

MEMOIR

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Memoir by Henry Charles Lea

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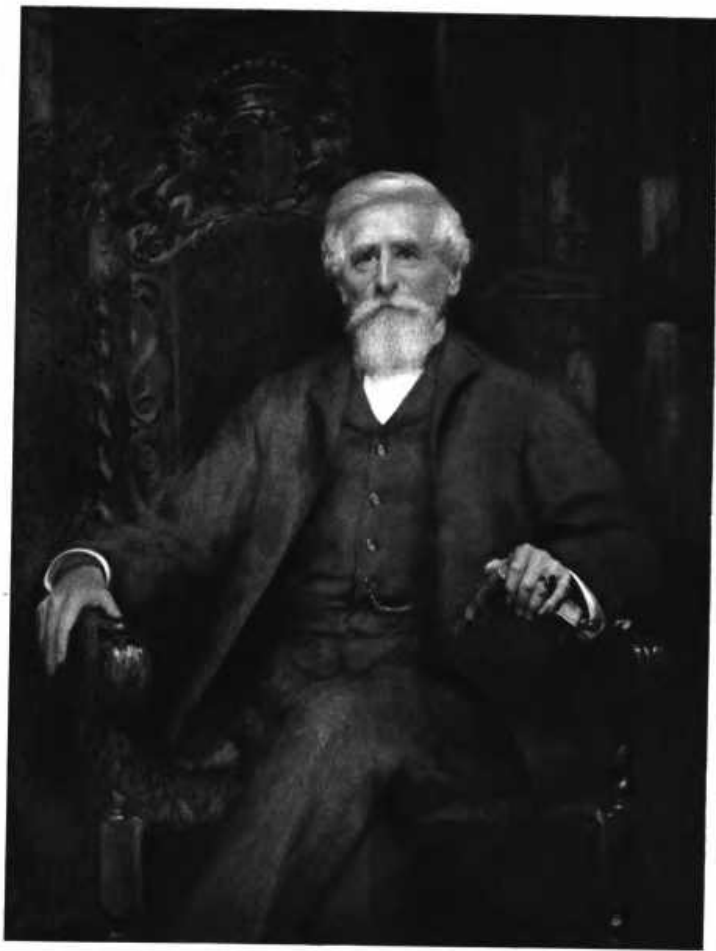
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HENRY CHARLES LEA

MEMOIR



Henry S. Lee

HENRY CHARLES LEA

1825-1909

PRIVATELY PRINTED

PHILADELPHIA

1910

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PRELIMINARY MEMOIR.

HENRY CHARLES LEA was born in Philadelphia September 19, 1825. He was a descendant in the sixth generation from John Lea, a member of the Society of Friends, who accompanied William Penn on his second visit to America in 1699. John Lea was a descendant in the seventh generation from John Lygh, of Chippenham, County Wilts, England, who died there in 1503. Mr. Lea's maternal grandfather, Mathew Carey, was prosecuted for his boldness in advocating in his newspaper the cause of Ireland, and came from Dublin to America in 1784, founding in 1785 the publishing house now carried on by his descendants in the fourth generation under the firm name of Lea & Febiger. His father, Isaac Lea, was a distinguished naturalist. His uncle, Henry C. Carey, political economist and publicist, was the well known advocate of the principle of protection to home industry, which has been a vital factor in promoting the unparalleled development of American manufacturing. Mr. Lea was educated at home, under teachers, never at school or college. He entered his father's publishing house in January, 1843, became partner in 1851, carried on the business alone from 1865 to 1880, and then retired.

Mr. Lea married, on May 27, 1850, Anna Caroline, daughter of William Latta Jaudon, of Huguenot ancestry.

LITERARY WORK. *Superstition and Force; Essays on the Wager of Law, the Wager of Battle, the Ordeal and Torture.* First edition, 1866; second edition, 1870; third edition, 1878; fourth edition, 1892. An Italian translation will shortly appear.

Historical Sketch of Sacerdotal Celibacy. First edition, 1867; second edition, 1884; third edition, in two volumes, octavo, 1907 (London reprint).

Studies in Church History: The Rise of the Temporal Power, Benefit of Clergy, Excommunication, The Early Church and Slavery. First edition, 1869; second edition, 1883.

Translations and Other Rhymes. Privately printed, 1882.

A History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages. Three volumes, octavo, 1888. French translation by M. Salomon Reinach, Paris, 1900.¹ A German translation, of which two volumes have appeared, will shortly be completed by the eminent scholars Joseph Hansen, of Cologne, and Herrmann Haupt, of Giessen. An Italian translation is in course of publication.

Chapters from the Religious History of Spain Connected with the Inquisition, 1890.

A Formulary of the Papal Penitentiary in the Thirteenth Century, 1892.

A History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences. Three volumes, octavo, 1896.

The Moriscos of Spain, their Conversion and Expulsion, 1901.

A History of the Inquisition of Spain. Four volumes, octavo, 1906-1907. A German translation, abridged, is in preparation.

The Inquisition in the Spanish Dependencies. One volume, octavo, 1908.

Besides these more extended works, Mr. Lea contributed many shorter studies and separate articles to historical and other journals.

