

# Official Diocesan Review and Annual Calendarium

1935

Supplement to the

Catholic Courier

Official Newspaper of  
the Rochester Diocese

1936

Volume VII

Number 45

## THE WORLD IN REVIEW



One who lives intensely in the present, making all its interests his own, cannot well be a historian, for he becomes too susceptible a subject for

prejudice. Every generation breeds its special prejudices which only time discovers and kills. To know history one must live with it. There is no great difficulty about the facts, but there is difficulty in judging them. Facts to the true historian are materials. To the prejudiced mind they are puzzle-blocks to be moved about and around until they make the picture that he wants to see.

No nation has suffered more in its reputation from the puzzle-block historian of the English tongue than Spain, and that because the prejudices promoted against her more than four centuries ago have lasted and lived long beyond the ordinary span of such life. They have even outlasted and outlived the cause that produced them; and traveled across ocean and plain, by means of a language which has set itself up in a dominant position in many and different parts of the world. Because England grew to hate Spain the language of England has in Spain's case been the vehicle of the calumnium. It has carried with it the terror of the Armada, the fear of Philip II, and the religious disunion invoked to justify the looting of the monasteries under Henry VIII. Spain's defects and blunders have been magnified and made to appear peculiar to herself. The debt owed to her by Western Civilization has been all but forgotten. The Mother of Christian Civilization in the Western World which she discovered, is falsely held to have been not its mother but its destroyer.

Happily there is a change working in the mind and heart of the historians. The writing of history is becoming not any longer an exercise of propaganda, but a scientific record. Research is changing the whole attitude of the English-speaking world to history, and not in the least degree is this plain in the department called Spanish-American, which means also that of Spain herself; for the three centuries of Spanish rule in America cover the most interesting period in the history of the mother country. They do not, however, burst suddenly on the view, but are led up to by more than seven centuries of preparation only a little less interesting than the Golden Centuries themselves.

If ever a people since Israel was prepared by trial for a world mission, that people was the Spanish. The discovery and settlement of the American continent was the addition of a new world to the old; nothing less in its effects than a new creation. If the old world was prepared for by millions of years of evolution from

## MEXICAN BACKGROUND

### A Glance at Mexico's Past

by Most Rev. Francis C. Kelley

Conquerors of Mexico. Religion mixes well with all the virtues, but the moment it touches the combination light is at once produced. Fighting Spain, a nation struggling for her life, proved no exception. Even before she was sure of a firm foothold on her redeemed lands she built her schools, crowned by her great universities. Thus was added to the steel of military valor the bright and lasting gilding of learning. The universities thus founded at Salamanca, Alcalá, and Coimbra, still tell the story of battle in the midst of which they were born. But another and an evil lesson was taught the Spaniard by the Moor. He had been the victim of the Moslem robber and looter, and became both robber and looter in his turn. True he felt that he was only taking back from the Moor what had been stolen from him, and in that he was quite right; but eight centuries of looting and regaining did their work, till it seemed to the Spaniard that victory and spoils were one and the same thing.

If men were perfect they would not be here on earth. While here they take on a resemblance to the soil upon which they live and have their being. Even God could not change His own-chosen people when they rebelled against His law, for free He had made them. The Spaniard was in many respects, especially in this, like the Jew. But when he won his last fight with the Moor at Granada, and his country was free, he made a new nation, the first nation in the whole world of his time; a nation that had command of the sea, and in the blood of it a tradition of Empire from its Roman days. Under Charles V the world saw that Roman Empire reborn and Western Civilization forming anew around it. No wonder the Spaniard was proud. He had done great things and the reward was at hand. His ambition took wings with the sails of Columbus from Palos, and with those of Cortez from Cuba.



Several errors of biased history must be corrected if we would have a true view of both Spain and Spanish Mexico. The chief error about Spain has placed the Moor in altogether too favorable a light before the English-speaking world. He is, it is



vals the victims were numerous; at one 20,000 in three days. The Mexican Indians could neither read nor write. They had picture records only. These for the most part they themselves destroyed. What of them are preserved we owe to the Spanish friars who, strangely enough, have been charged with their destruction. The Mexicans were cannibals, eating the arms and legs of their victims. There is proof even of the eating of children. There were no real schools. The one mentioned at the court of Montezuma was only for the military training of the children of the chiefs.

The pagan religious rites of the Mexican Indians called for human sacrifices in their most revolting form. Victims were fattened for the slaughter. Brought to the altar they were thrown naked on the sacrificial stone and their breasts slashed open with an obsidian knife by the chief priests. Through the open gash a hand was thrust to find the heart. It was dragged to the bleeding opening, cut clear and offered to the Sun-god. The body was then turned over to the butchers' stalls for the sale of the parts to be eaten. Nothing worse is recorded of the bloody religious rites of any savages; yet such a state of degradation is referred to by writers as a "culture," and the Spaniards are called barbarians for having brought on end to it. Indianism is now preached to Mexicans, forgetting that its return to them means a return to savagery. No wonder that the advocates of "Indianism" have written a bloody record for themselves, and that under their influence human life is cheaply held. Naturally also justice is a neglected civic virtue. If the invading Spaniard had done no more for the Mexican Indian than destroy the living death in the midst of which he lived, the benefit would have been inestimable not only to him but to the entire world.

Two great exploits are to the credit of the Spanish conqueror of Mexico; he made the greatest record of Christian missionary activity since the days of the Apostles; as well as the finest world accomplishment in the education of a primitive people. In an incredibly short space of time the Mexican Indian had accepted at least the rudiment principles and doctrines of the Christian religion. The advantage of this, apart from all other considerations, was his being drawn away from his revolting savagery. The work of education almost immediately gave the Indian a means of recording his own history and of preserving what was good in his traditions. The Spanish plan of colonization did not, it is true, overlook the prospect of gain for the conqueror,