dying nation will reach the fatal consummation its condition foreshadows. Gifted as is Lord Salisbury, he may be wrong in his vaticinations. A brilliant French statesman fifty years ago wrote a book on "The Decadence of England," in which the old land was depicted as in a dying condition. The work was read by Englishmen of the time with a disdainful smile. Since this judgment of Ledru Rollin was published, England has risen to a height of national glory and prosperity, exceeding any in its history. Dark as is the outlook for Spain and deserved as may be the retribution she is now suffering, we trust she will come out of the fire of her tribulations purified from those gross elements which have brought about the disasters which have so humiliated her national pride, and so weakened the national resources. The history of Spain is the most romantic story of national vicissitudes, it has no parallel in human annals for the variety of political and social changes, which render Spanish history a moving panoramic spectacle of dramatic events. The country itself is a very singular mixture of extreme fertility, and great sterility. It is divided by chains of mountains which run across from west to east like vast fences, separating the peninsula into very marked divisions, such as exist in no other country. The effect of those barriers between different sections has not been considered by historians, but we cannot but regard them as having had a powerful influence over the national character and destinies. The development of civilisation is seriously hampered in a country which is divided into sections in so marked a manner as is Spain by its four ridges of mountains, running almost parallel at distances of from 40 to 80 miles. These not only occupy an enormous area, but present formidable obstacles to the free intercourse of the people, and the transit of trade. A celebrated writer attributes the backwardness of Spain to its form of religion, but a study of the topography of the country seems to point rather to natural causes than to those associated with religious belief, as a prevailing cause of Spain's being in the rear of civilisation. People born and reared in a narrow and deep valley are never as enterprising in any department of life as those whose horizon is wider, and whose facilities of free intercourse with the other parts of their country are greater. Imagine, if we can, what progress Canada would have made if a range of mountains had run from the St. Lawrence to the arctic circle every 40 to 80 miles; or what this continent would have been had a chain of mountains run from the Atlantic to the Rockies every 80 miles, from the Gulf of Mexico up to its northern boundary. The marvel is that under such conditions the people of Spain have become so homogeneous, so full of national sentiment, and made in the past so brilliant

an historic record. During the years when England was developing its autonomy, laying the foundations of its constitutional liberties, and ripening century after century in self-government, in commerce, in the arts, in literature, and in education, Spain was largely under the dominion of clever but semi-savage Mahomedans, who for eight centuries did much to keep that land in the darkness and the degradation of an anti-Christian power. Following the uprising of the national forces which practically relieved Spain from the terrible incubus of the Moors, and brought about the union of the Kingdom under the joint rule of Ferdinand and Isabella, the nation achieved unrivalled distinction by its navigators, discovering, or rather re-discovering this continent, and making the first voyage round the Cape of Good Hope. Then followed the conquest of Peru and the planting of the Spanish flag from Florida to the River Platte and at points on the western coast of South America. In Europe, in the 16th century, Spain was dominant, her hand was upon Italy, and the Netherlands, and at Naples, and St. Quentin, the French were beaten by Spaniards. Since the fall of the Roman Empire the world had not known such a power as Spain was at the close of the 16th century. So mighty had it become that King Philip II, was suspected of a design to found an universal Empire. His ambition was the ruin of Spain. He flung himself against the power of England by an "Invincible Armada," which, in its destruction, inflicted irreparable disaster upon the maritime supremacy of Spain. A similar design is believed to have been entertained by Louis XIV of France who, about a century after the Armada, aroused Europe by making his grandson King of Spain, a movement which opened out a glorious chapter of English military history. From that time the history of Spain has been one of decadence. Her colonial Empire dwindled down to Cuba, Porto Rico, the Philippines, and a few islands more British than Spanish in their trade and population. Spain showed marvellous enterprise in acquiring territory, but utter incapacity to so govern dependencies as to secure their willing allegiance.

The failure of Spanish Government is alleged to have arisen from the indifference of the people, of the mercantile and the professional classes especially to the practical duties of citizenship. It is quite a mistake to regard Spain as a country without a popular form of Government. Her political liberties long years ago, before the reign of Charles V, were greater than those of any nation in Europe. For a length of time it has had a popular Assembly and a Senate, the latter even more democratic than the one of Canada. Its municipal institutions are very widely extended. Were a nation so equipped for self-government to die, it would be a marvellous illustration of the incapacity of mere institutions of popular government to save a country from ruin.

It is, however, one thing for a country to possess a good constitutional system of government, but