The salient characteristic of Mr. Lea's historical work is the absence of bias. He respected every man's right to his own

¹ It is worthy of note that this translation was circulated in France by the Government as an aid in the recent momentous struggle resulting in the separation of Church and State in that country. The power of American scholarship has had no more striking recognition than in this instance of its influence in the affairs of the Old World.

religious views, and particularly avoided anything in the nature of proselyting.¹ He held no brief for or against any creed, and no reader of his pages can discover therefrom whether he was Catholic or Protestant. The scales of fairness could not be tried by any more conclusive test. He was solely concerned with the truth, and in its ascertainment he set aside any works of opinion, going directly to the records of the time. From these original and incontrovertible sources he drew comprehensive material, illuminated the facts with profound learning, and both by setting them in effective juxtaposition and by pointing out their reasonable interpretation he carried conviction to all candid minds. In weighing evidence he trained his mind to the finest balance. His historical method was developed with scientific exactitude. He possessed the genius of taking infinite pains, no effort being too great for his industry in ascertaining all the facts bearing on a subject or in setting them forth instructively. His method of work required more than double writing in creating the finished manuscript. The first step was an exhaustive reading of everything relating to the subject in hand.² His reflections were set down, with copious notes and bibliographical references, all

¹ In conceding the right to translate his *Inquisition of the Middle Ages* into Italian, Mr. Lea wrote to Professor Domenico Battaini: "I have never sought to influence the religious beliefs of others, but I have always been inspired with the desire to ascertain and set forth impartially the absolute facts of history and let them teach their own lessons."

² Any treatment of these subjects which was to be anything but superficial and temporary involved years of labor in the great folio collections of law and theology, in out-of-the-way tracts and pamphlets, and in the libraries and archives of every part of Europe. From this life of patient toil Mr. Lea never shrank. This self-made scholar set himself to attack some of the hardest problems of the world's history, whose difficulties were to prove the measure of his success. From the outset he formed the habit of going directly to the original sources. His most mature work was the *History of the Inquisition of Spain*. The subject is intricate and thorny, the materials were for the most part unprinted and uncalendared, and except for certain publications of the author, scarcely anything had been done in the way of preliminary exploration or monographic investigation. Under such conditions the historian was obliged to be quarryman as well as architect, and the four solid volumes which he produced were fashioned out of the solid rock of original documents.—*Tribute to Henry Charles Lea, Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, December, 1909. See also footnote, page 10.

systematically arranged in provisional chapters, with subheadings, and marginal indexes. Thus the scattered parts of each subject were brought into rational connection, and the development of events was traced from cause to effect, perhaps centuries apart. In this organization of material from the evolutionary point of view, which is one of the main distinctions between the modern science of history and the narratives of early writers, Mr. Lea was an acknowledged master. The preliminary manuscript when completed brought the whole of each topic before his mind, and it was then entirely rewritten and greatly condensed. Mr. Lea held that only the author could properly index a book, and he bestowed no less care on this important instrument than upon the text itself. His workmanship was complete, everything else being subordinate to this. Time was never considered nor was it ever wasted. Labor instead of being a curse was one of life's great blessings. Asked if he really enjoyed what appeared to others to be unremitting drudgery, he replied that there was no pleasure equal to it. Intellectual absorption was happiness to him. He neglected exercise until after his second breakdown, at fifty-five years of age, and thereafter rebuilt his shattered health to greater stability than before. He walked just enough to keep himself in working order. His mornings sufficed for this and for attention to his affairs, which were increased rather than decreased on his retirement from business as a publisher. His afternoons and evenings until midnight were free for study and writing, and were so employed with interruptions only at meal times. Every day in the year was time, time was life and life was opportunity not to be wasted. He characteristically remarked that it would be wrong to do on any day of the week what it would be wrong to do on Sunday.

Mr. Lea early formed the project of making the history of the Inquisition the great object of his life's work, and his volumes which preceded it were the outcome of preparatory studies thereto. Perhaps it would be more accurate to call them collateral subjects

which developed naturally out of his reading and lay at hand readily in the form of preliminary manuscript described in the preceding paragraph. He appreciated brevity, and finding that the vast subject of the Inquisition, even when disembarrassed of its collaterals, could not be comprised in a few volumes, he divided it according to natural lines of cleavage into the Inquisition of the Middle Ages or the Pre-Reformation period, and the Inquisition of Spain, beginning with the Reformation. Discovering that this concluding portion had exceeded his ideas of space, and that his finished manuscript, representing ten years of labor, would make nearly three thousand printed pages, he withheld it from press, and completely rewrote the six thousand pages of manuscript with his own pen, condensing, adding new material, and finally getting it into a form answering his requirements, satisfied that with this vast labor he had improved it and reduced it by some four hundred pages of print. When he determined to undertake this immense task he was eighty years old, and ran great risk that he might not live to see the chief object of a lifetime of study accomplished. Nothing deterred him from placing the quality of his work above every other consideration.

While Mr. Lea's labors were largely directed to subjects which for centuries have been the object of acrimonious debate, he endeavored to treat them with the impartiality and strict adherence to fact of the scientific historian. That he succeeded in this may be assumed from the verdict of Lord Acton, himself an earnest Catholic, in a searching review of the *Inquisition of the Middle Ages*.¹ In this Acton says: "His information is comprehensive, minute, exact and everywhere sufficient, if not everywhere complete. In this astonishing press of digested facts there is barely space to discuss the ideas which they exhibit and the law which they obey;" and the review concludes by saying: "But the vital points are protected by a panoply of mail. From the Albigensian

¹ *English Historical Review*, 1888.