

Chapter 3:

The Inquisition - Seizure of the Victims - Modes of Torture, and Celebration of the Auto Da Fe

16.- Of all the inventions of popish cruelty the Holy Inquisition is the masterpiece. We have already referred to its establishment by Saint Dominic, in the thirteenth century. For the history of this destructive engine of papal cruelty, we must refer to any, or all of the authentic works of Llorente , Puigblanch , Limborch , Stockdale, Geddes , Dellon , and other historians of the Inquisition . All that we shall undertake will be a brief description of the treatment, tortures, and burnings of the unfortunate beings who writhed under its iron rod of oppression. The adjoining engraving represents an exterior view of one of the gloomy prisons of the Inquisition in that country, which, more than any other, has been oppressed and crushed by this horrid tribunal, unhappy Spain. It is copied from a drawing taken on the spot by David Roberts, Esq.

It was impossible for even Satan himself to conceive a more horrible contrivance of torture and blood, than this so called Holy Inquisition. There it was (in the words of Pollock), that the Babylonish harlot of the Apocalypse,

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"With horrid relish drank the blood

Of God's peculiar children-and was drunk;

And in her drunkenness dreamed of doing good . The supplicating band of innocence,
That made the tiger mild, and in his wrath The lion pause-the groans of suffering most
Severe were naught to her: she laughed at groans;

No music pleased her more; and no repast So sweet to her as blood of men redeemed By
blood of Christ. Ambition's self, though mad And nursed on human gore, with her
compared Was merciful. Nor did she always rage;

She had some hours of meditation, set Apart , wherein she to her study went;

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The Inquisition model most complete

Of perfect wickedness, where deeds were done, Deeds! let them ne'er be named-and sat
and planned Deliberately, and with most musing pains, how, to extremest thrill of agony,
The flesh, and blood, and souls of holy men, Her victims might be wrought; and when she
saw New tortures of her laboring fancy born, She leaped for joy, and made great haste to
try Their force,-well pleased to hear a deeper groan."

17.- The victims of the Inquisition were generally apprehended by the officers of the tribunal called familiars, who were dispersed in large numbers over Spain , and other lands where the "Holy office" was established. In the dead of the night, perhaps, a carriage drives up, and a knock is heard at the door. An inquiry is made from the window, by some member of the family rising from his bed; 'who is there?' The reply is the terrible words, 'The Holy Inquisition.' Perhaps the inquirer has an only child, a beloved and cherished daughter; and almost frozen with terror, he hears the words, Deliver up your daughter to the Holy Inquisition,-or it may be-Deliver up your wife, your father, your brother, your son. No matter who is demanded, not a question must be asked. Not a murmur must escape his lips, on pain of a like terrible fate with the destined victim. The trembling prisoner is led out, perhaps totally ignorant of his crime or accuser, and immured within those horrid walls, through which no sigh of agony or shriek of anguish can reach the ear

of tender and sympathizing friends.

The next day the family go in mourning; they bewail the lost one as dead; consigned not to a peaceful sepulchre, but to a living tomb; and, strive to conceal even the tears which natural affection prompts, lest the next terrible summons should be for them. In the gloomy cell to which the victim is consigned, the most awful and mysterious silence must be preserved. Lest any of its internal secrets might be disclosed, no sounds were permitted to be heard throughout the dismal apartments of the Inquisition. The poor prisoner was not allowed to bewail his fate, or, in an audible voice, to offer up his prayers to Him who is the refuge of the oppressed; nay, even to cough was to be guilty of a crime, which was immediately punished. Limborch tells us of a poor afflicted victim who was, on one occasion, heard to cough; the jailers of the Inquisition instantly repaired to his cell and warned him to forbear, as the slightest noise was not tolerated in that house. The prisoner replied that it was not in his power to forbear; a second time they admonished him to desist; and when again, the poor man, unable to refrain from coughing, had repeated the offence, they stripped him naked, and cruelly beat him. This increased his cough, for which they beat him so often, that at last he died through the pain and anguish of the stripes which he had received.

18.-The commonest modes of torture to force the victims to confess or to accuse themselves, were, dislocation, by means of pulley, rope and weights; roasting the soles of the feet; and suffocation by water, with the torment of tightened ropes. These tortures were inflicted in a sad and gloomy apartment called the "Hall of Torture," generally situated far underground in order that the shrieks of anguish generally forced from the miserable sufferers, might not interrupt the death-like silence that reigned through the rest of the building.

