

Observations on
The State
of
Religion
and
Literature
in Spain

by

John Bowring

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***START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK OBSERVATIONS ON
THE STATE OF
RELIGION AND LITERATURE IN SPAIN***

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**OBSERVATIONS
ON
THE STATE
OF
RELIGION AND LITERATURE
IN
SPAIN,**

MADE DURING

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE PENINSULA

In 1819.

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1819.

OBSERVATIONS, &c.

There are in Spain, according to Antillon's [\[3a\]](#) calculations, two hundred thousand ecclesiastics. They possess immense revenues and an incalculable influence over the mass of the people; though it is certain that influence is diminishing, notwithstanding the countenance and co-operation of a government deeply interested in preserving their authority.

It would be great injustice to the regular clergy of Spain to class them with the immense hordes of monks and friars, scattered over the face of the Peninsula, some possessing rich and well-stored convents, large estates and accumulating wealth, and others (the mendicant orders) who prey more directly on the labours of the poor, and compel the industrious to administer to their holy, uninterrupted laziness. The former, though, doubtless, by far too numerous, are for the most part intelligent and humane: dispensing benevolence and consolation in their respective parishes; friendly, in many instances, to liberty and devoted to literature. The latter, with few, but striking exceptions, [\[3b\]](#) are unmanageable masses of ignorance and indolence. [\[3c\]](#) They live (as one of the Spanish poets says) in a state of sensual enjoyment between the organ-loft and the refectory, to which all other enjoyment is but purgatory; [\[3d\]](#) the link which should connect them with the common weal for ever broken; the ties of family and friend dissolved; their authority founded on the barbarism and degradation of the people, they are interested in stemming the torrent of improvement in knowledge and liberty, which must in the end inevitably sweep away these "cumberers of the soil." No society in which the sound principles of policy are at all understood, would consent to maintain a numerous body of idle, unproductive, useless members in opulence and luxury, (at the expense of the active and the laborious,) merely because they had chosen to decorate themselves with peculiar insignia—to let their beards grow, or to shave their heads; and though the progress of civilization in Spain has been greatly retarded, or rather it has been compelled to retrograde under the present system of despotism, yet, that great advances have been made since the beginning of the late Revolution, is happily too obvious to be denied. [\[4a\]](#)

That Revolution, in fact, has produced, and will continue to produce, a very favourable influence on the ecclesiastical government of Spain. Leaving out of consideration the immense number of priests and friars who perished during the

atrocious invasion of their country, the destruction of convents, the alienation of church property, and the not unfrequent abandonment of the religious vow, unnoticed amidst the confusion and calamities of active war, more silent, but more extensive changes have been going on. The Cortes, when they decreed that no Noviciates should be allowed to enrol themselves, [4b] gave a death-blow to the monastic influence, and since the re-establishment of the ancient despotism, the chasm left by this want of supply has not been filled up, nor is likely to be; for, the greater part of the convents (except those very richly endowed) complain that few candidates propose themselves, except from the lower classes of society, who are not likely to maintain the credit or add to the influence of the order. Examples are now extremely rare of men of family and fortune presenting themselves to be received within the cloisters, and offering all their wealth and power as the price of their admission. Another circumstance, the consequence of the Revolution, has tended greatly to lessen the influence of the regular clergy, where it is most desirable it should be lessened, among the lower classes. Driven from their cells by the bayonets of *enemies*, or obliged to desert them that their convents might become hospitals for their sick and wounded *friends*, they were compelled to mingle with the mass of the people. To know them better was to esteem them less, and the mist of veneration with which popular prejudice had so long surrounded them, was dispersed, when they became divested of every outward distinction, and exhibited the same follies and frailties as their fellow-men. [4c] He who, in the imposing procession, or at the illumined altar, appeared a saint or a prophet, was little, was nothing, when mingling in the common relations of life he stood unveiled before his undazzled observers. For the first time it was discovered that the monks were not absolutely necessary for the preservation even of religion. Masses were celebrated as before: the host paraded the streets with its accustomed pomp and solemnity: the interesting ceremonials which accompany the entrance and the exit of a human being in this valley of vicissitude, were all conducted with their wonted regularity. Still less were they wanted to implore the blessing of Heaven on the labours of the husbandman, whose fruits grew and were gathered in with unvarying abundance. Without *them* the country was freed from the ignoble and degrading yoke of the usurper, while success and martial glory crowned the arms of their military companions, (the British,) who cared little for “all the trumpery” of “friars white, black, or grey;” and if the contagion of their contempt did not reach their Catholic friends, they lessened, at least, the respect with which the inmates of the convent had been so long regarded.

But in anticipating a period in which the Spaniard shall be released from

monkish influence, it must not be forgotten how interwoven is that influence with his most delightful recollections and associations. His festivities, his romerias, [5a] his rural pastimes, are all connected with, and dependent on the annual return of some saint's-day, in honour of which he gives himself up to the most unrestrained enjoyment. A mass is with him the introductory scene to every species of gaiety, and a procession of monks and friars forms a part of every picture on which his memory most delights to dwell.—And a similar, though, perhaps, a stronger impression is created on his mind by the enthusiastic “love of song,” [5b] so universal in Spain. He lives and breathes in a land of poetry and fiction: he listens with ever-glowing rapture to the Romanceros, [5c] who celebrate the feats of his heroes, and surround his monks and hermits with all the glories of saints and angels: he hears of their mighty works, their sufferings, their martyrdom; and the tale, decorated with the charms of verse, is dearer to him than the best of holy writ. The peculiar favourites of the spotless Virgin, their words fall on his ear like the voice of an oracle, their deeds have the solemn sanction of marvellous miracles. To them he owes that his country is the special charge of the queen of angels, the mother of God; and in every convent he sees the records of the wondrous interpositions of heaven, which has so often availed itself of the agency of the *sainted* inmates, while every altar is adorned with the grateful offerings of devout worshipers, miraculously restored to health or preserved from danger. He feels himself the most privileged among the faithful. On him “our Lady of Protection” (del Amparo) smiles; to him the Virgin of Carmen [6a] bows her gracious head. In his eye ten thousand rays of glory encircle the brow of his patron-saint, the fancied tones of whose voice support, assure and encourage him: he believes that his scapulary [6b] (blessed by a Carmelite friar) secures him from every evil: his house is adorned with the pope's bull of indulgences—a vessel of holy water is suspended over his bed, and what more can he want, what danger can approach him? His mind is one mass of undistinguishing, confiding, comforting faith. *That* faith is his religion, his Christianity! How difficult will it be to separate the evil from the good, if, indeed, they can be separated! What a fortress must be overthrown before truth and reason can advance a single step! What delightful visions must be forgotten, what animating recollections, what transporting hopes! Have we a *right* to rouse him from these blessed delusions? This is indeed the ignorance that is bliss. Is it not folly to wish him wise?

