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Spain as Seen through the Works of

Vicente Blasco Ibáñez

SPAIN AS SEEN THROUGH THE WORKS OF
VICENTE BLASCO IBÁÑEZ

BY

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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPER-

VISION BY Rafael Arcángel Soto

ENTITLED Spain as seen through the works of Vicente Blasco Ibáñez.

BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

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SPAIN AS SEEN THROUGH THE WORKS OF VICENTE BLASCO IBÁÑEZ

BIOGRAPHY

Vicente Blasco Ibáñez was born in the city of Valencia in 1867. He is of Aragonese descent, and has inherited the characteristics of his race, -great personal energy and the passion for independence. His life has been from the beginning one of tumult and conflict with established authority. At seventeen he ran away from home and went to Madrid, where he began to interest himself in literature and politics. At eighteen he was sentenced to six months imprisonment on account of a sonnet which he published attacking the government. In 1890 he had to flee from Valencia to escape a second imprisonment, and went to Paris, where he spent two happy years in the Latin Quarter. Upon returning to Spain, he took a leading part in a popular demonstration against the measures of the government in its attempt to suppress the Cuban insurrection. This time he fled to Italy, but was arrested on his return three months later and condemned to two years imprisonment. He was released in 1894. For his propaganda as a champion of republican and socialistic ideas he has been arrested some thirty times. The people of Valencia have shown their gratitude for his independent leadership by electing him deputy to the Cortes eight times in succession. In this capacity he has distinguished himself for his fiery speeches in his support of the people's cause. Besides having visited France and Italy, Blasco Ibáñez has been in England, the Netherlands, the nations of Central Europe, Constantinople, Greece, and in some of the countries of South America.



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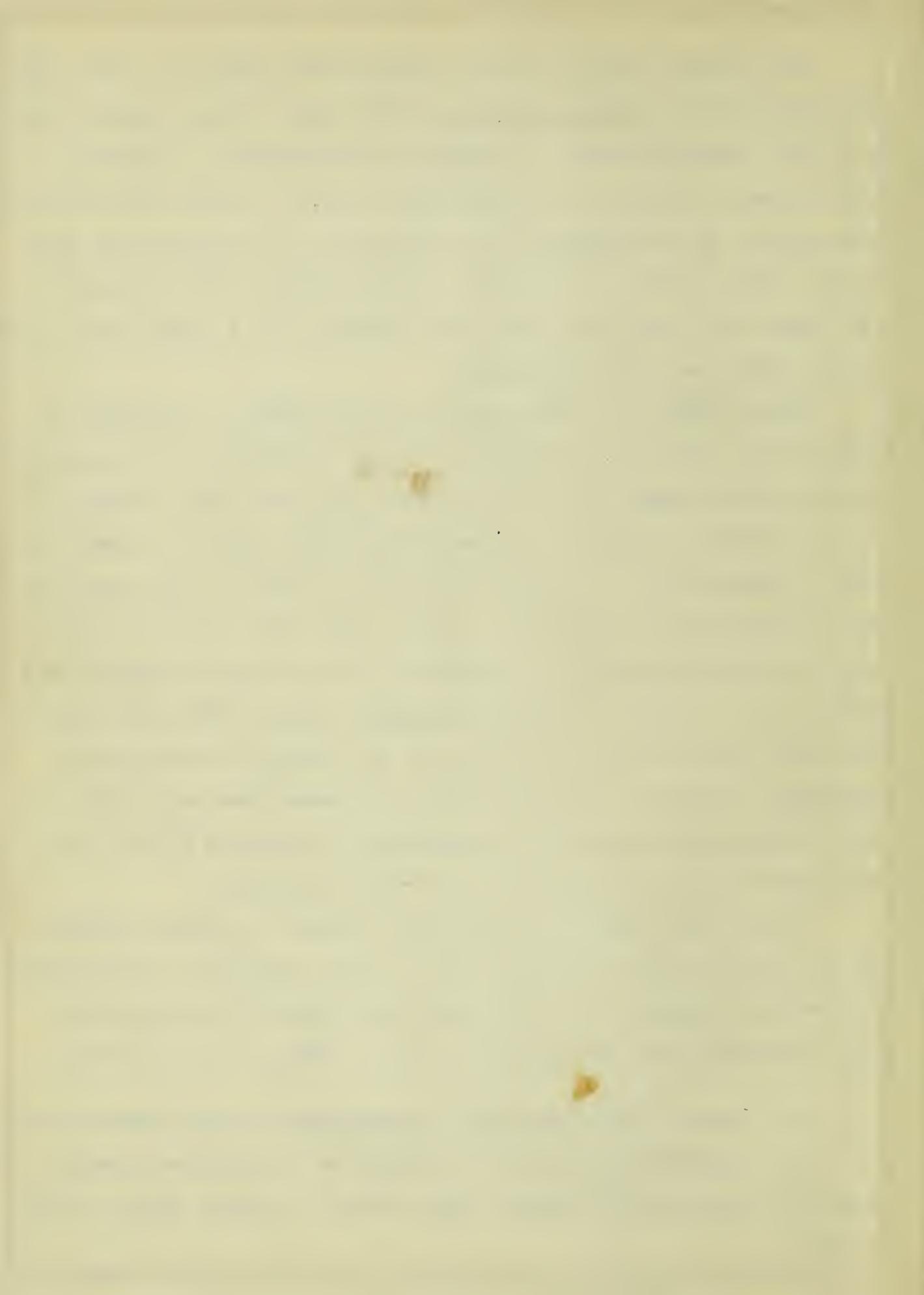
The literary career of Blasco Ibáñez really begins in 1894, with the publication of Arroz y tartana. Before this date his literary talents were confined mainly to journalistic activities. He edited a daily paper in Valencia, El Pueblo, as a means of social and political propaganda, and collaborated in the publication of several other newspapers. For a period of ten years, between 1900 and 1909, he gave to the public one novel every year, and sometimes two a year. (For a list of his works see the Bibliography)

Blasco Ibáñez is a true artist, yet his ideal in literature is not art for art's sake. He believes, to use the words of the Argentine critic Manuel Ugarte, that, "the printed page, more than a luxury of those favored by fortune, is to be the luminous hand which shows the way of reparations." (1) In all his works the study of the people is what preoccupies his attention; and this study "has not been an accident in his literary career, a task to which one devotes himself as a pastime and in order to try all the genres. Blasco Ibáñez has studied the people with delight and with love; his studies are unique and matchless in Spain." (2) The method of personal observation and experimentation which he uses in preparing his materials gives to his writings the trustworthiness of first-hand information.

Of late there has been developing in Spain a profound interest in the introspective analysis of the national conscience; independent thinkers are beginning to investigate what Miguel de Unamuno calls the "intra-historia" of the nation. Blasco Ibáñez is one of the pio-

(1) Manuel Ugarte: El Arte y la Democracia; Sempere, Valencia; p. 62

(2) Andrés González-Blanco: Historia de la novela en España desde el romanticismo a nuestros días; Sáenz de Jubera, Madrid, 1909; p. 573.



neers in this work, and in his novels he attempts to present a picture of the real Spain, without hesitating to display her weakness and her misery. His process of dissection may seem at times hard and cruel, but knowing the intention of the author one can hardly criticize him harshly for resorting to such methods. His works picture a scene of the conflict between the old and the new, between the retrograde traditional ideas which have held Spain in a mummified condition and the modern progressive forces which are pushing her into the current of European thought and life. Blasco Ibáñez does not only show the evils which he observes, but quite often points to a way of escape. Under all circumstances, however, he, the strong man, stands as the champion of the weak and the oppressed.

THE PEOPLE: THREE CLASSES

Blasco Ibáñez devotes most of his attention to the study of the middle and lower classes; and of these two the latter has a greater place both in his heart and in his books. The nobility, counting for little as a positive force in the general progress of the country, appears as a negligible factor in his writings. He refers to it only to show its decadence and penury. Jaime Febrer, in Los muertos mandan, represents the historical nobility, kept, on the one hand, from enjoying easy access to the army, the royal Councils, or the Church; and, on the other hand, prevented by a remnant of old prejudices from engaging in any profitable business or occupation. The only solution that Febrer can think of in his financial difficulties is to marry the daughter of a wealthy chuetas, of Jewish descent. In fact, the economic element is the factor which is bringing down the nobility to a level

with the other classes. Doña Elvira, in La bodega, however proud she may feel of the glorious past of her family, condescends, for economic reasons, to marry into the Dupont family, grown to wealth through the manufacture of wines. This downward step in the social rank represents for the nobility an upward stride in its attempt to escape from its peculiar restrictions.

The upward movement of the middle class is helping to relieve the situation. In this class we find the forces which are initiating the country in a career of development. Industrialism and commercialism are receiving from them a very strong impulse. These people are the moneyed classes of the country. In proportion as their wealth increases, social aspirations develop in them. Having satisfied their material needs, they begin to realize that there is a life of the spirit in which they ought to share. These aspirations no doubt help to narrow the gap between them and the aristocracy.

