

Selections.

AN AUTO DA FE BEFORE PHILIP THE SECOND.

This *auto da fe* ("act of faith") was the most imposing, as it was the most awful, of the solemnities authorized by the Roman Catholic Church. It was intended, somewhat profanely, as has been intimated, to combine the pomp of the Roman triumph with the terrors of the day of judgment. It may remind one quite as much of those bloody festivals prepared for the entertainment of the Cæsars in the Coliseum. The religious import of the *auto da fe* was intimated by the circumstance of its being celebrated on a Sunday, or some other holiday of the church. An indulgence for forty days was granted by his holiness to all who should be present at the spectacle; as if the appetite for witnessing the scenes of human suffering required to be stimulated by a bounty; that, too, in Spain, where the amusements were, and still are, of the most sanguinary character.

The scene for this second *auto da fe* at Valladolid, was the great square in front of the Church of St. Francis. At one end a platform was raised, covered with rich carpeting, on which were ranged the seats of the inquisitors, emblazoned with the arms of the Holy Office. Near to this was the royal gallery, a private entrance to which secured the inmates from molestation by the crowd. Opposite to this gallery a large scaffold was erected, so as to be visible from all parts of the arena, and was appropriated to the unhappy martyrs who were to suffer in the *auto*.

At six in the morning all the bells in the capital began to toll, and a solemn procession was seen to move from the distant fortress of the Inquisition. In the van marched a body of troops, to secure a free passage for the procession. Then came the condemned, each attended by two familiars of the Holy Office, and those who were to suffer at the stake by two friars, in addition, exhorting the heretic to abjure his errors. Those admitted to penitence wore a sable dress; while the unfortunate martyr was enveloped in a loose sack of yellow cloth,—the *san benito*,—with his head surmounted by a cap of pasteboard of a canonical form, which, together with the cloak, was embroidered with figures of flames and of devils fanning and feeding them; all emblematical of the destiny of the heretic's soul in the world to come, as well as of his body in the present. Then came the magistrates of the city, the judges of the court, the ecclesiastical orders, and the nobles of the land, en horsback. These were followed by the members of the dread tribunal, and the fiscal, bearing a standard of crimson damask, on one side of which were displayed the arms of the Inquisition, and on the other the insignia of its founders, Sixtus the Fifth, and Ferdinand the Catholic. Next came a numerous train of familiars, well mounted, among whom were many of the gentry of the province, proud to act as the body-guard of the Holy Office. The rear was brought up by an immense concourse of the common people, stimulated on the present occasion, no doubt, by the loyal desire to see their new sovereign, as well as by the ambition to share in the triumphs of the *auto da fe*. The number thus drawn together from the capital and country, far exceeding what was usual on such occasions, is estimated by one present at full two hundred thousand.

As the multitude defiled into the square, the inquisitors took their place on the seats prepared for their reception. The condemned were conducted to the scaffold, and the royal station was occupied by Philip, with the different members of his household. At his side sat his sister, the late regent, his son, Don Carlos, his nephew, Alexander Farnese, several foreign ambassadors, and the principal grandees and higher ecclesiastics in attendance on the court. It was an august assembly of the greatest in the land. But the most indifferent spectator, who had a spark of humanity in his bosom, might have turned with feelings of admiration from this array of worldly power, to the poor martyr, who, with no support but what he drew from within, was prepared to defy this power, and to lay down his life in vindication of the rights of conscience. Some there may have been, in that large concourse, who shared in these sentiments. But their number was small indeed in comparison with those who looked on the wretched victim as the enemy of God, and his approaching sacrifice as the most glorious triumph of the Cross.

The ceremonies began with a sermon, "the sermon of the faith," by the Bishop of Zamora. The subject of it may well be guessed from the occasion. It was no doubt plentifully larded with texts of Scripture; and, unless the preacher departed from the fashion of the time, with passages from the heathen writers, how-

ever much out of place they may seem in an orthodox discourse.

When the bishop had concluded, the grand inquisitor administered an oath to the assembled multitude, who, on their knees, solemnly swore to defend the Inquisition, to maintain the purity of the faith, and to inform against any one who should swerve from it. As Philip repeated an oath of similar import, he suited the action to the word, and, rising from his seat, drew his sword from its scabbard, as if to announce himself the determined champion of the Holy Office. In the earlier *autos* of the Moorish and Jewish infidels, so humiliating an oath had never been exacted from the sovereign.

After this, the secretary of the tribunal read aloud an instrument reciting the grounds for the conviction of the prisoners, and the respective sentences pronounced against them. Those who were to be admitted to penitence, each, as his sentence was proclaimed, knelt down, and with his hands on the miscal, solemnly abjured his errors, and was absolved by the grand-inquisitor. The absolution, however, was not so entire as to relieve the offender from the penalty of his transgressions in this world. Some were doomed to perpetual imprisonment in the cells of the Inquisition, others to lighter penances. All were doomed to the confiscation of their property—a point of too great moment to the welfare of the tribunal ever to be omitted. Besides this, in many cases the offender, and, by a glaring perversion of justice, his immediate descendants, were rendered forever ineligible to public office of any kind, and their names branded with perpetual infamy. Thus blighted in fortune and in character, they were said, in the soft language of the Inquisition, to be *reconciled*.

As these unfortunate persons were remanded, under a strong guard, to their prisons, all eyes were turned on the little company of martyrs, who, clothed in the ignominious garb of the *san benito*, stood waiting the sentence of their judges—with cords around their necks, and in their hands a cross, or sometimes an inverted torch, typical of their own speedy dissolution. The interest of the spectators was still further excited, in the present instance, by the fact that several of these victims were not only illustrious for their rank, but yet more so for their talents and virtues. In their haggard looks, their emaciated forms, and too often, alas! their distorted limbs, it was easy to read the story of their sufferings in their long imprisonment, for some of them had been confined in the dark cells of the Inquisition much more than a year. Yet their countenances, though haggard, far from showing any sign of weakness or fear, were lighted up with the glow of holy enthusiasm, as of men prepared to seal their testimony with their blood.