But, alas! this is only one side of the picture! for, however soothing, however charming the contemplation of contented ignorance may be to the imagination, in the eye of reason the moral influence of such a system is baneful in the

extreme. All error is evil; and the error which substitutes the external forms of worship for its internal influence on the heart, is a colossal evil. Here we have a religion, if such it may be called, that is purely ceremonial. Its duties are not discharged in the daily walk of life, not by the cultivation of pure and pious and benevolent affections, but by attending masses, by reciting Paternosters and Ave Marias, by pecuniary offerings for souls in purgatory, and by a thousand childish observances, which affect remotely, if they affect at all, the conduct and the character. The Spaniard attends his parish church to hear a service in an unknown tongue; [6c] he bends his knees and beats his bosom at certain sounds familiar to his ear, but not to his sense; he confesses and communicates with undeviating regularity; [6d] and sometimes, perhaps, he listens to a sermon in the eloquent style and beautiful language of his country, not, indeed, instructing him in the moral claims of his religion, but celebrating the virtues and recounting the miracles of some saint or martyr to whom the day is dedicated. He reads his religious duties, not in a Bible, but an Almanack; and his Almanack is but a sort of Christian mythology. His saints are more numerous than the deities of the pantheon; and, to say the truth, there are many of them little better than these. [7a]

He is told, however, that his country exhibits the proudest triumphs of orthodox Christianity. Schism and heresy have been scattered, or at least silenced: and if in Spain the eye is constantly attracted, and the heart distressed, by objects of unalleviated human misery; if the hospitals are either wholly unprotected, or abandoned to the care of the venal and the vile; if the prisons are crowded with a promiscuous mass of innocence and guilt, in all its shades and shapes of enormity [7b]—what does it matter? Spain, Catholic Spain, has preserved her faith unadulterated and unchanged, and her priests assure us that an error in creed is far more dangerous, (or to use their own mild language,) far more damnable, than a multitude of errors in conduct. A depraved heart may be forgiven, but not an erring head. This is, in fact, the fatal principle, whose poison spreads through this strongly-cemented system. To this we may attribute its absurdities, its errors, its crimes. This has created Dominicks and Torquemadas.

In a word, intolerance, in its widest and worst extent, is the foundation on which the whole of the Spanish ecclesiastical edifice rests. It has been called the main pillar of the constitution, and is so inwrought with the habits and prejudices of the nation, that the Cortes, with all their general liberality, dared not allow the profession of any other religion than the “Catolica Apostolica Romana unica

Verdadera.” [7c] The cry of *innovation* there, as elsewhere, became a dreadful weapon in the hands of those who profess to believe that errors become sanctified by age. Too true it is, that if long usage can sanction wrong, persecution might find its justification in every page of Spanish history, from the time when Recaredo, the gothic monarch, abandoned his Arian principles (with the almost solitary exception of the tolerant and ill-treated Witiza). Long, long before the Inquisition had erected its frightful pretensions into a system, or armed itself with its bloody sword, its spirit was abroad and active. Thousands and tens of thousands of Jews and Moors had been its victims, and its founders did no more than obtain a regal or a papal licence, for the murders which would otherwise have been probably committed by a barbarous and frenzied mob, excited by incendiary monks and friars.

The Inquisition has, no doubt, been greatly humanized by the progress of time; as, in order to maintain its influence in these more enlightened and inquiring days, it has availed itself of men of superior talent, these have softened the asperity, or controlled the malignity and petty tyranny of its inferior agents. Its vigilance and its persecutions are, indeed, continually at work, yet, I believe its *flames* will never again be lighted. Its greatest zeal is now directed against Freemasons, of whom immense numbers occupy its prisons and dungeons. I have conversed with many who have been incarcerated by the Inquisition, and they agree in stating that torture is no longer administered. [7d] But its influence on literature is perhaps greater than ever; for though Spain possesses at the present moment a great number of admirable writers, the press was never so inactive. The despotism exercised over authors [8a] and publishers is so intolerable, that few have courage voluntarily to submit to it. Often after authorizing the publication of a work, they order it to be suppressed, and every copy to be burnt, and never think of reparation to those who are so cruelly injured. Their presumption in condemning whatever they cannot understand, [8b] their domiciliary visits, their arbitrary decrees, against which there is no security and no appeal, make them fearful enemies and faithless friends.

With the difficulty, delay, expense and frequent impossibility of obtaining a licence for the publication of any valuable work, may be well contrasted the ridiculous trash which daily issues from the Spanish press. Accounts of miracles wrought by the different virgins, [8c] lives of holy friars and sainted nuns, romances of marvellous conversions, libels against Jews [8d] and heretics and Freemasons, histories of apparitions, and so forth, are generally introduced, not by a mere licence of the inquisitor, but by long and laboured eulogiums.

It is no novel observation, that the most cruel and intolerant persecutors have often been men wholly devoid of religious principle; men, who consider the religion of the state only as a part of its civil policy, and who treat the denial of a national creed with the same severity as the infraction of an established law, or rather as a species of treason against the supreme authority. No plea of modest inquiry, of conscientious doubt, or honest difference of opinion, is allowed to oppose for a moment their sanguinary and despotic sway. There are no terms of safety but those of unresisting, instant, absolute prostration. Such men are generally the prime movers of the gagging engine of religious intolerance; and such men are to be found too abundantly in Spain. Others there are who imagine they see in the pomp and parade of the Romish ritual, a system of delusion admirably adapted to beguile, or even to bless the ignorant. They fancy themselves beings of a higher and nobler order, and that, while they bask in the sunshine of intellect and knowledge, they may be well content that the uninstructed mass should trudge on in darkness below. Why should they throw their pearls to senseless swine; or shower down truth and virtue on those who fatten on vice and error?