There is, however, a danger in the conception which persists in the middle class concerning the realization of the change just considered. Copying and aping aristocratic manners become the only aspirations of these parvenues, who gradually abandon their habit of industry and thrift, and take advantage of an infinite variety of schemes in order to keep up appearances. In Arroz y tartana, Blasco Ibáñez ridicules and attacks this "burguesía pretenciosa, corrompida prematuramente, por la ambición de brillar, por el ansia de mentir, encaramándose penosamente a una altura usurpada." (1) Don Antonio Cuadros (2) starts as a clerk in a store, and by means of his industry

(1) Arroz y tartana, p. 238.

(2) Arroz y tartana.

himself finally becomes the proprietor of the store. But he notices that other people are making money faster through their operations at the Bolsa, and he desires to be one of them. He neglects business at the store, and without knowing whether his ability will come up to the requirements of his new enterprise, he becomes a bolsista. At first he wins and this gives him confidence. Finally when he has almost all his money invested, a crash comes in the Bolsa, and Don Antonio has to flee in order to escape the shame of financial disgrace. (1) Doña Manuela Fora, (2) with her aristocratic airs and aspirations, causes her husband Don Melchor Peña to abandon his thrifty habits as a merchant in order to wear the garb of an aristocrat. This change of life, by taking Don Melchor out of his natural sphere, gradually leads him to the grave. In spite of these and similar abortive methods, the middle class is on the ascent. Its evolution is both economical and moral.

This upward tendency also characterizes the lower classes. Progress, however, is very slow in these classes, but the future holds for them great promise. They do not have the opportunities for ease nor the influence and power which wealth gives to people of the middle class. Whatever advance they make comes through hard labor and great sacrifice in their struggle with the upper classes, who oppress them. Moreover, among these people, prejudices regarding social changes are harder to overcome. Tía Mariposa, herself a trapera of the outskirts of Madrid, resents the marriage of her daughter to a mason who works in the city; she thinks that her daughter has descended in her

(1) Arroz y tartana, p. 238.

(2) . Arroz y tartana, pp. 43 ff.

social station. (1) Tío Paloma, the descendant of several generations of fishermen, regrets the fact that his son Tono has abandoned fishing in order to devote himself to farming. A change like this he considers a disgrace to the family. (2) According to Blasco Ibáñez, the condition of these classes should demand our most thoughtful consideration. Whether at the huerta, describing the struggle of the people with the soil; (3) or on the shores of the Cabañal, picturing the fight of a fishing community with the sea; (4) or at the lake of the Albufera, describing the misery and stagnation of a squalid population consumed by fever; (5) or on the Andalusian cortijos, making us witness the sufferings of a people under the oppression of a landed aristocracy; (6) or in Bilbao, describing the rudeness with which a community of miners earn their bread, the privations which they endure and the demoralizing environment which surrounds them; (7) or at the cathedral of Toledo, describing the condition of a starving lower clergy under the tyranny of a well-fed Church aristocracy; (8) or at the "villa y corte de Madrid," in the outskirts of which lives an "horda de hambre y miseraⁱ" feeding on the refuse of the city; (9) —

- (1) La horda; p.297
- (2) Cañas y barro; p.46
- (3) La barraca
- (4) Flor de Mayo
- (5) Cañas y barro
- (6) La bodega
- (7) El intruso
- (8) La catedral
- (9) La horda

in all these places one may see the strong and sympathetic arm of Vicente Blasco Ibáñez helping to lift the burden of the people, or striking hard at the established order of both Church and State, or pointing to the dawn of a new social order.

The condition of the middle and lower classes will be better observed in connection with some of the important problems which bring the two classes in contact.

THE AGRARIAN PROBLEM

In Spain, however much is said to the contrary, agriculture is in a backward condition. The progress made in this line in other countries does not seem to reach the Peninsula. "The land is cultivated worse than at the time of the Moors. Fertilizers are unknown, people speak of them with disdain, as modern schemes, contrary to good traditions. The intensive farming of other countries is considered like a dream. People plow in the Biblical style; the soil is left to produce as it will, the shortness of the crop compensating with the great extent of the land property and the extremely low wages." (1) Whatever modern implements have been adopted are used by the rich as a fighting weapon against the laborer. In the Andalusian cortijos, for example, the thrasher is the only modern utensil in use. "Thrashing in the old style lasted for months...., and the gañanes selected this epoch to ask for better conditions, threatening to go on a strike and leave the crops to be lost. The thrasher at present, by doing in two weeks the work of two months assures the harvest to the owner. Besides, it saves labor and is equivalent to a vengeance on discontented laborers." (2)

(1) La bodega, p. 197.

(2) Ibid., pp. 197 ff.

With a few exceptions, methods like those just mentioned are used with all the land available for cultivation. But there is a certain proportion of the land (two million hectares) which is not cultivated at all. In Andalusia there are immense tracts of land which are devoted merely to the raising of bulls, to supply the demand of the different plazas throughout the country. In many cases these tracts of land were formerly occupied by busy communities who were driven ^{to move} to other places on seeing the public lands which produced bread for their families become the pasture-ground of some influential wealthy man. Blasco Ibáñez dares to include also in these lands from which no produce is derived the fourteen leagues occupied by the royal hunting grounds of El Pardo, in Madrid, besides the lands about the Casa de Campo, the Granja, the possessions of Aranjuez, all of which are royal properties.(1)

In addition to the poor methods of tilling the soil, there is another evil which decreases the efficiency of the crops and often ruins them entirely, namely the almost total lack of irrigation. There are one million hectares of irrigated lands against twenty six million that are not. "Ese cultivo de secano, que viene a ser toda nuestra agricultura," says Blasco Ibáñez "es un llamamiento que la desidia española hace al hambre; una demostración perpetua del fanatismo que confía en la rogativa y en la lluvia del cielo más/que en los adelantos de los hombres."(2) In fact, rainless years and bad crops are causing people from all over Spain,— from Galicia, from Valladolid, from Zamora, from Castile, from Leon, from Aragon—to leave their homes and

(1) La horda, p. 96.

(2) La catedral, p. 209; La bodega, p. 110.

go to other more favored centers, like Bilbao, Barcelona, Valencia, etc., where industries and commerce offer opportunities of earning high wages. Many of these laborers with their families have not stopped in their exodus until after reaching Buenos Aires. Through his works, Blasco Ibáñez has been a promotor of this emigration to the South American Continent. (1)

In La bodega he gives us a graphic and complete picture of the Jerezan system of latifundia, which is typical of all Andalusia. "Dans ce cadre exubérant de couleurs grouille une vie intense, se meuvent des figures nettement enlevées: gens de la gañanía, aperadores et arreadores, capataces ou mayorales du cortijo, braceros....gitanes crapuleux et señoritos effeminés fainéants avec leur coeur de guapos et hâbleurs, rien ne manque à ce tableau d'un pays où le pittoresque flote, si je puis m'exprimer ainsi, parmi les rutilances d'un éther exubérant." (2) The beauty and charm of this picture is not, however, the thing that attracts our attention the most, as in the case in the descriptions of Andalusia by Fernán Caballero, Juan Valera, Salvador Rueda, and others. Blasco Ibáñez, besides being an artist, is a champion of the people's cause; and here, as elsewhere, he directs the course of our sympathy toward those who suffer under oppression. The misery of the gañanes appears before us in all its revolting reality. These people, who remind one of the ex-men described by Gorki, are the slaves of a land-system which is crushing their lives. They work all day long in the fields, in hot or cold weather, bending over at their task as if stuck to the soil, and all for a mere pittance, two

(1) La bodega, pp. 365ff; Los argonautas, La Argentina y sus grandezas.

(2) Camille Pitollet: Bull. hisp., Vol. 7 (1905), p. 309.

reales a day and five at the time of the harvest.(1) Their food consists of only bread and garlic, prepared in different ways.(2) Their dwelling-place is the gañanía, or house where all the men and women of a certain cortijo are piled in promiscuous confusion. Most of them sleep on mats, without removing their clothes, resting their aching bones on the hard ground. The same room serves both as a sleeping-room and kitchen, and this circumstance causes the air to become full of smoke and permeated with an "hedor de lana húmeda, aceite rancio, barro y carne aglomerada y viscosa!"(3) Physically and mentally, these people are wrecks. The men grow old prematurely and are wrecks by the time they reach maturity. Their faces are "carátulas de miseria, máscaras de sufrimiento y de hambre!" They tremble before the poderosos and the autoridad, and it is this fear which makes them work while the aperador is present. When left alone, "there takes hold of them the indolence of the race, the desire to remain motionless, without seeing anything, without thinking of anything!"(4)

Blasco Ibáñez gives us also a picture of the youths of the sierra who work under the vaqueros and the yegüerizos. With a salary of thirty reales a month, with no other food than stale bread, chick-peas or beans and rancid olive oil, these lads are condemned to savegery and slavery from their birth. Their habits of life are those of a primitive race, and their ambition is "casáme, jartáme y moríme."(5) They

(1) La bodega, p. 104

(2) Ibid., pp. 105ff.

(3) Ibid., p. 131

(4) Ibid., p. 130

(5) Ibid., p. 102

too, with the women of their neighborhood, migrate every year toward the cortijos of the low lands in order not to starve.

