

NORDAU'S 'SPANISH IMPRESSIONS'

BY IGNACIO BAUER

[Max Nordau, who has made his home in Paris for many years, found it convenient to reside in Spain during the war. The book here reviewed is in part the fruit of that experience.]

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WHO is not familiar with the genius of this gifted Israelite, whose fame has encircled the globe? However, few indeed are the Spaniards who know that Max Nordau can trace his ancestry to their own country, and that he prides himself decidedly upon his Segovian lineage. He says in his present book:—

‘My forefathers lived in Spain for full seven centuries; and though they left that beautiful country four hundred and twenty-two years ago, their descendants have never forgotten their Spanish inheritance. So I may consider myself at least a distant relative.’

It will delight any Spaniard to read these ‘Impressions’ wherein a great master traces a picture of our country that is full of life and light, of sun and color, and vibrates with the soul of our race. It is drawn by a man who is himself an ancient Spaniard, though he has absorbed the culture of other climes and other heavens; by a Spaniard who feels still stirring in the depths of his soul ancestral love and sympathy for the glorious land of his forbears, the *Sefarditas* — the Spanish Jews, driven into exile in the days of Ferdinand and Isabella, from Seville, Cordova, Granada, and Madrid.

With what delight he describes the songs of Andalusia:—

A peculiar and strangely foreign melody follows the prelude of the guitar. Andalusian songs are directly descended from the Moorish music born in the great deserts of

Africa and the mountainous solitudes of Morocco. I fancy that an educated ear and a cultivated musical taste will find Andalusian music at first more original than beautiful; but as we become accustomed to it, it discloses its profound beauty and exercises an irresistible charm. These are not true songs, but rather recitals, or passionate, dreamy chants, in which the words themselves continue to play the major part and music merely serves to shade their meaning.

The melody consists of an endless series of tremolos, rising to a high falsetto and then descending to the deepest gutturals. It produces the effect of a continuous decoration. The song itself is a highly figurative recitative, but so perfectly executed, so self-consistent, and so expressive, that many of our greatest vocal critics assign it no low rank among our musical forms. The guitar constantly carries the melody — a melody ever simple and beautiful and of unvarying purity, without a single variant or inharmonious chord. None the less, it has a strange power to move the heart of the hearer.

Farther on, he discusses the Spanish workingman, the proletarian of Madrid:—

I have witnessed the following scene, not once, but a dozen times, and in case of at least six couples, both young and old. To be sure, I did so unobserved; but if the persons concerned had noticed that I was watching them, they would certainly have invited me to share their hospitality; and this I could not refuse without offending them, or accept without putting myself in a false position. The men were clothed in

their soiled workers' clothes; their faces were those of common laborers, toil-worn and coarse. In any other country they would have gone to a restaurant at noonday to dine alone, while their wives would have eaten something at home. But here the laborer dines with his family, although he may have to do so in the public streets. He has all the manner of a master in his own house, with his wife by his side. Each shows the other the courtesies of good society. When the wife arrives and when she departs, they invariably exchange some little formula of politeness; and there is an innate courtesy in their intercourse, a certain dignity and mutual respect, that cannot fail to impress the stranger who observes them. These simple workingmen seem gentlemen in disguise. Give them wealth and education, and they will be no different from the best blood of the land. They have the same refinement of sentiment and instinct. These laborers, dining at midday with their wives on the asphalt pavement on San Ricardo Street, are living examples of Spanish courtesy.

Nordau gives us a vivid description of a bull-fight, in which he again shows his sympathetic appreciation for the Spanish point of view.

The spectators wear short jackets, and hats with a flat narrow brim, or what they call *cordobes*, shaped like low truncated cones; and they carry canes with curved handles, which make them appear like *toreros* in everyday garb. The general effect is pleasing. It is a costume which combines style with equality, and disguises differences of class. In such garb a great Spanish nobleman is scarcely to be distinguished from a wharfman working along the Guadalquivir, except that the cut and quality of his costume may be better. However, this democratic similarity of costume does not make the aristocrat look like a man of the people; but it makes the man of the people, in this country of universal good taste and universal dignity and polish, seem a gentleman.