But perhaps a larger class, which would include too the majority of the learned clergy of Spain, are they whose honest opinions are made up of heresy and infidelity; but their worldly interests are so inwrought with the existing system, that the thought of sacrificing those interests to the higher claims of right, has never occurred to them; or, if it has occurred, has never obtained a moment's attention. To them it is a glorious and gold-giving superstition. If they can persuade themselves that, on the whole, it is harmless, they are satisfied. They do more—they say it is beneficial, and they have repeated this so often, that they, perhaps, almost believe it is true. Would they look round them they might see the melancholy effects which superstition and intolerance have produced in their hapless country. What is Seville—the once renowned Seville, with its hundred and twenty-five churches and convents? The very shrine of ignorance. It was there that the Spanish chart of liberty was trampled under foot, amidst ten thousand shouts of “Live the King and the Inquisition!” “Perish the Constitution!” Or Cordoba, so long the cradle of the arts, the favourite seat of retiring wisdom? It is become the chosen abode of vice and barbarism! The press, which was established there in the short era of Spanish liberty, has been torn in pieces by a frantic mob, who, excited by the monks, paraded the streets of this unfortunate capital, threatening death to every individual whose name had been connected with that of liberty. How many a town and city, once illustrious, has sunk into nothingness! [\[9a\]](#) “What remains of their ancient glory? The ruins

of palaces, of fabrics, of store-houses and dwellings; and undilapidated churches and monasteries and hospitals, outliving the misery of which they have been the cause.” [\[9b\]](#)

One might surely expect that in a country possessing eight archbishops, more than fifty bishops, and more than a hundred abbeys, with a jurisdiction almost episcopal; “in which,” to use the language of a Spanish writer, “there are more churches than houses, more altars than hearths, more priests than peasants;” in which every dwelling has its saint, and every individual his scapulary;—one might expect to see some benefits, some blessings resulting from this gigantic mass of ecclesiastical influence. Let us, then, look upon a picture drawn by the hand of an acknowledged master.

“Our universities [\[10a\]](#) are the faithful depositaries of the prejudices of the middle age; our teachers, doctors of the tenth century. Beardless noviciates instruct us in the sublime mysteries of our faith; mendicant friars in the profound secrets of philosophy; while barbarous monks explain the nice distinctions of metaphysics.

“Who goes into our streets without meeting cofradías, [\[10b\]](#) processions or rosaries; without hearing the shrill voice of eunuchs, [\[10c\]](#) the braying of sacristans, the confused sound of sacred music, entertaining and instructing the devout with compositions so exalted, and imagery so romantic, that devotion itself is forced into a smile? In the corners of our squares, at the doors of our houses, the mysterious truths of our religion are commented on by blind beggars to the discordant accompaniment of an untuned guitar. Our walls are papered with records of ‘authentic miracles,’ compared to which, the metamorphoses of Ovid are natural and credible.

“And ignorance has been the parent, not of superstition alone, but of incredulity and infidelity. The Bible, the argument and evidence of our Christian faith, has been shamefully abandoned, or cautiously buried beneath piles of decretals, formularies, puerile meditations, and fabulous histories.

“Monkish influence has given to the dreams and deliriums of foolish women, or crafty men, the authority of revealed truth. Our friars have pretended to repair with their rotten and barbarous scaffolding, the

eternal edifice of the gospel. They have twisted and tortured the moral law into a thousand monstrous forms, to suit their passions and their interests. Now they describe the path to heaven as plain and easy,—now it is difficult,—to morrow they will call it impassable. They have dared to obscure with their artful commentaries the beautiful simplicity of the Word of God. They have darkened the plainest truths of revelation, and on the hallowed charter of Christian liberty, they have even erected the altar of civil despotism!

“In the fictions and falsehoods they have invented to deceive their followers, in their pretended visions and spurious miracles, they have even ventured to compromise the terrible majesty of heaven. They shew us our Saviour lighting one nun to put cakes into an oven; throwing oranges at another from the *sagrario*; tasting different dishes in the convent-kitchens, and tormenting friars with childish and ridiculous playfulness. They represent a monk gathering together the fragments of a broken bottle, and depositing in it the spilt wine, to console a child who had let it fall at the door of the wine-shop. Another, repeating the miracle of Cana to satisfy the brotherhood, and a third restoring a still-born chicken to life that some inmate of the convent might not be disappointed.

“They represent to us a man preserving his speech many years after death, in order to confess his sins; another throwing himself from a high balcony without danger, that he might go to mass. A dreadful fire instantly extinguished by a scapulary of Estamene. They shew us the Virgin feeding a monk from her own bosom; angels habited like friars, chanting the matins of the convent, because the friars were asleep. They paint the meekest and holiest of men torturing and murdering the best and the wisest for professing a different religious creed.

“We have indeed much *religion*, but no Christian charity. We hurry with our pecuniary offerings to advance any *pious work*, but we do not scruple to defraud our fellow-men. We confess every month, but our vices last us our lives. We insist (almost exclusively) on the name of Christians, while our conduct is worse than that of infidels. In one concluding word, we fear the dark dungeon of the inquisition, but not the awful—the tremendous tribunal of God!” [\[11a\]](#)

This is the representation of a Spaniard. Though the colouring is high, it is a copy from nature, and the shades might have been heightened had he witnessed the conduct of numbers of the monastic orders during the late convulsions of Spain. There are, indeed, few examples of such infamous want of principle as was exhibited by many of them on the king's return. Those who had gone about preaching the rights of man, proclaiming the wisdom and exalting the blessings of the new constitution; exhorting their hearers, often with a vehemence little becoming their situation, to live and die for its preservation, and hurling their bitterest anathemas against those who dared to question the wisdom of a single article,—when the king refused to sign that constitution, became the eulogists of every act of tyranny, the persecutors of the *liberales*, and the chosen friends of Ferdinand. [11b] They have had their reward: and though a few of them have occupied the vacant sees, and have been caressed and recompensed with no sparing hand, the finger of hatred and of scorn points them out to the execration of betrayed and suffering millions, while their names will go down to posterity, accompanied with reproaches, curses and infamy. If those be forgiven who have gone on in one consistent career of servitude and degradation; who have betrayed no cause of liberty—for they are by habit and by election slaves; who have sacrificed no manly principles—for manly principles they had none;—still no charity can wash away the stains of those traitors to freedom, to humanity, to Spain, who so atrociously deserted the banners of their country's welfare, to range themselves around the standards of a profligate and unexampled tyranny.