According to Blasco Ibáñez the remedy for such conditions among the gañanía lies in the education of the individual: "Lo primero es crear hombres nuevos, antes de ir a la supresión del mundo caduco."(1) Revolutions are of no avail. "El alma de nuestras gentes es la misma que en tiempo de los señoríos. Guardan en lo más hondo la resignación del siervo."(1) And it is useless for them to fight against masters who have the autoridades on their side, and whose ideas in regard to dealings with the common people are: "el pan en una mano y el garrote en la otra,"(2) or "más palo y más religión."

ALCOHOLIC INTEMPERANCE

Closely allied with the agrarian problem is the question of alcoholic intemperance. Blasco Ibáñez never loses a chance to show the effects of the alcoholic poison upon the life of Spain. In La bodega, he makes a special study of the problem, taking Andalusia as the field of his observations. In this "tierra del vino," as he calls it, "la bodega es la moderna fortaleza feudal que mantiene a las masas en la servidumbre y la abyección. Los entusiasmos, los crímenes, la alegría, los amores, todo es producto del vino, como si este pueblo, que aprende a beber apenas suelta el pecho de la madre y cuenta las horas del día por el número de copas, careciera de pasiones y de afecto, fuese incapaz de moverse y sentir por propio impulso, necesitando para todos sus actos el resorte de la bebida."(3) And such is the influence of

(1) La bodega, p. 202

(2) Ibid., p. 83

(3) Ibid., p. 202

of wine on them that "si llegasen a sentirse hombres alguna vez, no tendrían los ricos más que abrir las puertas de sus bodegas para venderlos." (1) It is wine that keeps them in their misery, by defeating all efforts on their part to bring about social and economic reforms. Wine is the "personaje invisible y omnipotente, que interviene en todas sus acciones, soplando en su pensamiento, limitado y vivaracho como el de un pájaro; empujándolos lo mismo al desencanto que a la desordenada alegría." (2) And yet there is nothing which the Andalusian loves as much as he does wine. To him wine is "la mayor de las riquezas" (3) and "el remedio más seguro para fortalecer la vida." In reality, wine causes him to forget, and he desires to forget the misery of his condition. (4) Summarizing the effects of wine on the people of Andalusia, Blasco says through the mouth of Salvatierra (5): ;El vino! Ése es el enemigo mayor de este país: mata las energías, crea engañosas esperanzas, acaba con la vida prematuramente: todo lo destruye; hasta el amor." This would be a fit text for what he has to say in his books concerning the liquor problem in Spain.

THE PEOPLE AND THE GOVERNMENT

Spanish Attitude toward Authority.— The spirit of cooperation which in other countries is characteristic of the relations between the people and the government does not exist in Spain. Considered in

(1) La bodega, p. 147

(2) Ibid., p. 202

(3) Ibid., p. 69

(4) Ibid., p. 147

(5) Ibid., p. 203

this regard, the average Spaniard may fall under one of three classifications. First we find a group that shows no interest at all in the actions of the government.— The words of Vicente, in La horda, (1) might be used to express their indifferent attitude: "Maldito lo que me interesa la política. A estas horas, no sé quién manda en España. Lo mismo da que sean unos que otros. Todos son lo mismo: gobernantes, manipulantes y danzantes; y eso de la política, zarandajas, marañas, patrañas y tonterías." A second group includes those who, realizing the inefficiency of the administration, spend most of their time lamenting the present evils and living on the memories of days gone by. (2). This trait of looking back to the past and forgetting the present is characteristic of the Spanish soul. The inertia of the past dominates the Spaniard of today, and makes him incompetent to cope with modern problems. Past glories hold him under the power of their charm while the monarchy and the church, taking advantage of his oblivious condition, thrive at the expense of the life of the nation.

A third group includes those who see in the government an enemy, of which they must try to take advantage in every possible manner. This feeling on the part of the common people usually takes the form of disregard for law. The cases cited by Blasco in this connection are quite characteristic. We see tobacco dealers bringing their goods from Algiers and smuggling them into the country in the very face of the authorities. Quite often coast guards are bribed to allow the cargo to be landed and safely disposed of. In La bodega and in Flor de Mayo, Blasco Ibáñez very vividly describes these nocturnal scenes in which

(2) La catedral, p. 186; Arroz y tartana, p. 143; La barraca, pp. 166 ff.

(1) La horda, p. 153

the smugglers run the risk of losing their lives at the hands of unscrupulous government officers.(1) Again we see men, like el Mosco, in La horda, braving the vigilance of the forest guards and hunting all night long in the royal grounds of El Parado. At the octroi, the vendors insult the tax-officers when the latter compel them to pay an extra céntimo.(2) At the market some will use false weights or sell without a licence; and by means of signs or cries agreed upon beforehand will keep one another posted as to the whereabouts of the alguacil.(3)

One thing to be noticed in this respect is the attitude of leniency with which the people will regard these tricks, lauding them as jokes on the autoridades. Such an attitude is indicative of the little regard which Spaniards in general have for constituted authority. But this leniency is not limited only to petty offenders; it is extended even to outlaws and criminals. Pimentó fires two shots at a stranger who has come to settle in the huerta of Valencia, and all the huertanos witness in his favor at the time of the trial.(4) Plumitas, the bandit of Sangre y arena, who is no other than the famous and authentic Pernales who caused so much trouble to the gendarmerie of Southern Spain, is revered and helped by the poor people of the country. In him they see an avenger of those who suffer misery, a prompt and cruel judge after the manner of the old knights-errant.(5)

(1) La bodega, p. 54; Flor de Mayo, p. 92

(2) Flor de Mayo, p. 7

(3) Ibid., p. 16

(4) La barraca, pp. 60 ff.

(5) Sangre y arena, pp. 201 ff.

The Central Administration and District Politics.—Centralization

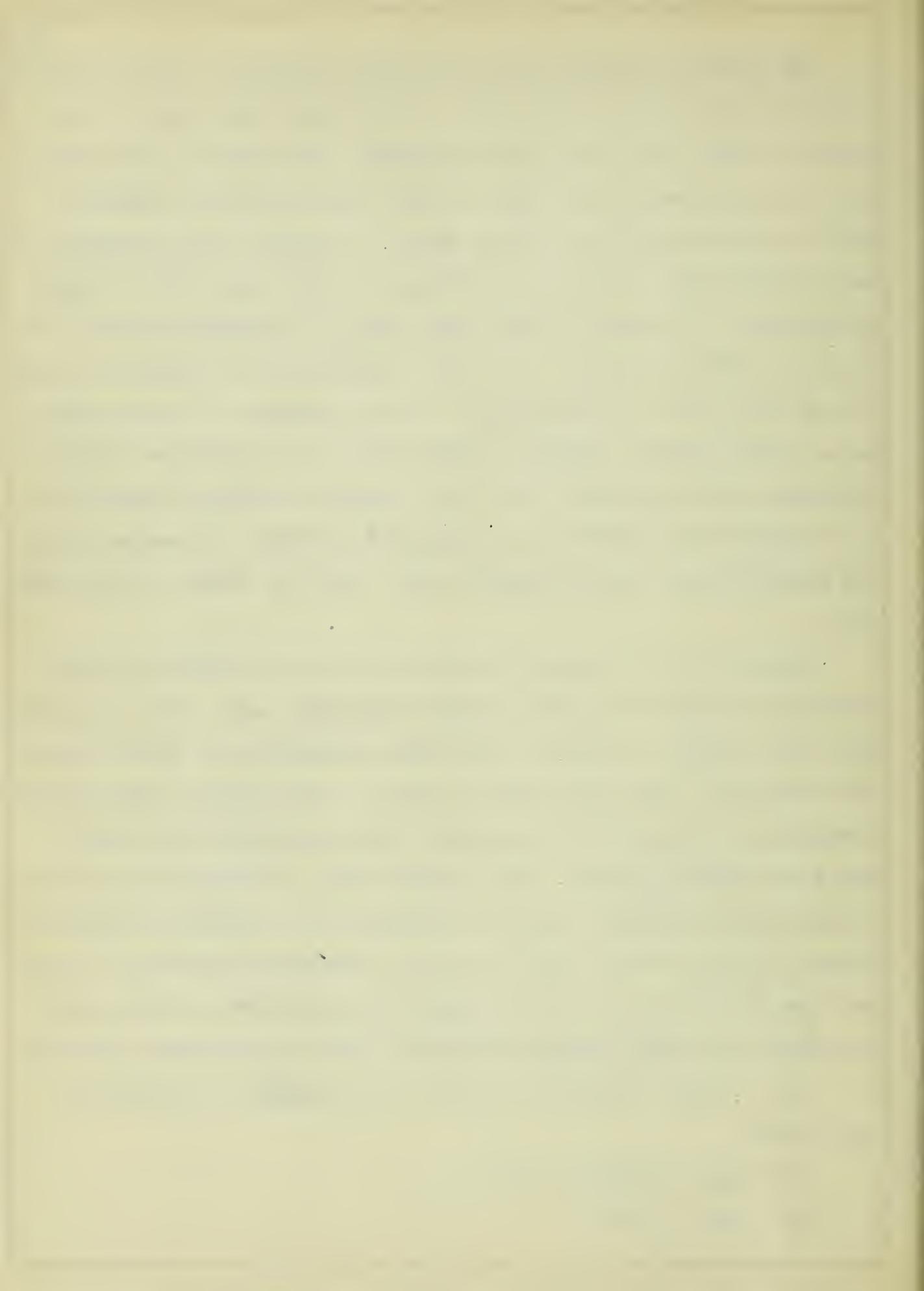
in Spain weighs heavy on the life of the country. The voice of the people is very feebly heard at the Cortes. The voters of the provincial districts are at the mercy of their local political bosses, (1) who in turn are manipulated from Madrid. No right of free suffrage can exist where these bosses rule. Speaking of their power and influence, as typified in Don Ramón Brull, Blasco says, "Don Ramón recibía el encargo de sacar triunfante a tal señor desconocido, que apenas si pasaba un par de días en el distrito. Era la voluntad de los que gobernaban allá en Madrid. Había que quedar bien, y en todos los pueblos volteaban corderos enteros sobre las hogueras; corrían a espita rota los toneles de las tabernas; se distribuían puñados de pesetas entre los más rehacios o se perdonaban deudas, todo por cuenta de don Ramón. (2).

