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THE TOTTER AND TUMBLE OF SPAIN'S COLONIAL EMPIRE

"Napoleon had every manner of success and abused his good fortune to the uttermost (sans mesure)."

—TALLEYRAND, "Memoires," I., 302.

Influence of the Monroe Doctrine on South America—The Fight Between Spain and Her Colonies

IN 1823 President James Monroe announced to the powers of Europe that the United States claimed a certain protecting influence over the whole of the American Continent. Here are some of the words he used, the sum of the so-called Monroe Doctrine: "We (the United States) could not view an interposition for oppressing them (the Spanish-American Republics), or controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European power, in any other light than as a manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States . . . the American Continents should no longer be subjects for any new European colonial settlement."

That declaration virtually guaranteed the independence of every Spanish colony from California to Cape Horn. And when, shortly after that, the British Government, under the leadership of Canning,* confirmed

* George Canning, born in 1770, was Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1822 until his early death in 1827.

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the position of the United States by recognizing the independence of the different republics, all talk of reconquering the lost colonies was smothered and the now liberated territories were free to fight one another and make revolutions as often as they chose without any interference, at least from Madrid.

But Spain tottered a long while before she finally fell. It shows that there were some good elements in her administration, mingled with the much that was bad, for no system wholly corrupt could have spread one language and one church creed over so vast a territory in so short a time.

Spain's administration of her colonies was bad from the point of view of the political economist, but it did not shock those who suffered under it half so much as it shocks us of to-day.

The impulse which finally drove the mother country from the mainland of America was not far removed from the one which united the thirteen colonies of the United States in 1776. In both cases it was felt that the attitude of the home government was not merely unjust but arrogant; the personal pride of the colonists was hurt quite as much as their pockets. The officials of the home government not only regarded the colonies as means of enriching themselves and the Crown, but treated their colonial fellow-Spaniards with indifference, if not contempt.

So long as Spain was overwhelmingly strong the Spanish creole submitted with a fairly good grace; but the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, resulting in Spain's being treated as a province of France, raised among Spanish-Americans the feeling that their

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national glory was as safe on the River Plate or under the shadow of Chimborazo as in the palaces of Madrid.

Though Spain showed herself incapable of defending her transatlantic possessions, she still refused to allow them any voice in the management of their own affairs and persisted in excluding creoles (native colonial Spaniards) from all positions of responsibility. Out of one hundred and sixty viceroys of Spain, only four have been creole—out of six hundred and two Captains-General, only fourteen have been creole. Suspicion and jealousy marked Spain's attitude toward her far-away children, and who can wonder if they failed to show loyalty when she needed their help?

In 1898 the public sentiment of Spanish America was with the mother country against the United States; in 1823 the United States was hailed as the unselfish big brother protecting the younger republics against the mother's cruelty—so much have times changed!

During the wars of revolutionary France against the coalition of monarchical Europe, Pitt was approached with a scheme for assisting in the wrenching of the colonies from Spain. A revolutionary society was formed in London with the avowed purpose of liberating the different South American republics; but the peace of Basel (1795) checked the movement for a time; at least, so far as England could officially appear in the matter. But war soon broke out again, and after the destruction of the French and Spanish fleets at Trafalgar (1805), England felt her hands free.

Admiral Popham was at Cape Town. He had arranged to take over South Africa from the Dutch, and

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therefore, in 1806, he sailed across the South Atlantic and dropped anchor in the river Plate.

He had been induced to land here through representations of the revolutionary party. They found no difficulty in occupying Buenos Ayres, though General Beresford, who commanded the land force, had under him only 1,800 men. The English acted here as they had in Havana and Manila in 1762, granted complete freedom of worship, and opened the port to free trade, at least with England—an enormous concession compared with what the colonies had formerly enjoyed. Commerce at once revived, shipping crowded the river, and the short British occupation made it impossible for that colony ever again to rest contented under a policy of Spanish exclusiveness.

But, though the revolutionists had fought to drive Spain out, they had no mind to permit the English to stay in. So now they turned upon their liberators, after the manner of the Filipinos in 1898.

With that revulsion of feeling so frequently seen in hot-blooded races, Spaniards and creoles forgot their feud and united in common hatred of the hereditary enemy, the hated Anglo-Saxon. Within two weeks of the first occupation of Buenos Ayres by the English, the latter were attacked by an Argentine force and driven to take refuge in the citadel. The "patriots" who had promised Admiral Popham an easy victory over the country, now disappeared.