The most notorious of those, however, who co-operated to establish that fatal and ferocious despotism which now degrades and oppresses Spain, have already become its victims. In their sorrow and suffering and exile, let the unshaken friends of constitutional liberty, who are scattered over Europe, console themselves with remembering that their personal fate is no more severe than that of the base tools of a wretched monarch, who have nothing to accompany their wanderings but sadness, shame and self-reproach, dark and barren prospects, and desolate remembrances; while *those* shall receive from all around them, the smiles and the praises of the wise and good. They may look back on the “bread” of virtue which they have “cast on the waters,” and forward in the confident hope that they “shall find it again after many days:” but they who sacrificed their country to their cold-hearted and selfish avarice, have wholly erred in their calculations. Their country is fallen indeed, but they, too, have been buried in its ruins. Ferdinand, who has just as much of gratitude as of any other virtue, [12] has already trampled on the miserable tools of his early tyranny. It were well if those who “put their trust in princes,” would study the many impressive lessons

which the reign of the Spanish tyrant affords.

It is consolatory to turn from the profligacy and vice so often prominent amidst extraordinary political revolutions, to the spirit of truth and liberty which they always elicit; and Spain has had a most triumphant list of patriots. Their names must not be recorded: for, to receive the tribute of affection and gratitude from any hater of a tyrant, would be sufficient to subject them to his merciless ferocity. How wretched that country where no meed of applause may follow the track of talent or of virtue—where knowledge and the love of freedom are pursued and persecuted as if they were curses and crimes! Otherwise, with what delight should I speak of some who, buried in the obscurity of the cloister, or retiring into solitude from the noisy crowd, sigh in secret and silence over the wretched fate of the land of their birth, their admirable powers of body and mind fettered and frozen by the hand of despotism! All around them is slavery and ignorance; to them remain alone the joy of holding converse with the wise and the good of departed time, and the ecstatic hope that their country will one day burst from its death-like slumbers, and spring forth “into liberty and life and light.”

And let those illustrious exiles, the martyrs of truth and freedom, who have been driven by an ungrateful and cruel tyrant from their homes and their country, and doomed “to wander through this miserable world,” take heart; for a brighter and better day is about to dawn upon Spain. I have expressed a hope, it should rather be a conviction, that this period cannot linger long. If the extreme of evil brings with it its own remedy; if human endurance will only support a certain weight of despotism; if “there is a spirit in man;” if there is a strength in virtue or in liberty—the intolerable fetters *must* be broken.

¿Que es esto, Autor eterno
Del triste mundo? tu sublime nombre
Que en el se ultraja á moderar no alcanzas?
—¿ á infelices venganzas
Y sangre y muerte has destinado el hombre?
¿A tantas desventuras
Ningnu termino pones? ¿ó el odioso
Monstruo por siempre triunfará orgulloso?

Melendez.

The object, for which the foregoing observations were written, made it necessary to exclude some particulars, which perhaps deserve record.

A correct idea of the state of learning in Spain might be formed from the general decline of the public *colegios* and universities, and the almost universal ignorance of those to whom the important business of education is intrusted. At Alcalá de Henares, where there were formerly four or five thousand students, there are now less than three hundred, and the number is yearly declining. A similar decay may be observed elsewhere. I found every thing in a melancholy state of derangement and dilapidation at Bergara, though this, I believe, is now the only public school which has been able to maintain itself. The philosophical and mathematical instruments had been destroyed by rust, or rendered useless by violence, and every thing connected with instruction appeared conducted as if the dreadful apprehension that *too much* wisdom might be communicated, were constantly present to the *enlightened* directors.

There are few objects more touching, more humiliating, than those scenes sacred once to liberty and to literature, and associated with the names of the noblest and “the wisest of our race;” but now become the fortresses of ignorance, profligacy and despotism. Who would not sigh over Cordoba?

When I remember what thou wert of old,
Birth-place of Senecas;—nurse of arms and arts;
When to thy schools from earth’s remotest parts
The nations crowded—while thy sons unroll’d
Thy chronicles of wisdom;—when I see
The spot Averröes lov’d, and tread the sod
Maimonides and Abenezra trod;
Or seek the umbrage of some rev’rend tree,
Beneath whose shade Mena or Cespedes
At noon-tide mus’d:—when I remember these
Or other hallow’d names, and see thee *now*
Shrouded in ignorance and slavery:—
O Cordoba! my spirit weeps o’er thee,
And burning blushes kindle on my brow. [\[13\]](#)

While the majority of the most distinguished writers of Spain have been

expatriated, it may be supposed literature is at a very low ebb there. Melendez and Estála have died in exile,—while Moratin and Llorente will probably never again revisit their native land. Marina, Quintana, Argüelles, Gallego, and other estimable men, occupy the hopeless dungeons to which tyranny has consigned them; while this island, in particular, has had the honour of welcoming and of sheltering many a generous patriot and many an enlightened scholar, whose virtues and talents are lost to a country which has so much reason to deplore their removal.

I trust, however, that a work which has been so long a desideratum, viz. a History of Spain under the dominion of the Moors, compiled from Arabic documents, will, ere long, be published, by Don José Antonio Conde, the learned Orientalist, whose erudition and diligent research promise a most valuable and interesting narration.

The Spanish Academy are now printing, at Madrid, a new edition of Don Quixote, in five volumes, which will be prefaced by a Life of Cervantes, by Navarrete. This piece of biography will be peculiarly gratifying, as many documents connected with the history of Cervantes have lately been discovered, especially the records of the proceedings against him, before his imprisonment. [\[14a\]](#)

Herrera's celebrated work on Agriculture is also being printed by the Academy. The biographical notices are written by Don Mariano Lagasca, whose name is a sufficient pledge for their excellence.

The Spanish Drama had been in a progressive state of decay from the death of Candamo, till Moratin's [\[14b\]](#) attempts to introduce the regularity and unity of the Parisian theatre were crowned with complete success. It is a different, and will be considered as a lower order of merit, by all who place Nature and Shakespeare above Art and the French Drama. If, however, Calderon and Lope, Moreto and Montalvan, Solis and Candamo, seldom occupy the Spanish stage, it is because the national taste, or the national indifference, has chosen to sanction or permit the puerile trifles imported from the other side of the Pyrenees, to occupy the seats which might be so much more honourably filled by native genius. An active controversy is going on as to the respective merits of the French and Spanish theatres; but it does not seem to excite much interest beyond the immediate circle of combatants. A new dramatic writer (Gorostiza [\[15\]](#)) has lately appeared, and his first effort, "Indulgencia para todos," in spite of some

improbabilities in the story, and some vulgarisms in the style, gives fair hopes for the future.