These bosses, by means of their wealth and influence, hold the laboring classes in complete economic dependance upon them, and at the same time control the power of the local governments of their respective districts. From some secluded place in their homes, rarely acting themselves in person, these nysterious personages send out orders which are obeyed like law. Of Don Ramón Brull, (3) Blasco says that he "administraba justicia, decidía la suerte de las familias, arreglaba la vida de los pueblos; todo con pocas y enérgicas palabras, como un rey moro de los que en aquella misma tierra gobernaban siglos antes a sus súbditos a cielo descubierto." (3) All this he did without stirring

(1) The type pictured by Blasco is the quefe of the province of Valencia.

(2) Entre naranjos, p. 28

(3) Ibid., p. 30



from the patio of his house. With servants like Don Ramón and others, always faithful to "la buena causa" and to "la religión y las buenas costumbres," it is quite easy for the central administration to control the smallest political unit and thereby assure the integrity of the government.

SPANISH CATHOLICISM

The foreigner visiting Spain is greatly astonished at seeing so many churches, so many friars, so many priests, so many beggars, so much misery, so much decadence, all combined.(1) There are everywhere visible manifestations of the power and influence of the Church. For centuries it has been the policy of this institution to be in evidence in all places and at all times. In no other way can we explain the fact that Spain is "una nación que no concibe la vida sin la Iglesia!" (2). And yet with so much religión infused into its life, even to the point of saturation, Spain is the most indifferent nation in the world when it comes to religious matters.

How has the church come to have such power and influence? What has nullified her influence as a spiritual force for good? The answer to these questions will bring forth some of the essential characteristics of Spanish catholicism.

Control over the Individual the Secret of its Power.—For centuries catholicism in the Latin countries has had under its control all the avenues through which human life must necessarily pass. "Nada se escapa a su despotismo y su espionaje. Se ingiere en todas las

(1) La bodega, p. 93

(2) El intruso, p. 152

cosas de los humanos, desde las grandes a las insignificantes: interviene en la vida pública y en la íntima; bautiza al que viene al mundo, acompaña al niño a la escuela, monopoliza el amor, declarándolo vergonzoso y abominable cuando no se somete a su bendición, y divide la tierra en dos categorías: la sagrada, para el que muere en su seno, y el estercolero al aire libre para el hereje. Interviene en el traje, declarando cuál es el porte honesto y cristiano y cuáles las galas escandalosas: da reglas para las secretas expansiones en el lecho matrimonial, y hasta se introduce en la cocina, creando un arte culinario del catolicismo, que reglamenta lo que debe comer, lo que no debe mezclarse, y anatematiza ciertos manjares que, siendo buenos el resto del año, resultan el más horrendo de los sacrilegios en determinados días. Acompaña al hombre desde el nacimiento y no lo abandona ni aun después de depositarlo en la tumba. Lo conserva agarrado por el alma y le hace peregrinar por el espacio, pasándolo de destino en destino, ascendiéndolo camino del cielo, con arreglo a los sacrificios que se imponen sus sucesores en beneficio de la Iglesia!"(1) For the Church as an institution, this system may have proved to be the only means of sustaining her position; but for the individual, its influence has been blighting.

Religious Sentiment Perverted.— Spanish catholicism has perverted the religious sentiment of the masses. God has been relegated to a secondary and distant place. "That which monopolizes the credulity of the people are the saints, and even more than the saints, the images." People attribute different degrees of power and influences to different images, and contend that this or that image worshipped by them works

(1) La catedral, pp. 239 ff.

more miracles than the one worshipped by somebody else. "Selfishness, pride, and ignorance subdivide Divinity into an infinite number of parts. Each one believes he possesses the best part. People have the patriotism and the vanity of the saint under whose protection they live. This implies, naturally, a disdain for the others. In a quarrel with his neighbor, the Andalusian gañán feels sure of victory, because he is protected by St. Benito, while his adversary only has the help of St. George. A curious popular expression declares it: 'My Virgin has her boots shined by the other virgins,' all of which would prove that rather than faith and religion, what exists in Spain is fanaticism." (1)

Blasco gives us intense and vivid pictures of some of the things that take place during religious festivals. In some localities it would be hard to tell the difference between a religious procession and a carnival. (2) In Seville, the religious processions during Passion Week are really orgies of scandal and drunkenness. (3) On this occasion, the Virgin of the Macarena, the patron saint of the people, is taken out; and the enthusiasm of the crowd, makes them burst forth in the most fantastic praises: ¡Josú! ¡Y qué reguapa va a salí nuestra morena!— ¡Olé la Macarena!... ¡La primé Virgen der mundo!... ¡La que le da por er pelo a toas las vírgenes!— ¡A ve! ¡que paren!... que ahí está el primé cantaó der mundo que quíe echarle una saeta a la Virgen! (4) And after "el primé cantaó der mundo" and others sing the

(1) Manuel Ugarte, *Enfermedades Sociales*, p. 158

(2) *Flor de Mayo*, p. 97

(3) *Sangre y arena*, pp. 275 ff.

(4) *Ibid.*, pp. 290 ff.

praises of the Mare, "prorrumpen el público en aclamaciones de entusiasmo obsceno....y el vino circula en vasos a los pies de la imagen, y los más vehementes le arrojan el sombrero como si fuese una moza guapa, y no se sabe ya qué es lo cierto si el fervor de iluminados con que cantan a la Virgen o la orgía ambulante y pagana que acompaña su tránsito por las calles."(1) In some towns religious festivals are accompanied by "boisterous amusements which usually end in blows."(2)

The Church and the Economic Question.— Economically the Spanish Church is on the side of the wealthy. For the lower classes there is no hope of material advantage coming from Church influences. It does not matter in what state of misery these people may find themselves. The clerical recipe for misery is always the same: "pan para los pobres, caridad en los ricos y mucha doctrina cristiana para todos: así no se pelearán los hombres por si ^ú tienes más que yo y habrá en el mundo conformidad y decencia, que es lo que hace falta."(3) And this false doctrine of charity, a cover for the economic oppression of the wealthy upon the poor, is what keeps the country full of beggars and idlers. Few things are more typical of Spain than a crowd of beggars ^{lying} ~~lying~~ in wait for their patrons at the door of some church or cathedral.(4)

In the great economic enterprises of the Church, the Jesuits play the main part. Speaking of their sagacity in choosing advantageously their field of action, Blasco says: "No había una mancha de prosperidad y riqueza en el mísero mapa de España, que no la ocupasen ellos."

(1) Sangre y arena, pp. 292 ff.

(2) Canas y barro, p. 87

(3) La catedral, p. 149

(4) Ibid., pp. 8-9; Sangre y arena, p. 272

(1). In these progressive centers, their mission is that of directors and educators of the wealthy bourgeoisie. They attract them with the theatrical aspect of their ceremonies, with their music drawn from Italian opera, with the rich comfort of their chapels, and impress their teachings upon them by means of instruction, preaching, and the confessional. Once in control, they become the arbiters as to who shall work in the different industries. Religion becomes a means of boycott. When Sánchez Morueta, the great strong character of El intruso, surrenders to the influence of Jesuitism, many efficient laborers whose only offense is to profess liberal ideas are deposed without any cause and substituted by less efficient men who are professed members of the Church. (2) Don Pablo Dupont, in La bodega, dismisses men for not attending certain church services. (3) To the outsider these machinations of Jesuitism do not appear evident, but just the same there runs through the administrative mechanism of these industrial centers this invisible influence which is as powerful and constant as the forces of nature. Jesuitism is well entrenched in Spain, and will continue to hold its position until the conditions which promote its growth disappear. Blasco summarizes these under four headings: (a) the influence of several centuries of domination; (b) the people's lack of culture; (c) the servitude of woman, still chained to this invisible power by the sentimentality of ignorance; (d) the support of the rich, of traditional stolidity who, tormented by remorse, buy with a good portion of their fortune the assurance

(1) El intruso, p. 167

(2) Ibid., pp. 391-392

(3) La bodega, p. 45

of eternal bliss.