When that part of the process showing the ground of their conviction had been read, the grand inquisitor assigned them to the hand of the corregidor of the city, beseeching him to deal with the "prisoners in all kindness and mercy; a honeyed, but most hypocritical phrase, since no choice was left to the civil magistrate but to execute the terrible sentence of the law against heretics, the preparations for which had been made by him a week before.

The whole number of convicts amounted to thirty, of whom sixteen were *reconciled*, and the remainder *relaxed* to the secular arm,—in other words, turned over to the civil magistrate for execution. There were few of those thus condemned, who, when brought to the stake, did not so far shrink from the dreadful doom that awaited them as to consent to purchase a commutation of it by confession before they died; in which case they were strangled by the *garrote*, before their bodies were thrown into the flames.

Of the present number there were only two whose constancy triumphed to the last over the dread of suffering, and who refused to purchase any mitigation of it by a compromise with conscience. The names of these martyrs should be engraven on the record of history.

One of them was Don Carlos de Seso, a noble Florentine, who had stood high in the favor of Charles the Fifth. Being united with a lady of rank in Castile, he removed to that country, and took up his residence in Valladolid. He had become a convert to the Lutheran doctrines, which he first communicated to his own family, and afterwards showed equal zeal in propagating among the people of Valladolid and its neighbourhood. In short, there was no man to whose untiring and unrepaid labors the cause of the reformed religion in Spain was more indebted. He was, of course, a conspicuous mark for the Inquisition.

During the fifteen months in which he lay in his gloomy cell, cut off from human sympathy and support,

his constancy remained unshaken. The night preceding his execution, when his sentence had been announced to him, De Seso called for writing materials. It was thought he designed to propitiate his judges by a full confession of his errors. But the confession he made was of a different kind. He insisted on the errors of the Romish Church, and avowed his unshaken trust in the Reformation. The document, covering two sheets of paper, is pronounced by the secretary of the Inquisition to be a composition equally remarkable for its energy and precision. When led before the royal gallery, on his way to the place of execution, De Seso pathetically exclaimed to Philip, "Is it thus that you allow your innocent subjects to be persecuted?" To which the king made the memorable reply, "If it were my own son, I would fetch the wood to burn him were he such a wretch as thou art!" It was certainly a characteristic answer.

At the stake De Seso showed the same unshaken constancy, bearing his testimony to the truth of the great cause for which he gave up his life. As the flames crept slowly around him, he called on the soldiers to heap up the fagots, that his agonies might be sooner ended; and his executioners, indignant at the obstinacy—the heroism—of the martyr, were not slow in obeying his commands.

The companion and fellow-sufferer of De Seso was Domingo de Roxas, son of the Marquis de Peza, an unhappy noble, who had seen five of his family, including his eldest son, condemned to various humiliating penances by the Inquisition for their heretical opinions. This one was now to suffer death. De Roxas was a Dominican monk. It is singular that this order, from which the ministers of the Holy Office were particularly taken, furnished many proselytes to the Reformed religion. De Roxas, as was the usage with ecclesiastics, was allowed to retain his sacerdotal habit until his sentence had been read, when he was degraded from his ecclesiastical rank, his vestments were stripped off one after another, and the hideous dress of the *san benito* thrown over him, amid the shouts and derision of the populace. Thus apparelled, he made an attempt to address the spectators around the scaffold; but no sooner did he begin to raise his voice against the errors and cruelties of Rome, than Philip indignantly commanded him to be gagged. The gag was a piece of cleft wood which forcibly compressing the tongue, had the additional advantage of causing great pain while it silenced the offender. Even when he was bound to the stake, the gag, though contrary to custom, was suffered to remain in the mouth of De Roxas, as if his enemies dreaded the effects of an eloquence that triumphed over the anguish of death.

The place of execution—the *quemadero*, the burning-place, as it was called—was a spot selected for the purpose without the walls of the city. Those who attended an *auto da fe* were not, therefore, necessarily, as is commonly imagined, spectators of the tragic scene that concluded it. The great body of the people, and many of higher rank, no doubt, followed to the place of execution. On this occasion, there is reason to think, from the language—somewhat equivocal, it is true—of Philip's biographer, that the monarch chose to testify his devotion to the Inquisition by witnessing in person the appalling close of the drama; while his guards mingled with the menials of the Holy Office, and heaped up the fagots around their victims.

Such was the cruel exhibition which, under the garb of a religious festival, was thought the most fitting ceremonial for welcoming the Catholic monarch to his dominions! During the whole time of its duration in the public square, from six in the morning till two in the afternoon, no symptom of impatience was exhibited by the spectators, and, as may well be believed, no sign of sympathy for the sufferers. It would be difficult to devise a better school for perverting the moral sense and deadening the sensibilities of a nation.—Prescott.

Last week, at Stanford, Mr. Augustus Stafford, M.P., lectured on the Crimean campaign. After a few preparatory observations, the lecturer said he embarked on the 2nd of September last at Marseilles, on board the *Hecla*, an English transport, with 760 French troops. Cholera was in the town when they sailed, and eight hours afterwards it broke out among the troops on board. As they steamed southward the pest increased and so did the cholera. This large number of men had been sent out without any medicine whatever. Not possessing the silent fortitude of English soldiers, their cries were most piteous. On reaching Malta, the state of the ship was so horrible that he at most determined to quit it; but, at the urgent request of many poor sufferers, he was induced to stay with them. Cholera then began among the English sailors.