(1.) **DISLOCATION BY THE PULLEY, ROPES, AND WEIGHTS.** In this kind of torture, according to Puigblanch [Inquisition Unmasked, a historical and philosophical account of that tremendous tribunal, by D. Antonio Puigblanch. Translated from the Spanish. 2 vols.; London, 1816], a pulley was fixed to the roof of the Hall, and a strong cord passed through it. The culprit, whether male or female, was then seized and stripped, his arms forced behind his back, a cord fastened first above his elbows, then above his wrists, shackles put on his feet, and weights, generally of one hundred pounds, attached by his ankles. The poor victim, entirely naked, with the exception of a cloth around the loins, was then raised by the cord and pulley, and in this position was coolly admonished by the cruel inquisitors to reveal all he knew. If his replies were unsatisfactory, sometimes stripes would be inflicted upon his, or her naked body, while in this dreadfully painful situation—the arms bent behind and upwards, and the weight of the body, with the heavy irons attached, wrenching the very bones from their sockets. If the confessions were still unsatisfactory, the rope was suddenly loosened and the victim let fall to within a foot or two of the ground; thus most fearfully dislocating the arms and shoulders, and causing the most indescribable agony. This dreadful process was sometimes repeated again and again, till (oh horrible!) the poor mangled victim, with his dislocated bones, dangling on the ropes, as it were by his loose flesh, fainting from excessive pain, was hurried to his miserable dungeon, and thrown upon the cold damp ground, where the surgeon was permitted to attend him, to set his dislocated bones and patch up his poor tortured frame, only to prepare him for a renewal of these horrors, unless in the interval he should choose

to avoid them either by renouncing his faith, or by accusing himself of what he might be entirely innocent.

(2.) ROASTING THE SOLES OF THE FEET.-In this torture the prisoner, whether male or female, stripped as before, was placed in the stocks; the soles of the feet were well greased with lard, and a blazing fire of coals in a chafing dish placed close to them, by the heat of which the soles of the sufferer's feet became perfectly roasted. When the violence of the anguish forced the poor tortured victim to shriek with agony, an attendant was commanded to interpose a board between the victim's feet and the fire, and he was commanded to confess or to recant; but if he refused to obey the command of the inquisitor, the board was again removed and the cruel torture repeated till the soles of the sufferer's feet were actually burnt away to the bone, and the poor victim, if he ever escaped from these horrid dungeons of torture and misery, was perhaps made a cripple for life. The two forms of torture above described are represented in the adjoining illustration.

(3.) THE TORTURE OF TIGHTENED ROPES AND SUFFOCATION BY WATER was performed in the following manner. The victim, frequently a female, was tied to a wooden horse, or hollow bench, so tightly by cords that they sometimes cut through the flesh of the arms, thighs and legs to the very bone. In this situation, she was obliged to swallow seven pints of water slowly dropped into her mouth on a piece of silk or linen, which was thus sometimes forced down her throat, and produced all the horrid sensations of drowning. Thus secured, vain are all her fearful struggles to escape from the cords that bind her-every motion only forces the cords further and further through the quivering and bleeding flesh.

Heretics who were supposed incapable of surviving the infliction of the horrid tortures above described, were subjected to other contrivances for inflicting pain, within less danger of life. Among these lesser tortures was one called the TORTURE OF THE CANES. A hard piece of cane was inserted between each of the fingers, which were then bound together with a cord, and subjected to the action of a screw. Another of these was THE TORTURE OF THE DIE, in which the prisoner was extended on the ground, and two pieces of iron, shaped like a die, but, concave on one side, were placed on the heel of his right foot, then bound on fast with a rope which was pulled tight with a screw. Both of these kinds of torture occasioned the sufferer the most intolerable pain, but with little or no danger of life.

19.- Not unfrequently death ensued from the severe tortures of the holy office. A young lady, who was incarcerated in the dungeon of the Inquisition at the same time with the celebrated Donna Jane Bohorques, will supply an instance of this kind. This victim of inquisitorial brutality endured the torture till all the members of her body were rent asunder by the infernal machinery of the holy office. An interval of some days succeeded, till she began, notwithstanding such inhumanity, to recover. She was then taken back to the infliction of similar barbarity. Small cords were twisted round her naked arms, legs and thighs, till they cut through the flesh to the bone; and blood, in copious torrents, streamed from the lacerated veins. Eight days after, she died of her wounds, and was translated from the dungeons of the Inquisition to the glory of heaven. [Moreri, 6, 7. Limborch, 323. Edgar, 230.]

Ah, who can conceive the tale of unutterable anguish that is included in a single instance of inquisitorial malignity and cruelty- such, perhaps, as that just related A lady-a young

lady-perhaps the only daughter of doating parents, as dear to them, reader, as your daughter to you, or mine to me-brought up, perhaps, in the lap of luxury and refinement-living amid the smiles and caresses of doating friends, and dreaming of no danger nigh. In an unguarded moment a sentence has escaped her, disrespectful to the idolatry of Rome . Perhaps she has dared to say, she trusts for salvation, not in Mary and the saints, but in CHRIST ALONE. That sentence has been heard by a spy of the Holy office. She retires to sleep at night; at the midnight hour the carriage of the Inquisition stops before the door, and the lovely, the tender, the delicate female, upon whom the wind has never before been suffered to blow roughly, is dragged away to the damp and gloomy cell of the horrible Inquisition.

