

The courts of Madrid and Lisbon were as despotic as those of Constantinople and Ispahan. They did not, indeed, manifest their power by acts of blood, because the reigning families were not cruel, and cruelty had ceased to be a characteristic of the times: but with that cold, callous insensibility to which men are liable, in proportion as they are removed from the common sympathies of humankind, they permitted their ministers to dispense at pleasure exile and hopeless imprisonment, to the rigour and inhumanity of which death itself would have been mercy. The laws afforded no protection, for the will of the minister was above the laws; and every man who possessed influence at court violated them with impunity, and procured impunity for all whom he chose to protect. Scarcely did there exist even an appearance of criminal justice. Quarrels among the populace were commonly decided by the knife: he who stabbed an antagonist or an enemy in the street wiped the instrument in his cloak, and passed on unmolested by the spectators, who never interfered farther than to call a priest to the dying man. When it happened that a criminal was thrown into prison, there he remained till it became necessary to make room for a new set of tenants: the former were then turned adrift; or, if their crimes had been notorious and frequent, they were shipped off to some foreign settlement.

After the triumph of the monarchical power, the Cortes had fallen first into insignificance, then into disuse*. There was no

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Despotism
of the two
govern-
ments.

Mal-admini-
stration of
the laws.

Disuse of
the Cortes.

* A few years after the peace of Utrecht, the Abbé de Vayrac published a work in three volumes, entitled *Etat Present de l'Espagne, où l'on voit une Geographie Historique du Pays, l'Etablissement de la Monarchie, ses Revolutions, sa Decadence, son Rétablissement, et ses Accroissemens: les Prerogatives de la Couronne; le Rang des Princes et des Grands: l'Institution et les Fonctions des Officiers de la Maison du Roy, avec un Ceremonial du Palais: le Forme du Gouvernement Ecclesiastique,*

CHAP. legislative body; the principle of the government being, that all
 I. laws and public measures of every kind were to proceed from
 Condition of the nobles. the will and pleasure of the sovereign. Men of rank, therefore, if they were not in office, had no share in public business; and their deplorable education rendered them little fit either to improve or enjoy a life of perfect leisure. It is said also to have been the system of both governments, while they yet retained some remains of perverted policy, to keep the nobles in attendance about the court, where they might be led into habits of emulous extravagance, which would render them hungry for emoluments, and thereby dependent upon the crown. The long-continued moral deterioration of the privileged classes had produced in many instances a visible physical degeneracy; and this tendency was increased by those incestuous marriages, common in both countries, which pride and avarice had introduced, and for which the sanction of an immoral church was to be purchased.

Condition of the army.

The armies partook of the general degradation. The forms of military power existed like the forms of justice: but they resembled the trunk of a tree, of which the termites have eaten out the timber, and only the bark remains. There appeared in the yearly almanacks a respectable list of regiments, and a redundant establishment of officers: but, brave and capable of endurance as the Portugueze and Spaniards are, never were there such officers or such armies in any country which has ranked among civilized nations. Subalterns might be seen

Militaire, Civil et Politique; les Mœurs, les Coûtumes, et les Usages des Espagnols: le tout extrait des Loix Fundamentales du Royaume, des Reglemens, des Pragmatiques les plus authentiques, et des meilleurs Auteurs. There is no mention whatever of the Cortes in this work!

waiting behind a chair in their uniforms, or asking alms in the streets; and the men were what soldiers necessarily become, when, without acquiring any one virtue of their profession, its sense of character and of honour, its regularity, or its habits of restraint, they possess all its license, and have free scope for the vices which spring up in idleness. Drawn by lot into a compulsory service, ill-disciplined, and ill-paid, they were burthensome to the people, without affording any security to the nation.

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The state of religion was something more hopeful, though it is scarcely possible to imagine any thing more gross than the idolatry, more impudent than the fables, more monstrous than the mythology of the Romish church, as it flourished in Spain and Portugal. Wherever this corrupt church is dominant, there is no medium between blind credulity and blank, hopeless, utter unbelief: and this miserable effect tends to the stability of the system which has produced it, because men who have no religion accommodate themselves to whatever it may be their interest to profess. The peasantry and the great mass of the people believed with implicit and intense faith whatever they were taught. The parochial clergy, differing little from the people in their manner of life, and having received an education so nearly worthless that it can scarcely be said to have raised them above the common level, were for the most part as superstitious and as ill-informed as their flock. The higher clergy, however, had undergone a gradual and important change, which had not been brought about by laws or literature, but by the silent and unperceived influence of the spirit of the times. While their principle of intolerance remained the same (being inherent in popery, and inseparable from it), the practice had been greatly abated; and the *autos-da-fe*, the high festival days of this merciless idolatry, were at an end: for it was felt and secretly

