

Where Persecution Strikes

Persecution, like the bigotry of which it is the outcome, has neither brains to think nor a heart to feel. The persecution in France, as that of the penal days in the British Isles, is chiefly directed against those who are the light of Catholic life in the land. But its hardest and heaviest blows fall upon the poor and the afflicted. Some weeks ago a number of French doctors visited London and inspected its great hospitals. One of the visitors from across the Straits of Dover made it sufficiently clear to a representative of the 'Pall Mall Gazette' what the banishment of the nuns from the French hospitals is a heavy woe to the poor sufferers there. The speaker is a member of the staff of one of the leading Paris hospitals and had experience of similar work in Vienna and Berlin. 'What has impressed us most, perhaps,' said he, 'after our first astonishment that this great work is supported solely by voluntary contributions, is the high standard of the nursing staff not only here but in every hospital we have seen. You seem to be able to attract a socially higher and better educated class for the work than we can. Of course, at present we are very badly off in France. Many of our best nurses were religiouses. They have now been deported, you understand. They were kind to the patients, but—enfin, they were religiouses. Now we have to educate a new supply of nurses, and I hope we shall be able to attract the type of women you have.'

Perhaps. But the crude and heartless Sairey Gamps of various ages that were attracted to one great municipal hospital in Marseilles proved such a nightmare to the stricken poor that the banished nuns had to be recalled. The same thing will, no doubt, happen for the same reason elsewhere. In the meantime it is interesting to learn from a competent authority that the sick in the hospitals are 'very badly off in France' as a result of the Combes regime of proscription and persecution.

When Man is Beast

'Man,' said Eben Holden, 'he can be any kind of a beast, but a panther he can't be nuthin' but jest a panther.' The brute that is in him commonly shows its ways at their worst during the operations of that 'trade of barbarians,' war. Whether in East or West practically every campaign of what is termed 'civilised' warfare has been spotted over with savage incidents as with a leprosy. White people were rightly horrified at the wholesale slaughter of unresisting combatants and of non-combatants by both parties during the Taeping rebellion in China. At Nankin, for instance, the Taipings are said to have left only a hundred persons alive out of a population of 20,000 that occupied the Tartar quarter of that city. Yet Captain Blakiston tells us that the cruelties of the Taipings were 'hardly a counterpart of the Tsing (Imperial) atrocities.' And he tells how, in the same crowded centre of population, the Imperialists, in turn, 'enjoyed a three days' slaughter and left neither man, woman, nor child in that unfortunate city.' The Chino-Japanese conflict was also stained by a three days' massacre by the victors at Port Arthur. Their swift adoption of Western usages failed to stand the rude test of war.

However, Western warriors are little entitled to throw stones at the Shinto soldiers of Japan. The arms of professedly Christian States have been all too frequently stained by similar atrocities. In 1821, for instance, a scattered Mussulman population resident in Greece are said to have been cut off to the number of about 20,000. At the sack of Tripolitza some 8000 persons of every age and of both sexes were cruelly put to death. To this day British people cannot but recall with deep shame the fearful scenes of rapine and slaughter that accompanied the sacking of Badajos and San Sebastian during the Peninsula campaign. There are many still living who can recall the red orgies of the Servians at Belgrade in 1862. The Franco-German war opened with a relatively high spirit of chivalry on

both sides. But in a short space it led to the not infrequent shooting and hanging of prisoners by the irregular Franc-tireurs and of unoffending peasants by the Germans, and culminated in the mad blood-revelry of the enraged animals in military uniform who shot and hacked and burned non-combatants of both sexes in the streets and houses of Bazailles. And what shall we say of the series of worse than Bulgarian atrocities that were committed in China by hordes of degraded brutes in the uniforms of various Western armies—but not by the soldiers of the Mikado—during the Boxer troubles of 1900?

An Unwritten Law of War

Much has been done by international codes in the direction of humanising the armed conflicts of nations. But the history of all later wars, and the meagre reports that trickle over the wires regarding the present campaign in the Far East, go to show that much yet remains to be done. In one respect, however, the present campaign between the yellow man and the white man in the Far East rises, perhaps, to as high a level as has yet been attained in the wars of civilised peoples. We refer to the old-established custom which protects sentries and men of the pickets furnishing them from being stalked or 'sniped' or shot down without necessary and due warning. This good old usage was abandoned by both Boer and Briton during the whole of the long-drawn campaign in South Africa. It was generally observed during the Franco-German struggle. Much hot feeling was displayed when it was discovered that some half-civilised Turcos (or native Algerines who served in the French army) once in a while stole out of camp under cover of darkness, crept as quietly as big cats up to some German sentry, and then, with sudden spring and swift and unerring stroke of knife or bayonet, sent the surprised watcher's soul adrift. The *modus operandi* is dramatically described in Ercmann-Chatrian's 'Histoire du Plebiscite.' In the early encounters of the American Civil War the opposing sentries and pickets wasted a good deal of Government powder and shot and other valuable energy in administering hypodermic arguments to each other, and 'sniping' came near to being cultivated to the verge of being a fine art. But better sense and saner and more humane customs soon grew up. Each side learned to respect the other's valor, and first by mutual agreement, and afterwards by a tacit understanding, sentries ceased to be made targets for regimental crack-shots.

A good deal of chivalry of this kind existed all through the rough-and-tumble struggle of the Peninsular War, even at a time when feeling between Frank and Briton ran at a fever heat. Sentries and pickets stood within a Brown-Bess gunshot of each other without any exchange of the murderous, bone-splintering round bullets of a period when military men considered a musket-ball of no use unless it was big enough to smash the fore-leg of a cavalry horse. When an advance took place the pickets making the forward movement stepped out holding up the butts of their muskets as a courteous intimation to 'their friends the enemy' that the regrettable exigencies of war rendered it necessary that the truce between the outposts should terminate. Cavalry patrols, as well as infantry, when advancing, were first greeted by warning shots politely fired far over their heads. If they still persisted in their advance the courtesies of war were deemed to be at an end, and the musket-balls were sent dropping, not over their heads, but into them. No such courtesies were practised during the South African campaign. Sentries, pickets, and mounted patrols on both sides were made targets for the 'sniper' or for volley-firing as soon as they came within range. It is pleasant to note that the good old custom, which goes beyond Peninsula days, has been revived by Jap and Russ, at least before Port Arthur. It lessens to some degree the range of mental and physical anguish of a conflict that, apart from this, appears to have a reasonably full share of what are called the horrors of war.