Look at her, as she kneels prostrate in her gloomy dungeon, and implores succor from on high. See that tear of natural anguish that trickles down her cheeks, as she thinks of the agony of a doating father, of a tender mother, perhaps of a frantic betrothed one, who yet dare not give utterance to their anguish for fear of a similar fate. She is summoned before the tribunal of the men of blood. She is darkly told of suspicions, of informations , but she knows neither their author nor their subject. She is commanded to confess, without knowing her accusation, and is silent. The rough and hardened popish executioners are summoned, and her maiden modesty is outraged by her clothes being rudely torn from her person by cruel and bloody men. The command is given, the horrid torture is applied. The piercing cords are bound around her tender limbs, till they cut through the quivering flesh, and, fainting, she is borne back to her gloomy dungeon. No father's hand is there in that gloomy dungeon to wipe away those tears, no mother's hand to stanch and to bind up those bleeding wounds. She flies to the throne of grace for help (where else can she?) and she feels that Jesus is with her. In a few days, she is carried, all pale, enfeebled and emaciated, before her iron-hearted judges. She is again examined, and the horrible process of outrage and torture is repeated. She is carried back to her dungeon, to breathe her sighs to the cold stone walls, to linger alone, and suffering for a few days, and then her ransomed spirit quits the tortured body, and wings its way to Heaven. Her mourning friends know not of her death, for no news is suffered to transpire beyond those gloomy walls. But there is ONE who knows, ONE who sees, and in his book are recorded all the groans and sighs of that poor sufferer, to be brought forth in fearful reckoning against her murderers in anther day.

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When the mind has formed an accurate and vivid conception of a single case like this, then let it be remembered that it is but one of thousands and tens of thousands of equally barbarous instances of popish persecution, cruelty and torture; and that for ages, in lands that groaned under the iron rod of Popery, these horrors were of daily occurrence.

O merciful and compassionate God! what deeds of cruelty and blood have been perpetrated upon thy suffering children, in the name of HIM whose very heart is tenderness, and whose very name is LOVE.

20.- The next scene in this melancholy tragedy is THE AUTO DA FE. This horrid and tremendous spectacle is always represented on the Sabbath day. The term auto da fe (act of faith) is applied to the great burning of heretics, when large numbers of these tortured and lacerated beings are led forth from their gloomy cells, and marched in procession to the place of burning, dressed according to the fate that awaits them on that terrible day.

The victims who walk in the procession wear the san benito , the corozas , the rope around the neck, and carry in their hand a yellow wax candle. The san benito is a penitential garment or tunic of yellow cloth reaching down to the knees, and on it is painted the picture of the person who wears it, burning in the flames, with figures of dragons and devils in the act of fanning the flames. This costume indicates that the wearer is to be burnt alive as an incorrigible heretic. If the person is only to do penance, then the san benito has on it a cross, and no paintings or flames. If an impenitent is converted just before being led out, then the san benito is painted with the flames downward; this is called " fuego repolto ," and it indicates that the wearer is not to be burnt alive, but to have the favor of being strangled before the fire is applied to the pile. Formerly these garments were hung up in the churches as eternal monuments of disgrace to their wearers, and as the trophies of the Inquisition. The corozas are pasteboard caps, three feet high, and ending in a point. On them are likewise painted crosses, flames, and devils. In Spanish America it was customary to add long twisted tails to the corozas . Some of the victims have gags in their mouths, of which a number is kept in reserve in case the victims, as they march along in public, should become outrageous, insult the tribunal, or attempt to reveal any secrets.

The prisoners who are to be roasted alive have a Jesuit on each side continually preaching to them to abjure their heresies, and if any one attempts to offer one word in defence of the doctrines for which he is going to suffer death, his mouth is instantly gagged. "This I saw done to a prisoner," says Dr. Geddes , in his account of the Inquisition in Portugal, "presently after he came out of the gates of the Inquisition, upon his having looked up to the sun, which he had not seen before in several years, and cried out in a rapture, 'How is it possible for people that behold that glorious body to worship any being but Him that created it.'"

21.- When the procession arrives at the place where a large scaffolding has been erected for their reception, prayers are offered up, strange to tell, at a throne of mercy, and a sermon is preached, consisting of impious praises of the Inquisition, and bitter invectives against all heretics; after which a priest ascends a desk, and recites the final sentence. This is done in the following words, wherein the reader will find nothing but a shocking mixture of blasphemy, ferociousness, and hypocrisy.