The Church and the State.—The Church is the all-powerful institution in Spain. The State is merely one of the agencies through which she works. With her centralized administration, with her religious aristocracy, whose main task is to spy on and stealthily direct the affairs of the State, with her host of servants, both clerical and laical, ready to do her bidding, the Church is sure to make her power felt everywhere. "En el mundo laico quedan cesantes los empleados, se separa a los ministros, se degrada a los militares...hasta se destrona a los reyes.....Si pide usted justicia le envían ante tribunales formados igualmente por aristócratas de la Iglesia."(1) Suspicion of complicity and irreligiosity are sufficient proofs for sending anybody to prison.(2) Before the Revolution of 1868 the least offense to the priests could be made the occasion of a law-suit for sacrilege, outrage upon religion, etc., and a suit of this kind was to be feared more than a murder.(3) This spirit still exists today; and if the Church does not exercise her powers as she used to, it is because she is beginning to feel the effects of the awakening of the common people.

The Church derives from the State a large share of her revenue. "Si se compara con el catolicismo de las naciones modernas," says Don Martín, a personage of La catedral,(4) "resulta, como en los siglos anteriores, la institución más favorecida y que mejor bocado se lleva del Estado. Cuarenta y un millones arranca del presupuesto y aun le parece poca cosa esta cifra, que resulta una enormidad en un país

(1) La catedral, pp. 233-4

(2) La bodega, p.8

(3) Entre naranjos, p. 72

(4) La catedral, p. 234

que dedica nueve millones a la enseñanza y un millón al socorro de los desgraciados. Mantenerse en correspondencia con Dios les cuesta a los españoles cinco veces más que aprender a leer." (1) But these forty-one millions voted with the budget represent only a part of what the Church receives from the State. The remainder comes from the different departments of the government. "Cobra", continues Don Martín, " del ministerio de Estado por las misiones extranjeras, que de nada sirven; del de la Guerra y de la Marina por el clero castrense; del de Instrucción pública y del de Justicia. Cobra para sostener el boato del Romano Pontífice.....; cobra por reparación de templos, por bibliotecas episcopales, por la colonización de Fernando Poo, por imprevistos;" (2) etc. Then he goes on to tell us about the money the Church receives from the people directly, and from other sources: "La Bula de la Santa Cruzada produce más de dos millones y medio de pesetas todos los años: además hay que tener en cuenta lo que las parroquias sacan de sus fieles, y las utilidades anuales de las órdenes religiosas por su ministerio y oficios....y el presupuesto eclesiástico de los ayuntamientos y las diputaciones...En fin, que la Iglesia, hablando a todas horas de su pobreza, saca del Estado y del país más de trescientos millones de pesetas (3) todos los años: casi el doble de lo que cuesta el ejército." (4) Great as this financial burden is upon the people, it is small compared with what it used to be when the church possessed one half of all the property in Spain. (5) It is when the

(1) La catedral, p. 234

(2) Ibid., p. 235

(3) Roughly \$60,000,000

(4) La catedral, p. 235

(5) Ibid., p. 234

Church looks back to those times that she realizes her decline. Spain, without having had any of the great upheavals experienced by other Latin countries of Europe, is gradually coming out from under the clerical tyranny of four centuries.

EDUCATION

In Spain, the Church directly or indirectly, controls the educational system. With her "Seminarios" and institutions of higher learning, she takes away from the State a large share of the responsibility of providing schools. The lower classes are left, as a rule, in ignorance; but this condition is also the patrimony of a good number among the upper classes.

The "Seminario" is the place where the Church initiates those that are to be her servants. Here the youth learns to subordinate everything to the interests of the Church, even the most tender affections. By means of such a training, Gabriel Luna acquired, as a student, "esa dureza eclesiástica que hace del sacerdote un guerrero, más atento a los intereses de la Iglesia que a los afectos de la familia."

(1) In later years he did not feel the affection for his mother that a son should have. (2) How different from the socialist Salvatierra, in La bodega! (3) Ignorance in a "Seminario" will not retard a student, provided he shows a disposition to become a good tool of the Church. Speaking of his old classmate Don Antolín, who at this time was a priest at the cathedral of Toledo, Luna says: "Por su fe absoluta e

(1) La catedral, p. 66

(2) Ibid., p. 68

(3) La bodega, pp. 12-14

irracional, por su adhesión inquebrantable a la Iglesia, le habían sacado adelante en la carrera los señores del Seminario a pesar de su ignorancia."(1) The reward of the industrious student consists of: "triumfos en las controversias teológicas, premios a granel y el honor de ser presentado a los compañeros como modelo."(2) The main subjects of the curriculum are humanities, theology, and the canons. History as taught in the "Seminarios" and in other schools would not bear the light of modern investigations. "Se enseña el pasado del país con criterio semejante al del salvaje, que aprecia los objetos, por el brillo, no por su valor y utilidad."(3) Students receive ^{the} impression that Spain is the first and noblest country in the world,(4) and that her success in the past has been due to Catholicism.(5) On the moral side, these students when they go out into real life, ^{act like} men who have never practiced self-control, and are consequently unfit for promoting the good of the people. In this connection, Doña Tomasa, a most lovely character in La catedral, says to Gabriel Luna: "Yo no sé qué tienen las gentes de Iglesia, qué espíritu malo llevan dentro, que cuando se echan a la vida, es para no parar, y arden y arden sin prudencia alguna, hasta que no queda ni ^{el} cabo. Como tú han pasado muchos por el Seminario."(6)

In La horda Blasco lets us know what he thinks of the personnel

- (1) La catedral, p. 95
- (2) Ibid., p. 49
- (3) Ibid., p. 186
- (4) Ibid., p. 74
- (5) Entre naranjos, pp. 294 ff.
- (6) La catedral, p. 119

of the teaching profession. One of the characters, Maltrana, says that if he were dictator he would bring about this educational reform: "el examen general de todos los maestros de escuela; la revisión de la mentalidad de todos los catedráticos, pero de un modo implacable, sin entrañas, como pudiera juzgar un inquisidor. Profesores de Universidad descendían a ser maestros de aldea; la gran mayoría de los preceptores rústicos recibían la cesantía y un pedazo de tierra inculta, para que la arasen, dando así natural expansión a sus verdaderas facultades. Muchos desgraciados con talento, que titubeaban en las avenidas de la vida, no sabiendo qué camino tomar, entraban en el magisterio, dignificado y elevado a primera función nacional. El más humilde maestro de España tendría mayor sueldo que un canónigo." (1) Such a statement would indicate that in Spain education from the elementary schools up to and including the universities is in the hands of incompetent persons.

Concerning the lack of interest, or in some cases the indolence among University teachers, Blasco makes Gabriel Luna say: (2) "Los profesores son en su mayoría médicos y abogados que ejercen su carrera van una hora todos los días a sentarse en la cátedra, repitiendo como un fonógrafo lo que dijeron en años anteriores, y vuelven en seguida a sus enfermos y sus pleitos, sin enterarse de lo que se escribe y se dice por el mundo después que ellos ganaron su puesto. La cultura española es de segunda mano, puramente exterior, traducida del francés, y aun esto para la exigua minoría que lee, pues el resto de los llamados intelectuales no tienen otra biblioteca que los textos en que es-

(1) La horda, pp. 17-18

(2) La catedral, p. 210

tudiaron de muchachos, y se enteran de los adelantos del pensamiento europeo...por los periódicos." The immaturity of the students taking university work renders them unfit for this kind of training. "Los padres," continues Luna,(1) "con el afán de asegurar cuanto antes el porvenir de sus hijos mediante una carrera, los envían a los centros de enseñanza apenas saben hablar. El estudiante-hombre de otros países en toda la plenitud de su razón, no existe aquí. Las universidades se llenan de niños; en los institutos sólo se ven pantalones cortos. El español, al afeitarse por primera vez, es ya licenciado y va para doctor. La nodriza acabará por sentarse al lado del catedrático. Y esos niños que reciben el bautismo de la ciencia a la edad en que en otros países se juega al trompo, y afirmándose en el título que pregona su ciencia ya no estudian más, son los intelectuales que han de dirigirnos y salvarnos, los que mañana serán legisladores y ministros."

There are three professional careers which are considered worthy: the military career, Church service, and law.(2) It is the ambition of the average family to have the children follow one of these professions. In order of importance, law comes first, being the profession which opens the way to the public offices. The Spanish people have a mania for public offices. Don Jaime Brull wants his son Rafael to be an "abogado, la carrera de los hombres que gobiernan"(3) This anxiety to climb high, aspiring to follow careers of influence and lujo rather than of profit, engenders an aversion for the practical professions, such as commerce, for example. Rafael Pajares (4) de-

(1) La catedral, pp. 210-211

(2) Ibid., p. 277

(3) Entre naranjos, p.23

(4) Arroz y tartana, p. 52

clares that his step-son Juanito is "tan bruto como su padre, y cuando más, podría servir para el comercio."

With a few exceptions, the Spanish young man leaving college is far from being an enterprising youth. With all his external attainments, he lacks that solidity which is necessary to tackle the problems of life. Moreover, he is, as a rule, a youth without ideals. He does not become a reformist or an advocate of progress; rather he will devote his time and energy to making a way for himself, without ever thinking that he is part of a community.(1) Many who are financially able, will never do anything to develop a character for themselves.