In June of 1807 reinforcements arrived from England—12,000 men on eighteen warships, and eighty transports, commanded by General Whitelock. To the amazement of the world this force failed in their

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attempt to take the town from the Argentines; on the contrary they were forced to march back to their ships and embark for home. It was not a military disaster of the first rank, and a nation that had just won the battle of Trafalgar and was on the eve of driving Napoleon's army from Spain had no need to be cast down by so small a check, but considering the nature of the foe and the quality of the invading force, it stands out among memorable British losses—such as Majuba Hill, Saratoga, Yorktown, New Orleans, Colenso—the same old story—brave men; incompetent generals.

This was the time of great battles. The year 1805 was the year of Austerlitz as well as Trafalgar. 1806 was the year of Jena, when Napoleon chased the whole Prussian army from the borders of South Germany clear to the edge of Russia, whipping it into shreds. 1807 was the year of Friedland. The next year afforded Napoleon his "*Parterre* of Kings at Erfurt." In 1809 came more crash of big armies, the battle of Wagram in the midst. The Russian campaign was in 1812, in 1813 was that of Leipzig, in 1814 was the capture of Paris, and Waterloo came in 1815. Any gaps in these events were made up by Wellington's fighting in Spain, and England's small expeditions in every part of the world. No wonder, then, that the loss of Buenos Ayres should have been quickly forgotten.

But for Spanish colonial history no event was more important than this. The news of it was an inspiration to every revolutionary committee, not merely on the Plate, but in Chili and Peru, Venezuela and Mexico. Colonists had shown what they could do. They had

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not merely stood their own against Spain, they had saved Argentine from the foreign enemy—no less an enemy than England! While Spain was powerless to protect, the colonists had themselves organized a military force and achieved victory without any assistance from the mother country!

Henceforth there was no more thought of tolerating the tyranny of former days. The colonists were, many of them, ready to remain Spanish and monarchists on the basis of just and equal treatment with those of the mother country, but Spain lacked the courage, or understanding, to seize the opportunity thus offered. She let things drift—allowed the revolutionary wave to increase in magnitude, and made concessions when it was too late. If ever she felt a trifle relieved from momentary fear, her arrogance returned, and she sought to revive the commercial restrictions which had done so much mischief in the past. The short English occupation had united all classes of colonists on one subject at least, that though they wished no British soldiers, they meant to have the liberty which those soldiers had shown them how to procure.

In the same year that Prussia rose against the French yoke (1813), Argentine declared herself free, and from that day to the proclamation of President Monroe (1823), her struggle for independence was a perpetual source of encouragement to the rest of South America, aided by the events on the continent of Europe. When Spain was at the feet of Napoleon, her colonies were proportionately elated; but when Wellington finally drove the French out of the Peninsula, Republican prospects declined, for now the mother country

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became free to fight her rebellious offspring. Argentine alone maintained practical self-government, if not complete independence, throughout those stormy years of revolution and counter-revolution. In 1810, while a Spanish viceroy was nominally ruling the country, a popular assembly collected the taxes, conducted the government, and tolerated the viceroy as an ornamental feature. Half of the ruling assembly consisted of creoles, and the presence of the Spanish flag affected but little the progress of the country.

The monarchs formed a "Protective Union," a syndicate, a species of Trust, whose object was to guarantee perpetuity of monarchy by divine right. The political police exaggerated, where it did not invent, tales of revolutionary attempts, and it is possible that most of the monarchs constituting the so-called Holy Alliance were sincere in the belief that they were serving God by suppressing every manifestation of popular desire for self-government. England—at least governmentally—waged war against political discontent with nearly the same weapons as those used by Alexander of Russia. Discontent was wide-spread throughout Great Britain; there was rioting in many cities. The troops which had distinguished themselves on continental battle-fields now had to turn their bayonets against the mobs of their home counties. The public mind was agitated by plots for assassinating not only monarchs, but cabinet ministers, and thus for a time a majority of the English Parliament was ready to support any measure opposed to revolution, and, consequently, to sustain Spain against her republican colonies. But there was a limit to English strength and

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English patience. Spain proved so helpless even at home, that her pretensions to subdue the American rebels appeared almost grotesque. In 1819 she gathered a large force together near Cadiz, proposing a grand reconquest of South America under the sympathetic auspices of the Holy Alliance. But the officers who were to command the expedition had not been paid, and they were but half satisfied when the Government promised them each an increase of rank in lieu of cash. The men, however, 22,000 in number, were constantly reminded by friends of liberty that already Spain had sent, since 1811, 42,000 men, who had been killed either by disease or by the bullets of the enemy. Time dragged; the Government had not provided enough transports; the feeling against the war received new strength, and it culminated in a military revolution which put an end for the moment to all transatlantic schemes.

Then came the upsetting of the Spanish Government at home, and the substitution in England of a Liberal Ministry (1822) in lieu of Castlereagh.

