Civilization in Southern Italy.

THE follies and atrocities perpetrated in some parts of Southern Italy, during the epidemic of cholera, by the panic-stricken populace, are a grim satire on the enlightenment of the age. Acting under the ignorant belief that the cholera was propagated amongst them by the authorities or other persons, who either poisoned the wells or infected the air with some deadly poison, they violently attacked and murdered those who became the unfortunate victims of their frantic suspicions. At Ardore, a town in Calabria, on the appearance of the cholera, the people assembled in arms before the druggist's shop, loudly declaring their intention to burn it to the ground. An officer with a few soldiers in vain attempted to prevent the execution of this design. The mob rushed madly forward, trampled the unfortunate officer to death beneath their feet, set fire to the shop, and ruthlessly butchered the druggist and his family. Twenty other persons also fell victims to the ferocity of the enraged multitude. Similar tumults occurred in other places. At Potentino the mob surrounded the house of a certain Antonio Sabellino, with whom resided his brother Francesco, and a friend, Giacomo di Mattia, accusing them of being poisoners. The rioters broke into the house and searched for the alleged poison. At last they found on a shelf a jar full of paste, which Sabellino kept for poisoning rats. A dog having been made to swallow some of the paste died in a few minutes. This was thought conclusive, and the mob rushed upon the two brothers and their friend and brutally murdered them. In the parish of Cogliano it was firmly believed that the poisoners went from door to door and blew the infection through the keyhole. Accordingly a great number of the lower class of people abandoned their houses and camped out in the open air, so that they should not be poisoned; while those who remained at home were constantly firing muskets out of their windows with the idea of paralysing the action of the poison. The authorities and the troops only succeeded after immense efforts in convincing the people of their folly.

Scenes like these carry us back to the middle ages, when the frenzied terror produced by the ravages of the plague or "black death," as it was called, led to the horrible persecution of the Jews, who were accused of poisoning the wells. Innocence availed nothing before the popular frenzy, and where confessions of crime never committed were extorted by excruciating torture. In Basle all the Jews were inclosed in a wooden building, constructed for the purpose, and burnt together with it, without sentence or trial. In Mayence alone 12,000 Jews are said to have been put to a cruel

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death. At Eslingen the whole Jewish community burned themselves in their synagogue, to escape a worst fate. Everywhere they were pursued with merciless cruelty, and either fell victims indiscriminately to the fury of the populace or were tortured into confessions of impossible crimes, and then sentenced to be flayed or burnt alive.

Do we need the experience of the horrible events which have lately followed the devastations of cholera in Italy, to warn us that we are not yet secure from similar epidemics of popular madness? They spring from an ignorance of the laws of nature, and are inspired by the terror which is bred of ignorance. And how little do the people, generally, yet know of the laws of health, and of the penalties which avenge their infraction? It is not likely, perhaps, that they will ever in this country attribute the outbreak of a pestilence to a deliberate poisoning of the wells by the Fenians, or any other body of persons to whom they may chance to have a specially hostile feeling; but it can hardly be considered impossible, so long as epidemics which arise entirely from a gross ignorance and neglect of sanitary laws are attributed to the special act of Providence, and so long as prayers are specially put up for the miraculous removal of them, instead of for the gift of a right spirit to learn their nature, and manfully to strive to get rid of them. Surely a generation which acts in this way, which follows after "Davenport Brothers," and has a "Zouave Jacob" for its prophet, cannot afford to feel too safe from an epidemic of frenzied terror like that which has afflicted the mob of Italy. Within a few days of the accounts of the atrocities perpetrated in Calabria, the following paragraph appeared in the 'Cork Examiner':—

A riot, originating in an extraordinary superstition, occurred at Myross, in the west of this county, a few days ago. A body, supposed to be that of the captain of an American ship lost on the western coast, was washed ashore near Myross some time since, and, after an inquest had been held, was interred in Myross churchyard. Friends of the drowned sailor came recently to Myross to claim the remains, and to carry them back to the United States for interment in the burial ground where others of the deceased's family rested. When it became known that the body was to be removed, there was great perturbation amongst the country people, who have a superstitious belief that the exhumation of a corpse that has been buried for some time causes unusually great mortality during the ensuing twelve months—one of those extraordinary notions deep-rooted in the popular mind which defy human ingenuity to analyse or explain. To prevent the threatened calamity, the country people resolved to oppose the removal by force. On the morning on which the exhumation was to take place the population of the district, armed with the miscellaneous weapons that the farmyard affords, arose *en masse* against the strangers, and drove them and their assistants out of the graveyard. The parish priest was appealed to, and strove to reason the people out of their absurd apprehensions; but his influence, all-powerful in everything else, failed to make an impression on their superstitious fears. The people still refuse to permit the

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body to be removed, and mount guard day and night over the grave. The friends of the deceased are determined not to allow their pious mission to be frustrated by a popular superstition, and it is stated that the aid of the military will be called in if other influences cannot induce the people to desist from their cruel and insensate opposition to the removal of the body.

While the state of popular education in this country is such as to permit the existence of superstitions of this kind, it is evident that there will be no lack of work to engage the energies of a reformed Parliament. Even those who think fearfully of the late political 'leap in the dark' may take comfort from the reflection that no system of government can well leave the people in a blacker ignorance of natural laws than they are in now, after some thousands of years of government by their betters.

Insane Negroes in the United States.

THE annual report of the Superintendent of Longview Asylum, in the State of Ohio, contains a striking illustration of the deep-rooted repulsion which is felt to a black skin in the United States. A very heavy item in the year's expenditure has been caused by the purchase and fitting up of a house for the coloured insane, who had hitherto, as appears, been confined in the common jail. The superintendent expresses his gratification at the provision of accommodation more in accordance with the dictates of justice and humanity. "Two of the greatest misfortunes that humanity is liable to—insanity and a coloured skin—did not seem to me good and sufficient reason for classing the person so afflicted with malefactors, and it is therefore a matter of sincere rejoicing that a change in the disposition of these persons has been made, and especially that Hamilton County has taken the lead in this matter." After the passage of a law enforcing suitable provision for the coloured insane, application was made for their reception into the building occupied by the whites. This was thought out of the question by the authorities of the asylum, the strong prejudice against the negro felt by most white people being particularly strong among the inmates of the asylum. It became necessary, therefore, in order to carry out the intention of the legislature, to purchase a separate building, and to fit it up specially for the coloured insane. This was done; and the medical superintendent can now point with pride to the circumstance that all the insane negroes belonging to the county are freely received and kindly treated.

Whatever may be thought of this plan of procedure by the enthusiastic philanthropists, who, in spite of nature's brand of inferiority, would at once raise the negro to an equality with the white in every respect, we cannot help feeling that it was the only

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