The Andalusian "señorito" is a very common type of the indolent youth. In the words of one of the characters of La bodega, "los señoritos no tienen otra obligación que divertirse."(2) They will spend their time at the club, with nothing serious to occupy their minds. Speaking of the Círculo Caballista of Jerez, Blasco describes the mental depravity of these wealthy youngmen: "Por las tardes, la respetable asamblea discutía sus aficiones: caballos, mujeres y perros de caza. La conversación no tenía otros temas. Escasos periódicos en las mesas, y en lo más obscuro de la secretaría un armario con libros de lomos dorados y chillones, cuyas vidrieras no se abrían nunca."(3)

Blasco Ibáñez does not deplore certain vices of the Spanish youth as much as he laments their lack of ideals.(4) The young men of to-

(1) La catedral, p. 210

(2) La bodega, p. 246

(3) Ibid., p. 43

(4) La maja desnuda, p. 177

day, he thinks, spend their best time ministering to their bodies, while their minds remain in a virgin condition.(1) Yet he does not lose heart: he sees signs of promise. A student from Deusto (2) may, like López de Sosa,(3) devote his life entirely to sport and ostentation. But, on the other hand, there are students, like some in the University of Valencia, who in their nightly meetings, will discuss such topics as these: "Was the French Revolution good or bad?" or "Socialism compared with Christianity."(4) And there are ambitious fellows, like the Maestrico, in La bodega, who though poor and oppressed, become their own teachers, and follow unselfish ideals.(5)

Blasco Ibáñez advocates education for all. Isolated education among the oppressed classes is useless, to say the least: it creates, "desertores, tráfugas," who hasten to align themselves with the enemy. Or if the champion stands his ground, he becomes the object of persecution. Gabriel Luna says, in this connection, concerning his own experiences: "Me siguen los pasos la miseria y la policía. Cuando me detengo anonadado por esta existencia de Judío Errante, la Justicia en nombre del miedo, me grita que ande, y vuelvo a emprender la marcha."(6) The same idea is expressed in a dialogue between el Nacional and Plumitas, in Sangre y arena:(7) "El pobre lo que necesita es

(1) La maja desnuda, p. 176

(2) A Church University in Bilbao.

(3) La maja desnuda, p. 169

(4) Entre naranjos, p. 36

(5) La bodega, pp. 138 ff.

(6) La catedral, p. 16

(7) Sangre y arena, p. 225

instrucción: sabé leé y escribí," says el Nacional, and Plumitas answers: "Yo sé leé y escribí. ¿Y para qué sirve eso? Cuando vivía en el pueblo me servía pa hacerme señalá y pa que mi suerte me pareciese más dura...."

A condition like the one just described leads one to think that reading is not a very common thing in Spain, and so it is in fact. Even among the higher classes, very little is read, and "those who read at all keep what they read to themselves, as if they were ashamed to display it openly. At the salones nobody ever speaks of books, and although in every self-respecting home, there is usually a library, these bound volumes have as their only mission the adornment of the room; they consitutute a decorative element."(1)

This aversion to reading is due in part to the fact that in Spain little is published worth reading. And moreover there seems to be an influence which makes inaccessible the good that there is to be read. In Maltrana's plan of educational reform,(2) mention is made of certain librarians who on being asked for some modern book, say that the book does not exist or that somebody else has it at the time. The "obras rancias, de inútil erudición, mamotretos enojosos" which repel people, taking away from them their desire to learn, these are always on hand and within reach of whoever cares to read them. When one sees a López de Sosa (a graduate of Deusto), whose favorite classics are the sporting magazine, the automobile catalogue and a collection of cheap French novels,(3) one wonders at the habits of reading

(1) Álvaro Alcalá Galiano: La novela moderna en España, p. 23

(2) La horda, pp. 16-18

(3) La maja desnuda, p. 170

which are inculcated in young men at some of the higher institutions of learning within the confines of the Church.

THE SPANISH WOMAN

In all the works of Blasco Ibáñez, with the exception of Entre naranjos and Sónnica la cortesana, women play a secondary rôle. And it should be noticed that "both the heroine of Entre naranjos, and Sónnica, the Athenian courtesan are two energetic and perfectly virile types, who have only the beauty of their sex."(1) These two are by no means representative of the Spanish woman, for all their education has been acquired abroad, away from the influence of the Spanish environment.

The Spanish woman, according to Blasco, is a creature practically devoid of intellectual life and with very little positive strength of character. Only the religious sentiment will on certain occasions cause her to abandon this passive state and become aggressive.

In the wealthy classes, especially, the highest aspiration of the Spanish woman is marriage. To this event in her life she looks forward with a calculating eye. Marriage represents for her "un medio de independenciam, sin que el corazón llegue a interesarse." As a rule her inclinations count for little in the selection of a companion. The authority of the parents must not be opposed, even if her feelings do not agree with their choice. Both the parents and the girl are generally advised in this matter by the priest in the confessional. The girl's education has been such that in her mind she thinks the advice of the confessor should be followed. Pepita, in El intruso

(1) Eduardo Zamacois: Mis contemporáneos. I. Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, p.95.

is a type of this class, "educada primero por las monjas y dirigidas después por el confesor hasta en los hechos más pequeños de su existencia; con la voluntad adormecida, y considerando como un pecado el más leve instinto de iniciación propia."(1)

The married life of the woman of this class is a "vida insípida de ostentaciones y de devoción elegante." Little provision is made for her husband, either in time or affection, for her mind and heart are occupied by other things. "La iglesia, la confesión con el padre de moda, un buen vestido para dar envidia a las amigas y el visiteo entre mujeres:" these are her main aspirations.(2) As a rule, she goes about alone. In her mind, man's part is that of the "macho destinado a los negocios y a traer dinero a casa."(3)

The rich woman of the country is industrious and zealous for the material progress of the house. She considers all her duties fulfilled by being faithful to her husband and by saving money.(4) In other respects, especially in the religious life, she is like her wealthy sister of the city.

Zamacois has classified the women characters drawn by Blasco Ibáñez under two general headings: "católicas," and "humildes." The first group he describes as "voluntades belicosas, tiránicas, defensoras intransigentes de lo tradicional."(5) And he mentions as examples: Doña Bernarda, the fanatical mother of Rafael Brull, Remedios,

(1) El intruso, p.113.

(2) Ibid., pp.102-103

(3) Ibid., pp.62, 103

(4) Entre naranjos, p.27.

(5) Zamacois, op. cit., p.98

his wife, in Entre naranjos; Doña Cristina and her daughter Pepita, in El intruso; and Doña Juana in Los muertos mandan, who already an old woman, unmarried, and a millionaire besides, disinherits her nephew Jaime Febrer for the only offense of having wanted to marry a Jewess. The women of the wealthy class, described above, are the ones who constitute this group.

The "humildes," says Zamacois, "forman un generoso ramillete de frentes pálidas, de cervices inclinadas, de labios sin color, de ojos esclavos perdidos en la melancolía de la tierra; hembras silenciosas que caminan sin ruido, caracteres recogidos acostumbrados a obedecer, primero al padre, al esposo después, a los hijos más tarde." (1) And in this group, which is quite numerous, he includes: Tonica, the little seamstress of Arroz y tartana; Rosario, the wife of Tonet, in Flor de Mayo; Teresa, in La barraca, headstrong and tireless in her struggle with the soil; the Borda of Cañas y barro, the victim of a hopeless love; Sagrario, the repentant sinner of La catedral; Feliciana, who dies of grief, misery and cold, rather than as a result of child-birth in La horda; Josefina, the unfortunate burguesita, the victim of her education, in La maja desnuda; and Margalida, of Los muertos mandan.

Some of the most lovely Spanish types are to be found in this group. In the character of Feliciana the author has succeeded in representing the best moral qualities of the Spanish woman of the middle and lower classes, namely, her courageous and silent self-denial in the struggle for the home, and the unbounded attachment to the man to whom she has given her love. This last characteristic is a dominant trait in their lives, and it constitutes the motive that makes them

(1) Zamacois, op. cit., p.97

endure privations and mistreatment. Rosario, in Flor de Mayo, works all the week in order that her Tonet, the "amo," may have his tobacco, and money to visit the tavern. Moreover, not a day passes without her good-for-nothing husband mistreating her. Yet she does not care, and speaks with enthusiasm about her "apuesto marido." (1) When jealousy enters the hearts of these women, no matter how unworthy the object of their love may be, the two rivals will come to blows at the first opportunity, even if they have to be taken before a magistrate. (2)

In the lower classes, especially, the lot of woman is one of hardships and misery. Speaking of the fishwomen of the Albufera, says Blasco Ibáñez: "Eran las hembras de la miseria, con el rostro curtido y terroso, los ojos animados por el extraño fulgor de eternas tercianas y oliendo sus ropas, no al salobre ambiente del mar, sino al tufo del légamo de las acequias, al barro infecto de la laguna que al moverse despide la muerte." (3) In similar terms he pictures the condition of the women of the Cabañal. (4) The cargueras of the mining district of Bilbao he describes as "miseras mujeres de ropa sucia y carne negra." (5) In Los muertos mandan, he speaks of the anenria and melancholy which in early life afflicts the married woman of Ibiza, as a result of excessive procreation and the fatigues of country life. (6) Their existence is intensely portrayed by Febrer, when in speaking of

(1) Flor de Mayo, p.103

(2) La horda, p.196

(3) Flor de Mayo, pp.15, 88; Cañas y barro, p.37

(4) Flor de Mayo, pp.7 ff.