*State of religion.**Improvement of the higher clergy.*

CHAP. I. acknowledged, that these inhuman exhibitions were disgraceful in the eyes of Europe, and had brought a stain upon the character of the peninsular nations in other catholic countries, and even in Rome itself. The persecution of the Jews therefore (which the founder of the Braganzan line would never have permitted if he had been able to prevent it) ceased; and the distinction between Old and New Christians had nearly disappeared. At the same time, an increased intercourse with heretical states, the power and prosperity of Great Britain, and the estimation in which the British character is held wherever it is known, had insensibly diminished, if not the abhorrence in which heresy was held, certainly the hatred against heretics. Thus the habitual feelings of the clergy had been modified, and they were no longer made cruel by scenes of execrable barbarity, which in former times compelled them to harden their hearts. They became also ashamed of those impostures upon which so large a portion of their influence had been founded: though they did not purge their kalendar, they made no additions to it; miraculous images were no longer discovered: when a grave-digger, in the exercise of his office, happened to find a corpse in a state of preservation, no attempt was made to profit by the popular opinion of its sanctity: miracles became less frequent as they were more scrupulously examined; and impostures*, which, half a century ago, would have been encouraged and adopted, were detected, exposed, and punished. The higher clergy in both countries were decorous in their lives, and in some instances exemplary in the highest degree.

* The *Beatas* of Cuenca, Madrid, and Evora, may be cited as examples. Notices of the two former impostors may be seen in Llorente's *Histoire Critique de l'Inquisition*: a manuscript account of the latter is in my possession.

To the monastic orders the influence of the times had been less beneficial. There were ages during which those institutions produced the greatest blessings in Europe; when they kept alive the lamp of knowledge, mitigated barbarian manners, and carried the light of Christianity among a race of ferocious conquerors. These uses had long since gone by; and the dissolution of the Jesuits had extinguished the missionary spirit which that extraordinary society had provoked in its rivals, and by which it had itself almost atoned to humanity and to religion for its own manifold misdeeds. The wealthy orders still afforded a respectable provision for the younger sons of old or opulent families; the far more numerous establishments of the mendicants were more injuriously filled from the lower classes. The peasant who was ambitious of seeing a son elevated above the rank in which he was born, destined him for a friar; and he who was too idle to work, or who wished to escape from military service, took shelter in the habit. The mendicant orders were indeed a reproach to Catholicism, and a pest to the countries wherein they existed: they contributed not only to keep the people ignorant, but to render them profligate. Yet even among the Franciscans men were found, who, by their irreproachable conduct, their sincere though misdirected piety, and sometimes by their learning and industrious lives, preserved the order from the contempt into which it would otherwise have fallen even among the vulgar. The nunneries of every description produced nothing but evil, except in those cases where persons went into them by their own choice, who in Protestant countries would have been consigned to a Bedlam.

Literature had revived in both kingdoms, and was flourishing, notwithstanding the restraints which the government and the Inquisition continued to impose. Few similar institutions have equalled the Royal Academies of Madrid and Lisbon in

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*State of the
religious
orders.*

*Improving
literature.*

CHAP. I. the zeal and ability with which they have brought to light their ancient records, and elucidated the history and antiquities of their respective countries. There was one most important subject from which men of letters were compelled to refrain . . . the old free constitution : but it met them every where in their researches ; and its restoration was the object of their wishes, if not of their hopes.

*Morals of
the lower
classes.*

The lower classes, who in great cities are every where too generally depraved, were perhaps peculiarly so in Spain, from the effect of what may be called their vulgar, rather than their popular, literature. This had assumed a curious and most pernicious character, arising partly from the disregard in which ill-executed laws must always be held, and partly from the faith of the people in the efficacy of absolution. The ruffian and the bravo were the personages of those ballads which were strung for sale along dead walls in frequented streets, and vended by blind hawkers about the country. In these pieces, which, as they were written by men in low life for readers of their own level, represent accurately the state of vulgar feeling, the robberies and murders which the hero commits are described as so many brave exploits performed in his vocation ; and, at the conclusion, he is always delivered over safely to the priest, but seldom to the hangman. Fables of a like tendency were not unfrequently chosen by their dramatists for the sake of flattering some fashionable usage of superstition, such as the adoration of the cross and the use of the rosary ; and the villain who, in the course of the drama, has perpetrated every imaginable crime, is exhibited at the catastrophe* as a saint by virtue of one of

* What is most extraordinary is, that some German critics have discovered sublimity in these monstrous exhibitions, which are as offensive to common sense as they are to the moral feeling.

these redeeming practices. Such works were more widely injurious in their tendency than any of those which the Inquisition suppressed. They infected the minds of the people; and the surest course by which a coxcomb in low life could excite admiration and envy among his compeers was by appearing habitually to set justice at defiance. It became a fashion among some of the higher classes in Spain to imitate* these wretches; and, by a stranger and more deplorable perversion of nature, women were found among those of distinguished rank, who affected the dress and the manners of the vilest of their sex. No such depravity was known in Portugal: the court set an example of decorum and morality there; and as there were fewer large towns, in proportion to the size of the kingdom, there was consequently less corruption among the people.