Nordau discusses the psychology of the Spanish nation; and this man, who knows that his Hebrew ancestors were driven out of what had been their fa-

therland for centuries, for the sole fault of worshipping God in a different manner from their neighbors, writes: —

Spain is, for those who judge its history by Torquemada, and its literature by Don Quixote and Don Juan Tenorio, the land of bloody fanaticism, and of violent and unscrupulous gallantry. Nevertheless, bear this well in mind: the Spaniard is the most tolerant man in the world, without the slightest natural impulse to torture or to burn. He overflows with kindness. He does not seek glory in single combat with windmills; and though he is naturally sentimental and tender, he does not pass his life registering his *mil y tres amadas*, or accompany his serenades with stiletto thrusts.

Seldom has the soul of our Spanish race been depicted with greater sincerity than in these admirable lines: —

After the reconquest of the country from the Moors, the glorious qualities of the Spanish soul, its perseverance, vigor, sobriety, discipline, valor, and idealism, might have found their happiest employment in furthering the political, scientific, economic, and social progress of the country. But the tragic command of history bade them serve other ends. The House of Austria seized the throne that the Catholic kings had erected on the ruins of the Arab domination, and inaugurated a Golden Age. Its dawn coincided with the discovery of America and the extension of Spanish sway over the New World. Spain's vigorous spirit of local independence broke forth in the revolt of the *Comuneros* — or free municipal burgesses — so cruelly crushed by the powerful hand of Charles V. The noble spirits which might eventually have won this fight for liberty found boundless employment beyond the seas. He who would have adventure found it there to his heart's desire. He need only become a *conquistador*, or attach himself to the fortunes of any bold leader. Every vigorous and daring soul could drink to its full of the wine of life in the virgin lands of America. There lay glory, wealth and pleasure. There beckoned the joy of combat, victory, and unbridled liberty. There he who would might be king. He

might become a demigod. He might rule as a divinity over prostrate multitudes.

But if a man preferred to stay in Europe, all he needed was a trusty Toledo blade to carve out a noble destiny. His kings, Charles V and Philip II, always needed good soldiers. He might fight in Germany, in Italy, in Flanders. He might triumph in Pavia. He might storm Rome or Antwerp. He might cover himself with laurels at San Quentin. But, alas, in this gala day of adventure and victory the Spaniard lost his gift for methodical plodding and useful toil. The dream of every Spaniard of sound body and mind, with a brave heart and a strong arm, was to seek distant climes, to spend a few years or months of wild adventure, to intoxicate himself in the dangers of new and unknown experiences, to amass a rapid fortune, to raise himself to almost royal dignity beyond the seas; or else to return to Spain, which he had left poor and unknown, changed by a miracle from a modest Perico de los Palotes into a rich and famous Don Pedro de los Pinares.

It is with good reason that the sixteenth century in Spain is called the Age of Gold. Well indeed did it merit that title. The mines of Mexico and Peru flooded the Peninsula with their treasures. But it was not a flood that fertilized the soil of Spain; rather did it strip that soil of its fertility, and leave it sterile and barren.

Spain's people swam in a flood of gold and silver. But the golden harvest that yellowed its broad plains dwindled and vanished. Men thought they were becoming rich when they were becoming poor. Ill indeed was the bargain Spain made with America. America sent Spain her gold, but Spain gave America the best blood of her sons, the most valiant and enterprising of her children. As time went by, the Spaniards in America converted the new continent into a brave, independent, and prosperous empire; but the mother-land languished and decayed. America's gold impoverished Spain, and Spain's blood enriched America.