Canning saw in the independence of the Spanish republics advantages of trade far outnumbering those to be got from supporting the pretensions of a monarchy which had so frequently demonstrated its incapacity for governing either at home or abroad.

In supporting the United States and the Monroe Doctrine, he gratified the love of liberty, which is instinctive in English people; he secured the hearty indorsement of the British merchant, who appreciated the commercial advantages involved; he secured the goodwill of the United States. President Monroe recog-

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nized the independence of Venezuela in 1822, and Europe immediately called a conference of the great powers for the purpose of sustaining the pretensions of Spain.

England, in 1822, not only declined to attend this conference (of Verona) but remarked pointedly to Spain that, in case she proceeded with violence against her colonies, the British Cabinet would recognize their independence.

And this happened when George III. had been dead but two years, in the reign of a George scarcely less hostile to popular government!

History moved rapidly in those days. In 1823 the Spanish King, Ferdinand VII., made another effort to unite the Holy Alliance in his favor—this time at Paris, but England now went a step further and said she would be present only on condition that the Spanish colonies be recognized as independent.

Another effort in 1824 ended with even less encouragement—England in that year recognizing the independence of Argentine by making a commercial treaty with her.

These annual surprises culminated in 1825, when England notified the world that she was sending diplomatic representatives to the different South American republics in spite of Spanish protests.

The wave of revolution, which swept the Spanish flag from the mainland of America, eventually produced a large number of alleged republics with constitutions framed on that of Washington and Adams, Jefferson and Franklin. But there were several efforts made to secure independence under a monarchy, showing that

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the plan suggested in 1783 by a Spanish Crown Minister would have met with support among the colonists themselves. The ideal republic has not been secured anywhere on earth, least of all among people of the Latin race. It is interesting to note that of all the Spanish-American States, those which have shown the largest amount of civic energy and stability have been the ones farthest removed from the Equator, Chili and the Argentine at the south, Mexico at the north. The two most southerly ones have developed the largest amount of political and religious liberality, and have in consequence attracted considerable immigration other than Spanish.

Mexico, owing to her lack of good harbors and the difficulty of penetrating to her centres of population, developed politically and commercially more slowly than the Argentine, in spite of the fact that her territory touched that of the United States.

But as soon as regular railway service was established between Mexico City and the railway system across the Rio Grande, Mexico progressed so rapidly as to astonish even those who knew her best; and she now moves forward in pleasant contrast to the manner characteristic of her former self and her sister republics of the past generation.

The Spanish colonies fought the mother country long and furiously. Yet after the separation, and particularly when all who had taken personal part in the quarrel had been laid to rest, old ties reasserted themselves. Members of the same family who had been on different sides during the war, now began to interest themselves in the descendants of common parents; the

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Spanish colonist, proud of his lineage and past glories, yearned for a holiday in the Old World, and first among the objects of interest was the soil that produced his ancestors.

The same feeling that impels the New Englander to visit the birthplace of Shakespeare and gaze with awe at the venerable parchment of the Magna Charta, induces the Republican citizen of Buenos Ayres or Mexico to visit the home of Cervantes and climb the lofty flights of the Escorial.

The Spanish-American colonist is, after all, a Spaniard, and let us not forget that, in the many efforts now making for realizing Pan-American ideals.

The books that feed his mind, the periodicals that entertain his family, the news that is dearest to him, the visits that he appreciates most—these are not things of New York, London, or Hamburg, but of old Spain. The ambitious diplomatist of Spanish America knows the relative commercial importance of the different great powers, but the Court at which he appears with greatest satisfaction to himself (and his wife) is the Court of Madrid.

We in America of the north are apt to think that the Spanish-American holds us in affection—is in some mysterious way a part of our big western hemisphere family life. That is true to a very limited extent—an extent vastly more limited than many of our statesmen are willing to admit. The Spanish-American is not unwilling to recognize that in times past American political expediency made it advisable that Spain should lose her colonies—just as in 1777 France found it to her interest to take sides with George Washington

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against George III. We were grateful to France then, and we still demonstrate effusively when reference is made to Lafayette at a Fourth of July banquet. But sentiment of this kind did not prevent the United States and France from being at war during the life of Washington—nor did it prevent Napoleon III. from seeking to destroy the American Union during our Civil War.

During the last war (1898) the sentiment throughout the Spanish-American republics was emphatically opposed to the United States, and in favor of the mother country. This sentiment was just as pronounced in Montevideo or Santiago, as in Paris, Rome, or Barcelona. Indeed the whole Latin world was apparently at one on this subject, for reasons far removed from mere commercial considerations.

Had Spain shown the capacity to carry on the war, there is reason to think that she would have found in her former colonies abundance of volunteers who would have taken up arms against the Yankee with enthusiasm. For Spain is, after all, the mother, and her faults have been largely forgiven.