

History of S. Italy.



THE purpose of this article — the final of a series — is to give a brief but accurate survey of Italy from Rome to all the land that lies to the south.

§ PERIOD OF FOREIGN DOMINATION, 1503 TO 1860. SPANISH VICEROYS, 1503 TO 1707.

From then on Naples was merely an appendage of Spain. In 1519 Charles V, the last of the Emperors, inherited his vast bequest of most of German and Austrian Europe and the Lowlands, as well as his heritage in Spain which included Sicily and Naples, or the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, as it was then called. The lot of Southern Italy was with Spain and its enormous empire.

But things were not happy in the vast agglomeration of states. In the north, Luther (1517) was preaching against the Church, to be joined shortly by Henry VIII, of England. Princes were hungry for the lands that might fall from its spoliation.

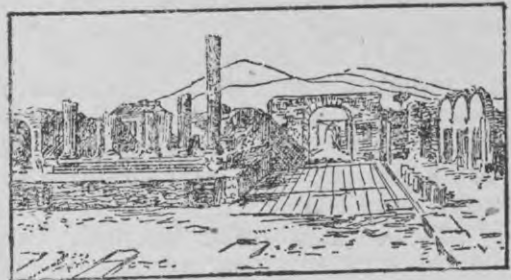
The reaction took a repressive form. The Inquisition flourished and anybody who had heterodox ideas in religion, politics or science, was persecuted vigorously.

Philip II, of Spain, was further embroiled by the great maritime struggle with England and Holland. He needed money and therefore bled his Italian territories of their wealth, even to the extent of neglecting them and the country was ruined. «Extreme poverty and famine brought pestilence again and again. Moslem pirates infested the seas and the coasts. Industry and trade languished, and in less than a century one of the richest countries in Europe was turned into one of the poorest.» ('The Remaking of Italy,' by Pentab).

Just how great the Arab menace alone was may be judged by their raids on Sicily and Southern Italy in 1534, by the fact that they threatened to close the Straits of Otranto, and by Suleiman the Great leaving the greatest empire in Europe on his death in 1566.

But subtle forces were at work within Spain and her faithful Roman Catholic territories. Ignatius de Loyola founded the Society of Jesus or Jesuits, which set about rectifying matters in the Church.

Active missions were made to hold members to the Faith and to secure converts. Out of this new spirit, a new type of architecture and decoration manifested itself — the rich, ornate, almost over-impressive style known as Baroque, a vogue, of which will be seen plenty of evidence all through Italy.



Pompeii.

Plagues and pestilences were the lot of the people. In Naples efforts to free themselves from the Spanish yoke were suppressed with frightful violence, only one, led by a fishmonger, Mansaniello, meeting with temporary success. Such was the lot of Southern Italy under the Spanish Viceroys.