Max Nordau does not rest content with studying Spain's past. His judicial mind analyzes the present, and points the way to the future; to a future where the perseverance and industry of the

Spaniard shall come into its own. His pen would disperse the fog of pessimism which now unnerves us:—

I observe in the Spanish people evidences of discouragement. They are plunged into an abyss of gloom. They doubt their own ability and their future. But they are wrong. Believe me, you will be hereafter the great nation you always have been; energetic to the verge of violence, brave to the boundary of rashness, quick of intellect, just, frank, keen as those Toledo blades which once were the glory of your artisans, knightly as your ancient paladins. Only one thing you lack, the most important of all. You lack an ideal.

A great nation cannot exist without an ideal worthy of itself. For eight centuries you were intent upon recovering your own country. For two centuries thereafter you sought universal dominion. Now your eyes scan anxiously and vaguely the whole horizon, seeking some new star to guide your future course. Waiting for that you retire into an individualism which cannot satisfy your ambitions. Some make money, others devote themselves to politics, and still others to useless irony. Men of genius limit themselves to a specialty, in which they may win world-wide fame, but cannot change the intellectual physiognomy of the nation. Already you contemplate a programme of more or less urgent internal improvements. Diffuse education among your people with open hand; repeople your mountains, irrigate your plains, cover your land with a network of highways, railways, and canals. Take into your own hands the exploitation of your mineral wealth, which you now leave to foreigners.

Continue your labor of civilization in Morocco. Treat that country as it treated you — not like an overseas colony, but like a prolongation of your national domain, like a continuation of Spain itself; across the narrow intervening arm of water, an integral part of the mother-land, a new Spanish province. Though you may go there first as soldiers with cannon, see that the plough, the miner's pick, the engineer's level, and the schoolbook follow close behind.

For you are what you always have been, and your country still has its historic mis-

sion. Spain has been an outpost of Europe through all history. It faces on one side the Mediterranean, the cradle of the world's civilization, and on the other the Atlantic, where the great nations of the world have

worked out their economic and political destiny. Within a century, if the nation concentrates upon its national task, and consciously exerts itself for a definite object, another Golden Age will dawn for you.

CONTROL OF THE LIFE-CYCLE. I

BY JULIAN HUXLEY

[Mr. Huxley is a grandson of Professor Thomas H. Huxley, the famous champion of Darwin in the early days of Natural Selection. He was formerly Professor of Biology in the Rice Institute at Houston, Texas, but is now of New College, Oxford. He is in charge of the investigation of the breeding habits of birds and the problem of reversed sexual selection in certain wading birds (Phalaropes); one of the numerous studies at present being carried on by the Oxford University Expedition to Spitzbergen.]

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THE control of the cycle of life in organisms is a problem of the most intricate nature, which touches not only upon the fundamentals of biology, but upon very many questions of the intensest concern to the human race. It is not in our power to give a connected account of the control of growth, for we do not yet know enough to be able to give any such account. All that can be done is to present some of the isolated views which we have been able to obtain, through the loopholes made by scientific research, of these hidden places of Nature, and to show what hopes this knowledge raises, but also what great need remains for organized and sustained research.

The concept of the life-cycle in higher animals involves at least six important biological processes. There is the origin of the individual's first rudiments; then growth or increase in mass; then differentiation or increase in complexity; then the maintenance of a

state of balance, the condition of maturity; then, senility; and, lastly, death.

The individual creature, among every group of the higher animals, starts an independent life at fertilization, which is simply the fusion of two cells detached from particular tissues of two other animals, male and female. It begins life, not, as was supposed some century and a half ago, as an immensely reduced replica of its adult state, but as a germ, the fertilized ovum, which bears no resemblance to the adult, and is incomparably simpler in structure. Development consists partly in an increase of size, but even more essentially in an increase of complexity.

At the outset, the human individual consists only of a simple unit of living substance, or cell, a tiny round mass of protoplasm containing a nucleus and some yolk-grains, and measuring, in the human being, but .008 of an inch in diameter. When we set about making a machine, we draw out a plan, then con-