By way of conclusion, I would remark, that ultra-royalism and bigotry may receive from the present wretchedness of Spain a *salutary* and *corrective* lesson. They may there see the unalloyed triumph of their principles, and study the consequences in the degradation, the disquietude and the wretchedness of a once renowned and illustrious nation. They have there a king reigning in “all the glory” of uncontrolled majesty, and a state-religion undisturbed by heretics or schismatics;—there is the dull death-like silence of abhorred submission, unbroken by any hated shouts of liberty—“the prostration of the understanding and the will,” that neither dares nor wishes to inquire.

As to the character of Ferdinand, it has been greatly misunderstood or greatly misrepresented. It has been well said of him, that he has all the crimes and none of the merits of his ancestors. He appears to care little about the church or the clergy, except inasmuch as he can make them the instruments of civil despotism. [16] His habits are gross and licentious; yet he is inaccessible to any sentiment of benevolence or generosity.—He never forgave a fancied enemy, and perhaps he never possessed a real friend.—From his very childhood his untameable and barbarous propensities made him the object of fear and dread; and adversity (that touchstone of character) has served only to excite and heighten the dark ferocity of his disposition. What, indeed, could be expected from an ingrate, who rewarded those that replaced in his worthless hand the sceptre he had cast away, with persecution and exile, imprisonment and death?

Was it for this through seven long years of war
We bore the miserable wants of woes
Pour'd on our naked heads by barb'rous foes,
While thou a patient captive—absent far,
Nor heard'st our cries, nor saw'st the bloody star
That o'er our helpless, hapless country rose?
Did we not break the intolerable bar
Forged by the master-tyrant? Interpose
To rescue—not our country—but mankind?
Did we not break thy prison-doors, unbind
Thy fetters, and with shouts of joy that rent
The very arches of the firmament
Receive thee?—And is this our destiny?

Insults and slavery, and a wretch like thee!

G. Smallfield, Printer, Hackney.

FOOTNOTES.

[3a] Antillon—I cannot mention this illustrious name without a tribute of admiration and gratitude. A life devoted to virtue and literature, an unwearied struggle in the cause of civil and religious liberty, rewarded by the fatal blow of a hired assassin, leaves behind it an impress on the hearts of the generous and the good which will not and cannot be erased.

[3b] It cannot be denied that the seclusion of the convent is so friendly to contemplation and research, that, literature has been, and still is, greatly indebted to it. A glance at the columns of Nich. Antonio's Biographical Dictionary will give striking proof of this.

[3c] There are many convents in which no book could be found but the service of mass or the rules of the order. In others, there are excellent libraries, of whose value friars have no idea whatever. In the convent of San Miguel de los Reyes, near Valencia, I examined some of the most interesting MSS. in existence, which are in charge of a brotherhood of unlearned Geronomites. The librarian refused to shew me a celebrated MS. of the Roman de la Rose, "because" (he said) "it was the work of a heretic;" though he added, he had written some verses in it to frighten any inquirer who might accidentally open it. He had been recommending *the burning* a noble illuminated MS. of the "Divina Commedia," apparently contemporary with Dante, as "the wretch had dared to send even Popes to hell." Ancient copies of Virgil, Livy and others, are in some danger, should our zealous friar stumble on their history, and learn that they never went to mass.

[3d] Montalvan.

Es Purgatorio—
Toda dicha, comparada
Con la de un frayle, cifrada
Desde el coro al refectorio.

The whole description is admirable, and I am tempted to introduce it here.

Friend, thou art right! A world like this
Hath nothing equal to the bliss

Enjoyed by yonder lazy friar,
Between refectory and choir!
The morning pass'd in sacred song,
(The task is short—the triumph long!)
Why should our portly friar repine?
Enough for him—good man! to see
His cellar stor'd with rosy wine,
His table pil'd with luxury.
Come now, come with me, and partake
Our friar's *poor* and *modest* board:
Meek sufferer—for Jesus' sake!
Self-sacrific'd—to please the Lord!!
And is this rich and gay domain
His place of penury and pain?
That table *his*, where rang'd in state
I see so many jovial brothers,
Each with his fingers in his plate,
And his eyes fix'd upon another's?
O 'tis indeed a lovely sight
To see thus earth and heav'n unite;
And what an enviable union
Of church and kitchen in communion!
While, hark! a voice at intervals,
The *pious* grace devoutly bawls
Gratias tibi, Domine!
While up and down their arms are moving
Like engines in a factory:
Thus most indisputably proving
How calm and meek and patiently
These pious souls submit to all
The *sorrow*, *suff'ring* and *privation*
Which may an earthly saint befall:
O unexampled resignation!!

Principe Perseguido.

[4a] Much was apprehended from the recalled Jesuits: they came—not the learned, the illustrious fathers of former days, but a handful of ignorant, helpless old men, incapable of good, and, I trust, incapable of evil. Father Juan Andres

died in Rome in 1817.

[4b] They enacted this under the pretence that all young men were wanted for the defence of the country. Even the friars were obliged to be silent against such a plea.

[4c] Nor are there wanting instances of friars atoning on the scaffold for crimes of the deepest dye; and I could mention examples of fraud, violence and murder committed since the king's return by individuals among them, whose monstrous atrocity it would be difficult to parallel.

[5a] Romerias. That these acts of devotion are always attended with shameful profligacy is sufficiently known. Even Calderon bears testimony to their danger:

— Todos los concursos
De varias romerias,
Tal vez en zelo empiezan
Y acaban en delicia;
El verse unos con otros
Conmuevese á la alegría,
La alegría al banquete
El banquete á la risa,
La risa al bayle, al juego
A la vaya, á la grita
Escollos en que siempre
La devocion peligra.

A Maria el Corazon.

So, indeed, says the old proverb, “Quien muchos romerias anda tarde ó nunca se santifica.”

[5b] The Roman Catholic Church has made a glorious league with the fine arts, each of which has been made subservient to its purposes, and has maintained its mighty influence. Poetry, painting and music can never pay the immense debt they owe to the gorgeous machinery of the Romish ritual.