"We, the inquisitors of heretical pravity , having, with the concurrence of the most illustrious -----, lord archbishop of Lisbon, or of his deputy, -----, calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of his glorious mother, the Virgin Mary, and sitting on our tribunal, and judging with the holy gospels lying before us, so that our judgment may be in the sight of God, and our eyes may behold what is just in all matters, &c. &c.

"We do therefore, by this our sentence put in writing, define, pronounce, declare, and sentence thee (the prisoner), of the city of Lisbon, to be a convicted, confessing, affirmative, and professed heretic; and to be delivered and left by us as such to the secular arm; and we, by this our sentence, do cast thee out of the ecclesiastical court as a convicted, confessing, affirmative, and professed heretic; and we do leave and deliver thee to the secular arm, and to the power of the secular court, but at the same time do most earnestly beseech that court so to moderate its sentence as not to touch thy blood, nor to put thy life in any sort of danger."

Well may Dr. Geddes inquire, in reference to this hypocritical mockery of God and man, "Is there in all history an instance of so gross and confident a mockery of God, and the

world, as this of the inquisitors beseeching the civil magistrate not to put the heretics they have condemned and delivered to them, to death? For were they in earnest when they made this solemn petition to the secular magistrates, why do they bring their prisoners out of the Inquisition, and deliver them to those magistrates in coats painted over with flames? Why do they teach that heretics, above all other malefactors, ought to be punished with death? And why do they never resent the secular magistrates having so little regard to their earnest and joint petition as never to fail to burn all the heretics that are delivered to them by the Inquisition, within an hour or two after they have them in their hands? And why in Rome, where the supreme civil, as well as ecclesiastical authority are lodged in the same person, is this petition of the Inquisition, which is made there as well as in other places, never granted?" [Geddes' tracts on Popery. View of the court of Inquisition in Portugal, p. 446. Limborch. vol. ii., p. 289.]

22.-If the prisoner, on being asked, says that he will die in the Catholic faith, he has the privilege of being strangled first, and then burnt; but if in the Protestant or any other faith different from the Catholic, he must be roasted alive; and, at parting with him, his ghostly comforters, the Jesuits, tell him, "that they leave him to the devil, who is standing at his elbow to receive his soul and carry it to the flames of hell, as soon as the spirit leaves his body." When all is ready, fire is applied to the immense pile, and the suffering martyrs, who have been securely fastened to their stakes, are roasted alive; the living flesh of the lower extremities being often burnt and crisped by the action of the flames, driven hither and thither by the wind before the vital parts are touched; and while the poor sufferers are writhing in inconceivable agony, the joy of the vast multitude, inflamed by popish bigotry and cruelty, causes the air to resound with shouts of exultation and delight.

Says Dr. Geddes, in a description of one of these auto da fes, of which he was a horrified spectator: "The victims were chained to stakes, at the height of about four feet from the ground. A quantity of furze that lay round the bottom of the stakes was set on fire; by a current of wind it was in some cases prevented from reaching above the lowest extremities of the body. Some were thus kept in torture for an hour or two, and were actually roasted, not burnt to death. "This spectacle," says he, "is beheld by people of both sexes, and all ages, with such transports of joy and satisfaction, as are not on any other occasion to be met with. And that the reader may not think that this inhuman joy is the effect of a natural cruelty that is in this people's disposition, and not the spirit of their religion, he may rest assured, that all public malefactors, except heretics, have their violent death nowhere more tenderly lamented, than amongst the same people, and even when there is nothing in the manner of their death that appears inhuman or cruel." [Cited in Limborch, vol. ii., p. 301.]

It was not uncommon for the popish kings and queens of Spain to witness these wholesale burnings of heretics from a magnificent stage and canopy erected for the purpose, and it was represented by the Jesuit priests as an act highly meritorious in the king to supply a faggot for the pile upon which the heretics were to be consumed. Among other instances of this kind, king Charles II., in an auto da fe, supplied a faggot, the sticks of which were gilded, adorned by flowers, and tied up with ribbons, and was honored by being the first faggot placed upon the pile of burning. In 1559, king Philip, the popish husband of bloody queen Mary of England, was witnessing one of these cruel scenes, when a protestant nobleman named Don Carlos de Seso, while he was being conducted to the stake, called out to the King for mercy in these words: "And canst thou, oh king, witness the torments

of thy subjects? Save us from this cruel death; we do not deserve it." "No," replied the iron-hearted bigoted monarch, "I would myself carry wood to burn my own son, were he such a wretch as thou." Thus is it that popish bigotry can stifle the strongest and tenderest instincts of our nature, turn human beings into monsters, and inspire joy and delight at witnessing the writhing agonies and hearing the piercing shrieks of even tender and delicate women, as their living bodies are being roasted amidst the fires of the auto da fe .