Travellers, forming their hasty estimate from the inhabitants of sea-ports and great cities, have too generally agreed in reviling the Portugueze and Spaniards: but if they whose acquaintance with these nations was merely superficial have been disposed to depreciate and despise them, others who dwelt among them always became attached to the people, and bore willing and honourable testimony to the virtues of the national character. It was indeed remarkable how little this had partaken of the national decay. The meanest peasant knew that his country had once been prosperous and powerful; he was familiar with the names of its heroes; and he spake of the days that were past with a feeling which was the best omen for those that were to come.

Such was the moral and intellectual state of the peninsular

* The Vermin and Four-in-hand clubs are sufficiently analogous to this Spanish fashion of the *Majos*, to render this at once intelligible and credible to the English reader.

CHAP. I. kingdoms toward the close of the eighteenth century. There was not the slightest appearance of improvement in the principles of the government or in the administration of justice ; but, if such a disposition had arisen, no nations could have been in a more favourable state for the views of a wise minister and an enlightened sovereign. For the whole people were proudly and devoutly attached to the institutions of their country ; there existed among them neither sects, nor factions, nor jarring interests ; they were one-hearted in all things which regarded their native land ; individuals felt for its honour as warmly as for their own ; and obedience to their sovereign was with them equally a habit and a principle. In spite of the blind and inveterate despotism of the government, the mal-administration of the laws, and the degeneracy of the higher classes, both countries were in a state of slow, but certain, advancement ; of which, increasing commerce, reviving literature, humaner manners, and mitigated bigotry were unequivocal indications. In this state they were found when France was visited by the most tremendous revolution that history has recorded, . . . a revolution which was at once the consequence and the punishment of its perfidious policy, its licentiousness, and its irreligion.

*Both become
subservient
to France.*

It was soon seen that this revolution threatened to propagate itself throughout the whole civilised world. The European governments combined against it : their views were discordant, their policy was erroneous, their measures were executed as ill as they were planned : a master-mind was equally wanting in the cabinet and in the field. In the hour of trial the Spanish court perceived the inefficiency of its organized force ; and having neither wisdom to understand the strength of the nation, nor courage and virtue to rely upon it, it concluded a disastrous war by a dishonourable peace. From that time its councils were directed by France, and its treasures were at the disposal of the

same domineering ally. A war against England, undertaken upon the most frivolous pretexts, and ruinous to its interests, was the direct consequence ; and when, after the experimental peace of Amiens, hostilities were renewed between France and England, Spain had again to experience the same fatal results of the dependence to which her cabinet had subjected her. Portugal had purchased peace with less apparent dishonour, because the terms of the bargain were not divulged ; but there also the government soon found that in such times to be weak is to be miserable : it was compelled to brook the ostentatious insolence of the French ambassadors, and to pay large sums for the continuance of a precarious neutrality whenever France thought proper to extort them ; for the system of Europe had now been overthrown, and the laws of nations were trampled under foot. A military power, more formidable than that of Rome in its height of empire, of Zingis, or of Timour, had been established in France upon the wreck of all her ancient institutions ; and this power was directed by the will of an individual the most ambitious of the human race, who was intoxicated with success, and whose heart and conscience were equally callous.

Many causes combined in producing the French revolution : the example of a licentious court had spread like a pestilence through the country ; impiety was in fashion among the educated classes ; and the most abominable publications were circulated among the ignorant with as much zeal as if a conspiracy had actually been formed for the subversion of social order, by removing from mankind all restraints of morality, of religion, and of decency. Things were in this condition when France took part in the American war ; a measure to which Louis XVI. reluctantly consented, because he felt in his heart its injustice, and had perhaps an ominous sentiment of its im-

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*Causes of
the French
revolution.*

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The seeds of republicanism and revolution were thus imported by the government itself, and they fell upon a soil which was prepared for them. Financial difficulties increased; state quacks were called in; a legislative assembly was convoked in a kingdom where none of the inhabitants had been trained to legislation; and the fatal error was committed of uniting the three estates in one chamber, whereby the whole power was transferred to the commons. There was a generous feeling at that time abroad, from which much good might have been educed, had there been ability to have directed it, and if the heart of the country had not been corrupted. Nothing was heard except the praises of freedom and liberality, and professions of the most enlarged and cosmopolitan philanthropy. The regenerated nation even renounced for the future all offensive war by a legislative act: they fancied that the age of political redemption was arrived, and they announced the Advent of Liberty, with peace on earth, good will towards men. They themselves seemed to believe that the Millennium of Philosophy was begun; and so in other countries the young and ardent, and the old who had learned no lessons from history, believed with them. But the consequences which Burke predicted from changes introduced with so much violence, and so little forethought, followed in natural and rapid succession. The constitutionalists, who had supposed that it is as easy to remodel the institutions of a great kingdom in practice as in theory, were driven from the stage by bolder innovators; and these in their turn yielded to adventurers more profligate and more daring than themselves. Nobility was abolished; monarchy was overthrown; the church was plundered; the clergy were proscribed; atheism was proclaimed; the king and queen were put to death, after a mockery of judicial forms; the dauphin slowly murdered by systematic ill-usage; a plaster

*Progress of
the French
revolution.*