[5c] Perhaps I may be allowed to introduce a few specimens of the style of the Romanceros. For instance, their praises of the Virgin:

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

La reyna de los cielos
Emperatriz soberana
Fuente de amor y dulzura
Rio de bondad y de gracia
Pielago de perfecciones
Tranquilo mar de gracias
Iris de serenidades
Lucero de la mañana
Del cielo norte seguro.

San Onofre.

Sagrada Virgen Maria
Antorcha del cielo empireo
Hixa del eterno Padre,
Madre del supremo bixo
Del sacro espiritu esposa.

Jayme del Castillo.

Hermosisima Maria
Preciosisima açucena
Que con tu divina gracia
Nos libertais de la pena,
Florida y hermosa rosa
Palma, cipres, virgen bella
Lirio, olivo, torre hermosa
De encumbrada fortaleza
Cielos, sol y luna hermosa
Fuente llena de clemencia
Que con tu divina gracia
Triunfos y lauros aumentas:
Gran Señora del Carmelo
Suplicote, sacra reyna
Que abogada y protectira
Con el rey de gracias seas.

Judio de Toledo.

Great, however, as is their devotion, it is less than their bombast.

Paren en sus movimientos
Ayre, fuego, tierra y ondas
Sol, luna, estrellas, luceros
Los planetas y la Aurora
Mientras mi pluma remonta
Su vuelo al mas sacro asunto
De la estacion dichosa
Quando vino la Cruz de Grao.

Cruz de Grao.

Remonte el vuelo mi pluma
Hasta la region mas alta
Del viento donde lucida
Brille, dando á aquesta plana
Y principio al suceso
Mas admirable de que narra
En sus anales el tiempo
Y las historias pasadas.

Jayme de Aragon.

[6a] The Carmelites will have it that Elias (whom Thomas Waldenses calls the first virgin among men, as Mary is among women), dedicated a temple to “the mother of God” on Mount Carmel, nine hundred years before her birth. Those who wish to be acquainted with the wonderful miracles wrought by the “Virgen del Carmen,” may consult an immense list published by Friar Juan Serrer, most of which are certified by notaries, priests, magistrates and friars.

[6b] El bendito Escapulario
Que al infierno lo amedrenta.

Romance.

[6c] It may, however, be noticed, that great numbers are drawn away from the religious services of the regular clergy, by the greater parade with which the friars attract their devotees to the convent chapel.

[6d] Spain is a striking example of the influence of the habit of confession on public morals. It has there, no doubt, given the full reins to licentiousness.

[7a] Feijoo, a Benedictine monk, says that his order has fifteen thousand canonized saints.

[7b] Of the numerous banditti, for which Spain has been always distinguished, there is, perhaps, not an individual who neglects any of those ceremonies which are considered binding on all faithful Catholics.

— These murderous bands
In holy water wash their hands;
They never miss a mass—they wear
A rosary and scapulaire:
They damn all heretics, and say
Their pious Aves twice-a-day;
They bend at every virgin's altar;
And can such saints deserve a halter?

[7c] The absurdity of introducing such an expression into a constitutional code could not be unnoticed by the illustrious body of deputies, to whom the Cortes had confided its arrangement. It is believed their object was to remove any suspicion as to their thorough orthodoxy, in order that they might effect hereafter some plans of ecclesiastical reformation.

[7d] Torture has been abolished in Spain for many years. However, that monster in the form of man, Elio, the captain-general of Valencia, has dared to employ it; and when I was in that capital I was informed, (and the fact has had abundant confirmation,) that it had been applied a few days before to no less than 147 individuals, whose cries and shrieks were heard by all the inhabitants of Murviedro, where they were confined. This tiger might allege, indeed, the example of his royal master, who caused numbers to be tortured in Madrid, after the last conspiracy there.

[8a] Don Gonzalez Carbajal, a poet of no common merit, whose verses have been well compared with those of Fr. Luis de Leon, is now publishing a metrical version of the Psalms. The MS. was sent to the inquisitorial censors, who replied, that, though they saw nothing absolutely objectionable in the work, they deemed it very extraordinary and very suspicious that no allusion was made in it to the Sumo Pontifice!

[8b] I will mention one of a thousand instances of ignorance which I have

individually witnessed. As I did not choose to expose myself to be annoyed by inquisitors, I travelled without any English books, except a small collection of hymns. They pounced upon it at Miranda del Ebro, where there is a rigid examination: there was some dispute whether or not it should be condemned, when some word like the name of a Spanish town, caught their eye: “O, ’tis a book of roads,” said our learned scrutineer, and he returned it to me.

[8c] Of the “different virgins” who divide the adoration of the devout in Spain, (each individual choosing his favourite,) it would be difficult to say which has the pre-eminence in general estimation. I believe “our Lady of Montserrat,” in Catalonia, and “our Lady of the Pillar,” of Zaragoza, have amassed for their guardian friars the largest piles of wealth.

[8d] As an instance of the fraud, the falsehood and the folly of those who sway the minds of the lower classes, I would quote, from among many examples, the “Centinela contra Judios,” a book of great popularity, introduced by several pages of inquisitorial praises. It gives the following account of the crimes and punishments of the twelve tribes:

“The tribe of Judah treacherously delivered up our Lord, and thirty of them die by treason every year.

“The tribe of Reuben seized our Lord in the garden, and therefore the curse of barrenness is on all they sow or plant, and no green thing can flourish over their graves.

“The tribe of Gad put on the crown of thorns, and on every 25th of March, their bodies are covered with blood from deep and painful wounds.

“Those of Asher buffeted Jesus, and their right hand is always nearly a palm shorter than the left.

“Those of Naphthali jested with Christ about a herd of swine, since when they are all born with tusks, like wild boars.

“The tribe of Manasseh cried out, ‘His blood be on us and on our children,’ and at every new moon they are tormented by bloody sores.

“The tribe of Simeon nailed our Lord to the cross, and on the 25th of

March, four deep and dreadful wounds are inflicted on their hands and feet.

“Those of Levi spat on the Saviour, and the wind always blows back their saliva in their faces, so that they are habitually covered with filth.

“The tribe of Issachar scourged Christ, and on the 25th of March blood streams forth from their shoulders.

“The tribe of Zebulon cast lots for the garments, and on the same day the roof of their mouth is tortured by deep wounds.

