

Mexico Parallels Old English Persecutions

Suppression of Catholics In Queen Elizabeth's Reign Finds Parallel in Mexico

Laws of 16th Century England Much Like Those Enacted by Benito Juarez, "Lincoln of Mexico," in 1857.

THE recent action of the Mexican Government in reviving the laws against the Catholic church, drafted as far back as 1857, has a historical parallel in the persecution of the English Catholics in the reign of Queen Elizabeth and of her successor, James I. The manner of stripping the church of much of its ecclesiastical authority is so much alike in both cases that the earlier laws might have served as patterns for the statutes enacted during the presidency of Benito Juarez, "the Lincoln of Mexico."

The Mexican Government insists that all clergymen register themselves and their churches, that no foreign priest shall officiate in Mexican churches, that religious instruction must not be given in the elementary schools, that convents and monasteries be closed and deprives foreign-born priests of the right to administer the sacraments.

Under Juarez all male religious orders were suppressed and the ecclesiastics were reduced to the status of the secular clergy. In addition to abolishing convents and monasteries, he forbade the wearing of the habit of a suppressed order. All church property reverted to the State, and books, paintings and antiques were ordered to be given to museums and libraries. The ancient right of sanctuary in churches was abolished.

One Governor Ordered All Priests to Marry.

The State chose queer means to enmesh the church in a network of laws. The use of church bells was regulated by police ordinances. Religious instruction was forbidden in the schools, but as a curb upon the education of young Mexico the law added, " * * * but morality will be taught." Last year the Governor of the State of Tabasco ordered all priests to marry if they would continue their ecclesiastical duties, which would, of course, necessitate their breaking the vow they took on entering holy orders.

These laws, however, were not enforced. The church was permitted to retain its land "on sufferance" and allowed to conduct services unmolested. Mexico, 90 per cent Catholic, was loth to proceed so harshly against the church and President Carranza in 1919 publicly promised to "make an honest effort to amend the laws infringing on religious rights."

Protestant and Catholic Persecutions in England.

Catholics in England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century were not so fortunate. Angered at his excommunication by the Pope, Henry VIII closed the monasteries of England and a persecution of Catholics was enacted.

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son and liable to sentence of death.

The convents and schools were closed and the nuns who attempted to remain were forcibly ejected by the soldiers of the crown. Monasteries were emptied and the countryside was filled with homeless monks, finding vain shelter they could in houses by the way.

During the reign of Elizabeth more than 200 Catholics were put to death. As a historian of the period says, "The rack seldom stood idle in the Tower during the latter part of her reign."

James I Continues Persecution of Priests.

James I, who followed Elizabeth, was even more militant in his tactics. The Catholics had hoped he would be the avenger of his mother, Mary, Queen of Scots, who was put to death by Elizabeth, but he chose to consider himself the successor of Elizabeth and Henry VIII as head of the English Church.

Feb. 22, 1603, the persecution reached its height. On that date

James issued a proclamation strictly commanding all priests to depart the realm before March 19 upon pain of having the laws executed against them without the least favor or mercy. The priests were imprisoned in England or were banished.

Many of the priests returned from the continent upon missions of conversion. Every manor house whose owner was Catholic offered refuge to at least one priest. In the thick walls of the old castles were dark hiding places called "priest's holes" where a persecuted clergyman could be concealed until the searchers who suspected his presence had ridden on.

"Priest's Holes" in Many Old Castles.

Some of these can be seen in English ruins to this day. One has a door hidden in a Corinthian column; another is entered through a fireplace provided with a double flue, one part of which was to carry off the smoke and the other to ventilate the hiding place. Hollow beams held springs and hinges window seats formed entrances and in one place even an altar was so constructed that several fugi-

tives could be hidden in it and still see all that was going on nearby.

At Wollas Hill, an Elizabethan mansion, there is a chapel in the upper part of the house and a "priest's hole" provided with a diminutive fireplace. When the officiating priest was about to celebrate mass, the housemaids spread linen on the hedges. This signal was known as far as it could be seen, and men and women from the villages near by soon arrived at the gate. Crowded in the great hall and in the minstrel's gallery they heard mass and received the sacrament.

On another estate was a curious maze of thickly planted evergreens in the shape of a cross. Three wooden crosses, placed there centuries ago, are still standing, and their presence is taken as an indication that at the time of the persecution the privacy of the maze was used for secret worship.

Thus quietly throughout the country supporters of the faith clung to the observance of their religion, sustained by the vague hope of a political change.

England's Celebrated Gunpowder Plot.

The gunpowder plot found England bordering on a state of revolution. In Scotland and in the northern parts of England small insurrections broke out, but the King quelled them, submitting the leaders to torture and death.

The gunpowder plot, however, was the most ambitious attempt that had been made. A group of persecuted Catholics formulated a plan to blow up the House of Commons by placing a store of gunpowder in a cellar below it. All would have happened as planned had not one of the conspirators warned a friend, telling him to absent himself from the meeting of the House on the fated day.

The recipient of the note, a conforming nobleman, immediately carried the missive to the King. The cellars were searched and there was found Guy Fawkes, match in hand, watching for the expected signal.