(5) El intruso, p.60

(6) Los muerto mandan, pp.238, 243

margalida, the girl he loves, he says: "Cuando fuese casada cultivaría la tierra, como las otras, su blancura de flor se marchitaría, amari- lleando; sus manos se tornarían negras y escamosas; acabaría siendo igual a su madre y a todas las payesas viejas, una hembra esqueleto, retorcida y nudosa, lo mismo que un tronco de olivo...(1) In Entre naranjos, Blasco pictures the effect of religious scruples on women of this class. Rather than engage medical assistance in alleviating their ills, they will depend upon the alleged miraculous power of some saint or religious relic.(2) In the Andalusian cortijo, women endure the same hardships as men.(3) In the outskirts of Madrid, the traperas, or rag-women, live in the most unhygienic environment in the midst of poverty and moral degradation. For their sustenance they depend on the refuse of the city, in which respect they act as real scavengers, as they go from house to house.(4) Greater misery could not be imagined than that in which these women of the lower classes live. Many of them have even lost the consciousness of their femininity, in their struggle for bread.(5)

.....

BULL-FIGHTING

The most original manifestation of Spanish life is the corrida. Yet it receives but little attention in the works of the great contemporary Spanish novelists. Galdós, Valera, Palacio Valdés, and others, have dealt with the lidia and the gente de coleta as secondary matters

(1) Los muertos mandan, p.243

(2) Entre naranjos, p.56; in La horda, p.259

(3) See the chapter on the Agrarian problem, p.9-11

(4) La horda, p.70

(5) La bodega, p.135

but they have never consecrated to this institution a single novel dealing exclusively with the subject. The task has been reserved to Blasco Ibáñez, who, in the opinion of the critic E. Gómez de Baquero, has thus far made the most successful attempt in the novelas del toreo.(1) In his review of Sangre y arena, Mr. M. H. Peseux-Richard says: "Par l'abondance des matériaux, par la richesse des descriptions, par la finesse et la sûreté des observations personnelles, par le pittoresque et la vérité parfois brutale des détails, ce livre est plus qu'un roman: c'est une précieuse source d'informations, une contribution très intéressante à l'étude des moeurs, de l'état social, de la civilisation. Son titre: Sangre y arena fort heureusement choisi et puissamment évocateur, pourrait être complété par cet autre: Grandeur et décadence des toreros."(2)

Nothing interests the Spanish people more than bull-fighting, not even politics.(3) The torero is an idol among all classes of people. Even the autoridad, as represented in the guardia civil, will show special consideration to lads who reveal promising signs of following the profession. The red costumes and the "coleta" are a sufficient passport for these lads, as they go about from town to town, initiating themselves in the experiences of their vocation.(4) The glories of the toreo are identified with national glories. Listen to the people as Gallardo enters the plaza at Madrid:(5) "¡Gallardo!...¡Ya está ahí el

(1) La España moderna, CCXXXVIII, p.166

(2) Revue Hispanique, Vol.18, p.291

(3) Álvaro Alcalá Galiano: La novela en España, p.6

(4) Sangre y arena, p.73

(5) Ibid., p.36

Gallardo! ¡Olé! ¡Viva España!" And again, when a drunkard cheers for him at the gate, and summons all the nations of the world to come and admire Gallardo: "Tendrán barcos...tendrán dinero... pero todo mentira! Ni tienen toros ni mozos como este, que le arrastran de valiente que es...¡Olé mi niño! ¡Viva mi tierra!"(1)

In Sangre y arena Blasco "presents to us the complete life of his hero (a matador) from the hard and humble beginnings—leading the life of a rogue, enduring hunger, suffering scorn, taking part in capeas in the different towns—up to success with all its praises of popular admiration, splendid pay, wealth, and feminine favors."(2) The happiest period in the life of a torero comes no doubt after he has reached success, but his life is never free from agitation and anxiety. His time is scheduled for places which are sometimes very far apart; and scarcely has he fulfilled his contract in some plaza, when he has to take the train immediately, at times without changing his clothes, in order to travel "bajo un sol abrumador, por llanuras abrasadas y en antiguos vagones cuyo techo parece arder."(3) On his arrival after a tiresome journey at the place of destination, he is forced to endure the torment of enthusiastic adoration, both from the populace and from the "aficionados partidarios de su nombre." No time is left for him to be alone. And then perhaps a series of several corridos, which make him feel exhausted as the end of the day draws near. And after that juergas organized in his honor. In connection with these juergas, Blasco says of his hero Gallardo: "De estas fiestas salía siempre con

(1) Sangre y arena, p.37

(2) La España moderna, CCXXXVIII, p.166

(3) Sangre y arena, pp.117 ff.

el pensamiento turbado por el vino, y una tristeza feroz que le hacía intratable." Observing the sad fate of others who have been as famous as he, the torero usually becomes pessimistic in regard to his future. Then it is when the gambling habit takes possession of him, in his desire to amass money. In the midst of this life, the torero displays great ostentation and prodigality. The poor people go to him, for they know of his princely alms.(1) He is religious mainly through fear and remorse and will pray for "protection with the fervor of simple men who live in constant danger and believe in all kinds of adverse influences and supernatural favors."(2)

Concerning the attitude of the crowd toward the toreros while in the plaza, M. Peseux-Richard says,(3) a propos of his comments on Sangre y arena: "Gloire, fortune, vie large et presque fastueuse, tout cela est à la merci de deux bêtes féroces dont la moins redoutable est le taureau et dont l'autre—la vraie, la seule(4)—est la foule brutale, inconsciente, fantasque, souveraine maîtresse de la plaza, dont les jugements sans appel, aussi incompréhensible dans ses préventions que dans ses faveurs, capable de toutes les partialités, applaudissant les pires maladresses de celui qui a su la conquérir, puis quand le vent a tourné, l'obligeant par son attitude à courir à une morte certaine qui passera à peu près inaperçue et n'interrompra pas un instant l'ordonnance du spectacle." This statement gives an idea of the unwholesome moral influence of bull-fighting. It reveals to us the fiera

(1) Sangre y arena, p.352

(2) Ibid., p.122

(3) Revue hispanique, Vol.18 (1908), p.291

(4) Sangre y arena, p.410

which is in the heart of the Spaniard and makes him feel indifferent in the presence of pain and suffering. Without it the Spaniard would not endure the horrors at the plaza,-- the martyrdom of the horses, (1) which comes up with the worst form of cruelty conceivable, especially when one thinks of the inhumane processes to which these animals are subjected behind the scenes; (2) the spectacle of the "banderillas de fuego," to which^a relatively tame bull is submitted in order to make him "bravo"; (3) the falls of the picadores from their horses, as a result of which, "después de una vida de horribles costaladas, el que no moría repentinamente de un accidente desconocido y fulminante, acababa sus días loco"; (4) the vision of the dying bulls that fall mortally wounded, their blood gushing out in the midst of agonizing convulsions; the wounds and infections of the lidiadores, caused by "el cuerno, sucio de sangre y de excremento animal, fraccionado muchas veces por los golpes en menudas astillas"; and finally, though less frequently, the death of some torero on the horns of the irate bull. In regard to this last point, there is in the mind of the crowd a certain expectancy which Blasco describes in these words, speaking of Gallardo: "Todos creían que estaba destinado a morir en la plaza de una cornada, y esto mismo hacía que le aplaudiesen con entusiasmo homicida, con un interés bárbaro, semejante al del misántropo que seguía a un domador a todas partes, esperando el momento de verle devorado por sus fieras." (5)

(1) Sangre y arena, pp.371 ff; p.395

(2) Ibid., p.397

(3) Ibid., pp.402 ff.

(4) Ibid., p.98

(5) Ibid., p.44

The toreo, such as it is known today is of relatively recent date. Blasco Ibáñez considers it a survival of the Autos de Fe of the Inquisition. "A mediados del siglo XVIII, cuando España se metía en su caparazón, renunciando a lejanas guerras y nuevas colonizaciones, y se extinguía por falta de ambiente la fría crueldad religiosa, era cuando florecía el torero. El heroísmo popular necesitaba nuevos caminos para subir hasta la notoriedad y la fortuna. La ferocidad de la muchedumbre habituada a fiestas de muerte, necesitaba una válvula de escape para dar expansión a su alma, educada durante siglos en la contemplación de suplicios. El Auto de Fe era sustituido por la corrida de toros. El que un siglo antes hubiese sido soldado en Flandes o colonizador militar de las soledades del Nuevo Mundo, convertíase en torero. El pueblo, al ver cerradas sus fuentes de expansión, labraba con la nueva fiesta nacional una salida gloriosa para todos los ambiciosos que tenían valor y audacia."(1) To Blasco's mind, the toreo represents a progress in the Spanish customs, a toning down of the popular amusements in which Spaniards used to engage in other epochs.