“The tribe of Joseph made the nails for crucifying Jesus, and blunted them to increase his sufferings; and therefore their hands and feet are covered with gashes and blood.

“Those of Benjamin gave vinegar to Jesus; they all squint and are palsied, and have their months filled with little nauseous worms, which, in truth, (adds our author,) is the case with all Jewish women after the age of 25, because it was a woman who intreated the tribe of Joseph not to sharpen the nails used for the crucifixion of our Lord.”

This is a fair specimen of a book of 220 pages.

[\[9a\]](#) Seville, Cordoba, Santiago, Burgos, Toledo—in a word, all the places where ecclesiastical authority is most active, have been the most strenuous opposers of the progress of civil, to say nothing of religious liberty. And these, too, are universally the most barbarous of the Spanish cities. How the clergy at Santiago frustrated the attempts of the heroic Porlier to establish the Constitution, is notorious.

[\[9b\]](#) Informe de la Sociedad de Madrid sobre la Ley agraria, § 166.

At every step one finds in Spain enough to excite the most melancholy recollections. I went to Alcalá de Henares to visit the house in which Cervantes was born. (If I had undertaken a pilgrimage I could not have repaid the enjoyment, the delight, I have received from the works of this wonderful genius!) It had been destroyed, that a herd of friars might enlarge their kitchen-garden! I inquired for the MSS. of Ximenes Cisneros: they had been cut up for sky-rockets to celebrate the arrival of some worthless grandee!

[10a] Some of the Professors of the Spanish universities, those especially of civil law and medicine, and perhaps even some of theology, are enlightened men and lovers of liberty. This is decidedly the case at Salamanca and Alcalá, and partially so at Valencia. To the rest the text may safely be applied.

[10b] Cofradías—assemblies for religious objects.

[10c] Eunuchs are not now common in Spain. The inhuman practice, once so frequent, is now prohibited by law.

[11a] Translated from a little tract called “Pan y Toros,” attributed to Jovellanos. It was written before the Revolution.

[11b] Such men as Father Martinez, (Mercenario) who has been appointed one of the preachers of the royal chapel, should be held up to public detestation.

“¡Grande epoca de nuestra felicidad y de nuestra regeneracion!
Rubricad la constitucion con un juramento inviolable, selladla con la sangre de vuestras venas. Sus legisladores han sido inspirados por la Sabiduria divina—¡Gloriosa instalacion de las Cortes! Feliz transito de una casi mortalagonia á una vigorosa robustez politica. Mejor de los gobiernos—Cortes! precioso nombre qui despierta en nuestra alma todas las ideas de la antigua libertad y grandeza Española! Solo remedio de nuestros males, suspirados por todo Español, amante de su patria. Constitucion sabia y liberal—excelsa fabrica! ¿Que ofrecen Grecia y Roma comparable á nuestro augusto congreso y á su codigo tan completamente acabado? ¡Nacion sabia y entendida, que proclama con voz enérgica su libertad, su independencia y soberania! Libre é independiente, y no el patrimonio de ninguna familia ó persona. *El Rey no puede. El Rey no puede.* Avergüenzense los brutales idólatras del Atila ó Gengis Khan de la Europa—la España tiene una barrera firmisima contra el despotismo. Emancipados Españoles—segunda vez, loor sempiterno, himnos de bendicion á nuestros sabios legisladores! Leyes fundamentales, liberales y sabias—despues del catecismo de la religion estudialas, meditalas, canonizalas—á la par del catecismo de la religion pon en las manos de tus hixos y nietos el codigo constitucional. Pronunciad con entusiasmo el juramento inviolable que va á ser rubricado con la sangre del divino cordero, y que los angeles habrán ya escrito en las columnas del empíreo. Los

corazones Castellanos dicen mucho mas que lo que los labios pronuncian; ardientemente desean que al lado de aquella ara augusta se erija una pirámide, donde sea escrita en letras de oro esta inscripcion sencilla, *Juramos ser fieles á la constitucion: por ella vivirémos gloriosos: y por ella, si menester, fuére, gloriosamente morirémos.*”
Sermon preached in Valladolid, 13th September, 1812.

This recreant friar in a letter to the Patriarch of the Indies, dated 20th February, 1815, thus writes:

Of the Cortes: “Hiciéron publicar y jurar con la mas escandalosa premura una constitucion ignorada. Su formacion fué viciosa é ilegal; el codigo fué hecho por los amaños y malas artes de una faccion de anarquistas. Cortes—nombre hoy de infausto agüero—Junta de cabalas Gaditanas.”

Of the constitution: “Se la publicó casi en la forma qui se publicó el Alcoran todo por sorpresa, todo premura y todo militar. ¡Sus dias de terrorismo! Juré un odio eterno á los principios democraticos de la llamada constitucion y las ideas anarquicas é irreligiosas del partido liberal.”

Of Ferdinand: “Nuestro idolatrado rey. Nuestro suspirado monarca, el mas justo de los reyes.”

Of himself: “Mi conducta me granjeó el favor de todos los buenos de Galicia, que me mirában como una columna del partido servil. El consejo de Castilla me honró confiándome la censura de varios papeles qui calificué de sediciosos, subersivos é injuriosos á la soberania de S. M. El primer nombrado por la Junta de Obispos por la censura de todos los escritos revolucionarios é impios fué el Padre Martinez *nemine discrepante*. El ayuntamiento de Santiago me comisionó que diere gracias á S. M. por el reestablecimiento de la Inquisicion pidiendo á S. M. por los P.P. Jesuitas. ‘El Rey en atencion al distinguido merito y servicios del Padre Martinez’ me nombra su predicador supernumerario: y despues, ‘S. M. en consideracion á la solida literatura de V. S. y á los servicios hechos á su real persona, la religion y al estado,’ le nombra Consexero de la Suprema de la Inquisicion!”

Of the above sermon: “Hablé con la ligereza y superficialidad de un orador que habla de lo que no entiende. Era poco instruido en el derécho publico Español. Hablé constitucional y por conseqüente disparatadamente. Sermon de adornos, flores, y exâgerados hiperboles, sedicioso, subersivo é injurioso á la soberania de S. M.”