Punishment was swift and sure. The conspirators were killed and Parliament enacted more sanguinary laws against the Catholics. The King imposed fines on the families of all implicated in the plot and finding this profitable he began, instead of executing convicted Catholics, to impose heavy fines upon them, thereby increasing his income by some £30,000 annually. A fine of £200 a year was demanded from Catholics which, if not paid, subjected the recusant to forfeiture of all goods and chattels and of two-thirds of his lands.

Oath of Allegiance Broke Catholic Power.

But the law which effectually broke the power of the Catholic body in England was the enactment of a new oath of allegiance for the avowed purpose of drawing a distinction between those Catholics who denied and those who admitted the spiritual pretensions of the King. Those who refused to forswear the spiritual sovereignty of the Pope were subjected to perpetual imprisonment, the forfeiture of their personal property and the rents of their lands during life.

During the reign of terror that followed the enforcement of this statute the persecution was taken up with new vigor. Harboring a priest was punishable by death and the knowledge that one was about without informing the authorities was a felony and carried a death sentence.

The first of the persecuted Catholics died on the gibbet in 1577 in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and the last during the reign of Charles II in 1681. A succession of sympathetic rulers or, rather, rulers who did not feel it necessary to persecute the Catholics, has followed down to this day.

Mexico's Dispute With Church.

The antipathy of the Mexican Government toward the church is of long standing. Although able to throw off the dominion of Spain, the land ceded to the church by the Spanish King has not changed hands, and the influence of Catholicism, according to Mexican officials, has ever been on the side of the mother country.

Following the famed Mexican constitution under President Comonfort in 1857, Benito Juarez became the head of the republic. He enacted a series of laws against the Catholic church and at this time an attempt to consummate a schismatic movement was started. Plans were made by secret societies and other anti-Catholic associations to induce Juarez to declare Mexico separated from communion with Rome and establish a national religion whose first pontiff was to be Senor Pardo. The death of the proposed pontiff in 1861 put an end to the movement.

This was followed by the intervention of the French empire in 1864. Emperor Maximilian declared that the reform laws in regard to the laicization of the church property would be upheld. The civil war which ended in victory for Porfirio Diaz temporarily stopped the enforcement of the laws against the church, and the sufferance policy was followed until the presidency of Calles, when the statutes, issued for the most part more than 50 years ago, were revived.

LOS EDITORES DE PUBLICACIONES AGRICOLAS SERAN HUESPEDES DE LA
CIUDAD POR UN DIA.

El Grupo Hará Una Excursión Por El Estado de Louisiana Con El
Fin De Estudiar Las Condiciones.

El viernes anunció E. H. McReynolds, empleado de la oficina particular de L. W. Baldwin, Presidente de las Líneas del Ferrocarril Missouri-Pacific, que aproximadamente 100 editores de las principales publicaciones agrícolas del país serán huéspedes de la ciudad de Nueva Orleans el martes, 22 de Marzo.

Los redactores, que son miembros de la Asociación de Editores Agrícolas de América, saldrán de St. Louis, Mo., el lunes, 20 de Marzo, y emprenderán un viaje de tres semanas por las Líneas del Missouri-Pacific y Nacionales de México. Se acaban de hacer los arreglos necesarios para que permanezcan un día aquí con el fin de que obtengan datos de primera mano acerca del puerto de Nueva Orleans y del desarrollo rápido de las posibilidades agrícolas de la parte sur del Estado de Louisiana.

Los planes proyectados el viernes, por miembros de la Junta Directiva de la Asociación de Comercio de Nueva Orleans, para agasajar a los huéspedes, incluyen un paseo por el puerto, una visita a la Exposición Internacional de Comercio y una comida en el edificio de dicha Exposición, patrocinada por las Agencias de Agricultura y Publicidad.

El Secretario de la Agencia de Agricultura, B. B. Jones, espera tener como invitados especiales al Dr. W. R. Dodson, decano del Departamento Agrícola de la Universidad del Estado de Louisiana, y a W. R. Perkins, Director del Departamento de Extensión Agrícola, ambos de Baton Rouge. Se cree que la mayoría de los miembros de la Asociación, especialmente los que se interesan por la expansión futura agrícola de esta región del Estado, estarán presentes durante la comida.

Según el Sr. McReynolds, que está encargado de arreglar este viaje, la visita de los miembros de la Asociación de Editores de Publicaciones Agrícolas proporcionará a esta ciudad la oportunidad de festejar a jefes de publicaciones que son leídas mensualmente por millones de personas, de mostrarles los puntos de interés y de darles a conocer hechos ciertos que resultarán de inmenso valor.

El Sr. McReynolds dijo: "Louisiana está dando pasos agigantados en el desarrollo de la agricultura, y los editores de una gran número de publicaciones semanales y mensuales que vendrán aquí, tienen grandes deseos de ver y saber, todo lo más que les sea posible, acerca de las posibilidades que existen para el cultivo de los campos, hortalizas y jardines."

Wilson B. Callender, Secretario del Departamento de Publicidad de la Asociación de Comercio tiene pensado hacer una exhibición especial de productos de Louisiana. Los platillos que se servirán en la comida serán de productos cultivados en nuestro Estado.