SIGNS OF REAWAKENING

A transformation is particularly to be observed in the rapidity with which the Church is losing her hold on the laboring classes. Except in a few instances, the religious fervor which once caused these people to fill the places of worship from morning till night, is gone. Some, although still feeling respect for religion, do not attend religious services;(2) others attend through mere routine or fear of

(1) Sangre y arena, p.265

(2) La horda, p.47

criticism;(1) others, for economical reasons, though against their desires;(2) while others are totally indifferent to religious matters.
(3)

The change has been fostered by the new aspect of the economic problem in those places which have become the centers of some particular industry, on a large scale. While the wealthy middle class of these centers has been blindly walking in the paths laid out by the Jesuits, the laborers have been organizing,(4) holding meetings, getting up manifestations, and preparing strikes. At last the people have begun to shake off their torpor. A growing conviction that they no longer need the protection of religion is taking possession of them. The economic activity and the desire for reform attract them and monopolize their interest. Moreover, they are instinctively finding out where the cause of their economic oppression lies. Speaking of the popular meetings held by the workers of Bilbao, Blasco says through the medium of Dr. Aresti,(5) "Se hablaba del jesuita, del fraile, del cura, y la muchedumbre se ponía instintivamente de pie, con nervioso impulso, y brillaban los ojos con el fulgor diabólico de una venganza secular, y sonaba estrepitoso el trueno del aplauso delirante, y se levantaban los puños amenazadores, buscando al enemigo tradicional, al hombre negro, señor de España. Las huelgas por cuestiones de trabajo se desviaban para apedrear iglesias: las manifestaciones populares

(1) La catedral, p.87

(2) La bodega,p.

(3) El intruso, p.44

(4) Ibid., p.162

(5) Ibid., pp.161-2

silbaban e insultaban a toda sotana que cruzaba la calle: hasta los motines contra el impuesto de consumos tenían por final la quema de algún convento." And then, accusing the friars and the Jesuits as being the barriers to the people's progress, Dr. Aresti continues: "Ellos eran los que les habían tenido en la ignorancia durante siglos, haciéndoles ver que el pobre carece de otro derecho que el de la limosna, inculcándoles un respeto supersticioso para el potentado, obligándoles a creer que deben aceptarse como dones celestes las miserias terrenas, pues sirven para entrar en el cielo. Y el pueblo, que solo conseguía ventajas en fuerza de rebeldías y revoluciones, se vengaba del engaño de varios siglos persiguiendo a los impostores."(1)

The socialistic propaganda among the common people promises the advent of a new social order. The new ideas have been reaching every class. Leaders have sprung up even among the uneducated lower classes. (2) They have ^{caught} the vision presented to them by leaders of the type of Gabriel Luna, (3) Salvatierra, (4) and Aresti. (5) In language which reveals crudity and with arguments which though mistaken at times show the naiveté of a primitive race, these people give forcible expression to these ideas through which they dimly catch a glimpse of the coming reign of social justice. The poor laborer is no longer imposed upon as before. Ideas like those expressed by tío Polo, in La horda, (6)

(1) El intruso, pp.161-2

(2) El Nacional, in Sangre y arena; Zaratustra, in La horda.

(3) La catedral.

(4) La bodega.

(5) El intruso.

(6) La horda, pp.32 ff.

show clearly that the leaven has spread faster than one would ordinarily think, and that the people are coming into a conscious realization as to what their rôle ought to be in the economic development of the country. "Muy bien por el progreso" says tío Polo, "pero que sea igual para todos. Porque yo veo que de los pobres sólo se acuerda para echarnos lejos como si apestásemos. El hambre y la miseria no progresan ni se cambian por algo mejor. La ciudad es otra, los de arriba gastan más magencia, pero los medianos y los de abajo están lo mismo" (p.32) "Sin la lluvia no hay agricultura, y la agricultura es la más noble profesión del país. Hay que protegerla; hay que ayudar al mediano; que gaste el de arriba, ya que tiene; pero que no sea todo para él" (p.34) "Hay que ayudar al mediano. El mediano es el que da el pan" (p.35)

Even at the Cortes, where the people are so imperfectly represented, the new wave of reform is having its influence.(1) Leaders representing the people's cause, are carrying conviction into the hearts of their colleagues in regard to the national evils and the abuses which rule everywhere. The sincerity and persistency of these leaders and the cold logic of their arguments are gradually producing the desired result. In Entre naranjos, Blasco introduces a character who for thirty years had been espousing the people's cause, always repeating the same criticisms of the conditions of the country, with the conviction that truth is ever the same. Referring to his speech, says Blasco: "Hablaba en nombre de la España del porvenir, de un pueblo que no tendría reyes porque se gobernaría por sí mismo; que no pagaría sacerdotes porque, respetando la conciencia nacional, per-

(1) Entre naranjos, pp.285 ff.

mitiría todos los cultos sin privilegiar alguno. Y con sencilla amabilidad; como si construyese y juntase versos, emparejaba cifras, haciendo resaltar la manera absurda con que la nación se despedía de un siglo de revoluciones, durante el cual todos los pueblos habían conseguido más que el nuestro."(1) Then speaking of the effect of the speech: "El estremecimiento de la convicción pasaba por la cámara, silenciosa, anhelante, para no perder nada de aquella voz débil, lejana, como salida de una tumba. Todos sentían en el ambiente el paso de la verdad y cuando terminó con una invocación al porvenir, en el cual no existirían absurdos ni injusticias, se hizo más profundo el silencio, como si un viento glacial, una brisa de muerte hubiese aleteado sobre aquellas cabezas que creían estar deliberando en el mejor de los mundos."(2) Then, as a contrast, Blasco introduces the speaker whose task is to defend the ecclesiastical budget. Instead of answering the arguments of the advocate of the people the new speaker confines himself to eulogizing the past—the story of Covadonga, the seven centuries of battles for the Cross, the triumph of the Catholic unity—and to calling his adversary "un ideólogo de inmenso talento, pero siempre fuera de la realidad." And Blasco mentions the fact that the greater part of the speech of the defender of the Church, was delivered to a chamber of empty seats. Many who congratulated him later had not heard a word of what he had said. This reveals the fact that at the Cortes, the cause of the people is gaining ground and conservative tendencies are beginning to slacken.

Spaniards who return from travel in other lands bring back with

(1) Entre naranjos, pp.288-289

(2) Ibid., p.290

them * purifying influences. Stript of their pr^ojudices and narrow conceptions through the observation of other people's life, they learn to look at Spain with different eyes. They throw overboard that exaggerated opinion which through the influence of the Church's teaching they have formed of Spain.(1) They cast aside the racial and religion pr^ojudices which have blighted Spanish life in the past. In Los muertos mandan, Pablo Valls, who has visited England and the United States, comes back to Mallorca, his native place, ready to challenge the traditional preoccupations of the island. In the same book, Jaime Febrer, a noble who has traveled on the Continent, and consequently considers himself above those prejudices which make life miserable in small cities, finds happiness by breaking away from the past and marrying into a family which descends from tenants of Ferrer's noble ancestors. Gabriel Luna, educated in a Church seminary, goes to France and marvels at the difference between the "fiera devoción española," hostile to science, and French catholicism, "culto, razonador y respetuoso con los progresos humanos."(2) In short, no Spaniard leaves his country without his coming back with something new in his life, even if it is nothing else but dissatisfaction with the order of things at home.

Another good sign of this awakening is the discontent in the ranks of the Church itself. The common opinion among outsiders is ~~the fact~~ that the Church is a democratic institution. Blasco denies the truth of such an opinion when he says through Don Martín(3): "Hay para morir

(1) La catedral, p.74

(2) Ibid., pp.74-5

(3) Ibid., pp.233-4

de risa cuando hablan de igualdad y del espíritu democrático de la Iglesia. Una mentira; en ninguna institución impera un despotismo tan cruel. En los primeros tiempos, papas y obispos eran elegidos por los fieles y desposeídos del poder cuando lo empleaban mal. Ahora existe la aristocracia de la iglesia, o sea de canónigo para arriba, y el que llega a calarse una mitra, a ese ni Dios le tose ni hay quien le pida cuentas." The millions collected from the State and from the people go to the princes of the Church,(1) for whom the splendid tables are reserved,(2) while the lower clergy are almost starving,(3) without daring to oppose in the least the tyranny from above. Blasco Ibáñez, whose heart goes out to the oppressed in all walks of life, sympathizes with the misery of these people. As they cannot express their thoughts regarding their condition, the only solution they find is to leave the Church. It would be hard to estimate the number that go out in this manner, for their exodus takes place in secret. They realize that if they were discovered they would be ostracized or perhaps persecuted: they know too well the power of the Church. Such a discontent among the ranks of the clergy will help to pave the way for reform within the Church, or it will serve as a blow at the foundations of the institution.

CONCLUSION

Blasco's works constitute an analysis of the actual condition of Spain. He deals with economic, social, religious, and political prob-

(1) La catedral, p.237

(2) La maja desnuda, p.254, 315; La catedral, p. 149

(3) La catedral, p.236

lems. His tendencies are of a socialistic character, and his main targets are the Church and the Monarchy, which according to him, impede all true progress. Blasco stands always on the side of the oppressed, no matter what their station in life may be. He sees hopes of a change, and in his works he often points the way which the people should follow.

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