Another disgraceful example may be quoted in that of Father Velez, the present Bishop of Ceuta, who has lately published a book, entitled *Defensa del Altar y del Trono*, so infamous, so full of outrages, insults, and shameless mendacity, that the very Inquisition refused to license its impression; and our mitred libeller delivered a copy to the king, whose taste it so admirably suited, that he issued an immediate mandate, signed by his royal hand, ordering its instant publication. I believe it is the only book which has been printed for years without the Inquisition’s authority.

[12] The title of *Ingrato* is, in fact, the Spanish despot’s right *par excellence*. A few more such examples would dissolve the spell which holds so many slaves in bondage, and lead them to doubt whether

“*Such divinity as doth hedge a king,*”

can really be of celestial origin.

[13] I know of no city honoured with so proud a list of illustrious men in so many departments of literature, as Cordoba. Strabo (Cap. iii.) speaks of the learning of its inhabitants, and so does Cicero (Orat. pro Archiâ). The two Senecas and Lucan among the Romans; Averröes; his rival Avicenna, and Abenzoar, distinguished Arabic writers; the three most famous Hebrew Rabbies, Abenezra, Kimki and Maimonides; Ferdinand the logician; Juan de Mena, the father of Spanish poetry; Arias Montano, Nebrixa, Gongora, the poet, and Cespedes, the every thing—were all natives of Cordoba. Repeated attempts have been made to revive the spirit of learning in this interesting capital, and the literary societies there have published several striking appeals on the subject; but Cordoba continues without even a bookseller’s stall;—a striking monument of the triumphs of monkery and ignorance over all that is great, good and generous in the human character.

[14a] Notwithstanding the many discussions as to the birth-place of Cervantes, and the numerous copies that have been made of the register of his baptism,

since the claims of Alcalá to the honour of his birth-place have been admitted, it is surprising that no one should have remarked that the name of his father is spelt *Carvantes* in the original parish record, which I consulted. It is in the oldest of the registers of the church of St. Mary Mayor, at page 192.

Fray Jayme Villanueva mentioned a curious circumstance to me at Valencia, connected with Cervantes;—that among the ecclesiastical documents he had examined at Tarragona, there were a great number of letters addressed to the Cabildo, relating various acts of robbery and murder committed by Roque Guinart and his band, (vide *Don Quixote*, Vol. IV. Par. ii. Cap. 60,) and imploring their assistance to rid the country of these freebooters: these letters are dated 1614. Now the second part of *Don Quixote* was published in 1615. How soon did Cervantes avail himself of these events, and how rapid must his composition have been!

Cervantes! idol of my happiest hours!
Generous and joyous spirit! who hast brought
From thy rich storehouse of romantic thought
Wisdom and truth and valor!—All the powers
Of Poetry and Music fill thy bowers.
Proud is the monument thy hands have wrought,
And beautiful the lesson thou hast taught;—
And now the muse of many nations showers
Garlands upon thy tomb:—yet thou wert poor
And desolate in life—of all bereft,
In misery and melancholy left
To fix thy dim eye on a prison door!
Shame on the world! No other star shall shine
Upon that world with such a light as thine!

“Se engendró (el Quixote) en una carcel donde toda incomodidad tiene su asiento y donde todo triste ruido hace su habitacion.”

Prologue to Don Quixote.

[14b] Moratin's translation of *Hamlet* is as unworthy of the Spanish as of the British bard; but any prose rendering of the beautiful poetry of this extraordinary tragedy must be intolerable to an English ear.

[15] As none of his writings have probably reached England, I shall be excused for introducing a specimen of his verses from the above comedy. Take, for example, the description of a gaming house:

Don Carlos.

¿Aun la colera se dura?
¿Que viste tan malo alii
Que asi te altera?

Don Severo.

Yo vi
Un infierno en miniatura
Y no merece otro nombre,
Porque se deja al entrar
Cuanto puede recordar
Los privilegios del hombre.
En un ahumado aposento,
Anegado en porqueria,
He visto en un solo dia
Lo que no pudiera en ciento.
Sobre una mesa ó bufete
Alii un mandil se descubre,
Que mas empuerca que encumbre,
Y al que se llama tapete.
Yace encima un mal belon
Moribundo, desdichado,
Quien, á pesar de su estado,
Manifestó la intencion
Que de alumbrarnos tenia;
Mas le faltó un requisito,
Y fue el aceite maldito,
Que estaba en Andalucia.
Pues de esta mesa al redor,
Y por tal luz alumbrados,
Encontramos ya sentados,
Esperando un redentor,
A una percion de estafermos,

Que por ser desaliñados,
Flacos, puercos y estropeados,
Me parecieron enfermos.
Pero ¡ai Dios y que sudores
Tuve! ¡Que susto me diste
Cuando al oído me dijiste
Estos son los jugadores;
Luego descubri al banquero
Fumando su cigarrito,
Manejando aquel librito,
O recogiendo dinero.
A bosquejar no me atrevo
Ni sus dedos, ni sus uñas,
No se quejen las garduñas,
O chille un Cristiano nuevo:
Pero añadiré sencillo,
Que si le encuentro en la calle,
En lugar de saludalle
Le doi mi capa y bolsillo.
¡Qué juramentos! ¡Qué por vidas!
Y otras voces conocidas
Tan solo entre jugadores.
Acá gana una *judia*,
Alli las sotas *se dan*,
Piérdese un buen *ganarán*
O quiebra *contra judia*.
Alli sin sogá, *se amarra*,
Se apunta sin escopeta,
Sin necesidad *se aprieta*.
Se mata sin cimitarra:
Tambien *se entierra* sin ser
Doctor ni sepulturero,
Y en fin se pierde el dinero
Sin oír, sin hablar, sin ver.
Estos, amiguito, son
Los primores, que sin tasa
Se encuentran en esa casa,
Que llamas de diversion.
Y no siento, ciertamente,

Haber jugado y perdido,
Sino el haber conocido
Pocilga tan indecente.

[\[16\]](#) I have seen him join the religious processions at Madrid, but with evident indifference and impatience. In the really interesting solemnities of the 2nd of May, (to commemorate the earliest victims of the Revolution,) in the presence of the Court, the Nuncio, and the dignified ecclesiastics of Spain, he played idly with his wax taper and his pocket handkerchief, and walked out of church in the middle of mass. If he ever amused himself with embroidering garments for the Virgin, (which I do not believe,) or feigned a special devotion in the ecclesiastical ceremonies of his country, he has not thought it necessary to wear the mask of hypocrisy any longer.

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