

### NEW VIEWS OF THE GREAT SPANISH ARMADA.\*

Volume III. of the 'Cambridge Modern History' series is entitled 'The Wars of Religion,' a title sufficiently indicating the nature of its contents, and covers the general field of European history from 1530 to 1625. The twenty-two chapters are divided among sixteen authors, of whom four at least are widely and favorably known as specialists in the fields of which they write. These are Mr. R. Nisbet Bain on Poland, Mr. E. Armstrong on Tuscany and Savoy, Mr. Martin Hume in two chapters on Philip II. and Philip III. of Spain, and Mr. S. R. Gardiner (whose recent death has caused a distinct loss to the historical world) on England in the time of James I. The chapters by these authors are all excellent examples of the specialist's art, and yet are well suited to the general survey that the work itself is attempting to give. The usual selected bibliographies accompany the volume; while in their preface the editors announce that upon the completion of the twelve volumes originally planned two supplementary volumes will appear, one containing maps of the various countries in the periods treated, and one supplying a general index to the entire work, together with some comprehensive genealogical tables.

It is becoming more and more evident, with the appearance of each volume, that this huge production can never serve as a popular history, nor even as an instructive one; since the

distinctions made, and the emphasis placed on comparatively minor incidents, are such as the general reader cannot appreciate and which therefore merely weary him. The work is serviceable for reference purposes, but is especially of value to the student of history, offering him specialist knowledge, and at the same time giving him suggestions for his own work. An adequate review of the volume should therefore be directed to the needs of the historical student, and should deal explicitly with each contribution; but our present limits confine attention to but one of the many interesting chapters, that by Mr. J. K. Laughton on 'The Elizabethan Naval War with Spain.'

Mr. Laughton's desire for accuracy removes all the glamour of the epoch. Hawkins, Drake, and even Sir Humphrey Gilbert, are depicted as little better than freebooters, almost pirates in fact, and as probably animated much more with the love of adventure and of easily gotten pillage than with religious or national enthusiasm. It is not a pleasant picture of an age that the Protestant historians have taught us to look upon as one of inspiring religious patriotism. Moreover, while the author is careful to state that England wholly underestimated her own naval strength in the contest with Spain, he proves in fact that the Great Spanish Armada was but an empty bubble that burst upon the first contact with the efficient fleet of England. The English ships were quick, active, fast sailers, supplied with heavier guns of longer range than were the Spanish, and were manned with sailors who also fought the ship; while the Armada consisted of poorly equipped and poorly victualled floating forts, in which the sailors had no share in the fighting, and which were crowded with troops and commanded by soldiers. These vessels were expected to come to hand-to-hand conflicts with the enemy, when the valor of the Spanish troops was counted upon to win the victory; but, clumsy in movement and badly sailed, the soldiers in them never had a fair chance to prove their reputed valor. The English simply kept their distance and maintained a steady pounding of the enemy. Storms and bad weather, according to Mr. Laughton, had little to do with the English victory, for an entire week of good weather intervened between the opening of the conflict and the beginning of tempests. Of the Spanish ships, many of the hundred and thirty belonging to the Armada were mere transports, or supply ships, with no fighting qualities whatever; so that in the final analysis the real 'men of war' numbered about fifty on each side. The entire victory was simply the victory of newer and better ships, heavier guns, and newer methods, over an antiquated

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pattern of vessel and an obsolete style of naval warfare. It was in truth a mere slaughter, as is shown by the fact that the English lost but some sixty men all told in killed and wounded, though many sailors died soon after from a disease that broke out in the fleet; while the Armada lost sixty-three ships and thousands of men. These figures prove, better than any words, the inequality of the contest.

This analysis of Philip II.'s famous attempt to invade England is unquestionably in perfect harmony with the best results of modern historical research, and is therefore to be welcomed on the ground of historical accuracy; but the danger in such studies is that the writers forget contemporary opinion, which is after all the chief interest in historical study, and, by dwelling on the errors into which contemporaries fell, underestimate or even lose sight of the importance and influence of the very misapprehension of the facts. The importance of the defeat of the Armada, viewing it from its effect on the English nation, lies largely in the fact that the people believed that England had won a victory against overwhelming odds. This is in some measure indicated by Mr. Laughton, but not with sufficient emphasis. His delight in proving the actual superiority of the English fleet blinds him in a degree to the devout thankfulness of the nation at a God-sent preservation.

In treating of the years after the Armada of 1588, the author is not so critical; for he regards that year as practically marking the conclusion of the struggle between England and Spain for the supremacy at sea. In fact, however, two authors, Mr. Julian Corbett in 'The Successors of Drake' and Mr. Martin Hume in 'Treason and Plot,' have both conclusively demonstrated that the last ten years of Elizabeth's reign were years of increased Spanish effort for the overthrow of England. Mr. Corbett ranks the Armada of 1599 as a more tremendous effort on the part of Spain, and as more dangerous to England, than that of 1588; while Mr. Hume, both in the book just named and even in his two chapters in the present volume, shows the wave of patriotism and the desire for revenge that swept over Spain when the news of the defeat of 1588 was received. Possibly the period assigned to Mr. Laughton extended beyond that in which he had a special knowledge, and he was thus led to conclude his article with the old accepted tradition, not being aware that the tradition had recently been undermined. This is not a criticism of the specialist, for the specialist's knowledge must stop somewhere; it is rather an inevitable fault of a general history written by a number of specialists.

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