

HISPANIC AMERICA¹

I

ITS CULTURE AND ITS IDEALS

AS a representative of the University of San Marcos, the leading Peruvian university, I desire to offer my fraternal salutation not only to this university, but also to the universities and colleges of the United States. The University of San Marcos, the oldest in the New World, represents the past, with its glorious traditions. Without doubt, the chief values of Anglo-Saxon civilization in America lie in its universities, and it is evident that Hispanic civilization is embodied in the higher institutions that were left by Spain in her colonies. Therefore the linking of our university with the colleges and universities of the United States is, in my judgment, a token of our unity of culture and of the homage of our traditions to your ideals.

The subject of this, my first lecture, is "Spanish America: Its Culture and Its Ideals." It seems that the hour has come in which, laying aside ancient prejudices, all men of good will should spread throughout Anglo-Saxon America an accurate idea as to Hispanic America; and in Spanish America, a true interpretation of the aims and culture of the United States.

At the present time, the American continent is the hope of the world and the basis and support of the new civilization. The universal war has brought the centre of economic

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gravity to this continent. Mankind needs to-day, more than ever, the wealth and work, and, above all, the spirit, of America. In this respect, the United States is the chief factor; but Spanish America has also a share, in no wise contemptible; and this being true, it is important to understand the relations between these two different, but essential, elements of the culture of the New World.

My principal obligation in this lecture is to be frank. I must now forget the language of former diplomacy in order to call things by their names. We might say that there are three periods in the history of relations between the Americas. The first period is that of the political tie constituted by the Monroe Doctrine; the second, that of the commercial relations of the present time; and every one expects the dawn of the third period, in which, over and above the solidarity required for the defense of our independence, and over and above the advantages of commercial exchange, the souls of our people will establish a bond: our culture will be comprehended and our aims harmonized. We should make a great mistake to base the mutual approach of the Americas upon their economic interests alone. Sad to say, many Spanish-Americans believe the United States is nothing more than the centre of finance and of technical experts; and many North Americans look upon Spanish America merely as a commercial market and as an attractive field for industrial development. If we do not go beyond these ideas, the relations between the Americas will be but superficial. We Spanish-Americans are much interested in studying the spiritual side of your people; and you North Americans would do well to learn how, in spite of our economic and political crises, we have an intellectual and social culture that may not be neglected. In order to attain our goal, it is necessary to eradicate the prejudices

that have sprung from our remoteness. You must be aware that there are prejudices here and that there are prejudices there. Unfortunately eminent Latin-American writers have spread throughout the southern countries the idea that the civilization of the United States has an exclusively economic character that will incline her to an imperialistic policy and to territorial absorption.

As the complement of this prejudice of ours and corresponding to it—and you will understand that errors unite to produce evil, just as truths unite to produce good—there is still another prejudice entertained by certain intellectual people regarding Spanish America. To them our countries seem to be the theatre of economic crises and of inevitable political anarchy. We are well aware that your civilization has not only an economic aspect, but also an intellectual and moral aspect. We of South America still bear in mind the moral and religious beginnings of this nation. We know that work has a value in itself, entirely apart from the wealth that it produces; that activity addressed to economic ends does not necessarily spring from selfish motives, but from a certain romantic intoxication over its display; and that the knights of industry, the representative types of this people, possess more of the soul of chivalry and adventure than of the bartering spirit of Carthage and Phœnicia. We know that lofty ideals predominated in your struggle for independence, and that spiritual motives led you to fight for two ideals, united in a sublime harmony—the preservation of the Union and the freeing of the slaves. We assume, too, that the last phase of your history—your participation in the Great War—was not due to your economic interest only, but also to the consciousness of your mission as defenders of democracy and of the principle of nationality.

We are convinced that there has sprung up here an intellectual movement devoted to the study of phases of political law, to pointing out the influence of psychic factors in sociology and to establishing the paramount position of ideal values in philosophy. We shall ever remember, above all, that there arose from the midst of this people, moulded of its clay, nourished upon its sap, one of the most completely rounded statesmen that ever lived, in whom intelligence and creative will were thrown into relief by their morality, and, we could almost say, by their sanctity: a figure that can only be compared in human history with that of Marcus Aurelius and Saint Louis the Just of France: Abraham Lincoln.

It is true that amid a population so large as that of the United States, life is extraordinarily complicated and rich; and it is possible to find here different currents of ideas and the sources of contradictory policies; but it is interesting to know what are the ideals and the orientations that accord with the deep and essential soul of the United States; and we of Spanish America must know that these ideals and these orientations are those required by democratic tradition, by respect for human freedom and the equality of peoples. The soul of the United States is the soul of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. The people of our countries have nothing to fear, but much to hope for, from the America of Washington and Lincoln.

Since our history is less well known than yours, the prejudices disseminated throughout the United States in respect of Spanish America have taken deeper root; and it is necessary to struggle against them with earnestness. I cannot deny that Spanish America has suffered economic crises and political outbreaks, but I hold that in Spanish America economic development and political culture were forced to

fight against tremendous difficulties, which explain of themselves our backwardness and our revolutions. I maintain that, in the second place, in spite of them, there exists in Spanish America a very high degree of social and intellectual attainment.

The slow economic development and the political unrest of the early history of Spanish America can be understood by bearing in mind the historical and geographical factors, and, especially, by comparing them with those of the history of the United States. For us, independence was a sudden change, a tremendous leap forward, because, during the colonial period, Spain and Spanish America were subjected to a régime of absolute monarchy; the institutions that represented the liberty of the Middle Ages had become vitiated.

Our forefathers were not prepared for freedom. The great institution of the *Cabildos* itself, which was the organ of local government in Spain, lost in Spanish America many of its essential features. The colonial life of the English colonies in America was quite different. You had had experience with the institutions of free government; your independence arose as the assertion of your rights as citizens of the British monarchy, and the development of your institutions, after the establishment of the republic, was a continuation, enriched by new ideals, of institutions that came down from the past. Liberty in English America may be likened to a venerable tree well rooted in tradition.

The system of labor has more to do with training for freedom than political organization. In the colonial times, Spain and England cherished the same purpose, that of exploiting the precious metals, but these metals could only be come at in Peru and Mexico, and the Spaniards found in these countries aboriginal races easy to master, whom they

put to work exploiting the mines. Thus, by virtue of factors of environment, the Anglo-Saxon colonists were compelled to devote themselves to agriculture, hunting and fishing. In Spanish America, the economic life rested upon the aboriginal races, and on them reposed the aristocratic and bureaucratic society. The difference between the northern and the southern colonies is still greater in respect of the geographical condition. Geographical unity and continuity, which are so necessary to true civilization, were lacking in Spanish America. The efforts of the English colonists centered upon the narrow strip that lay along the seaboard, and only after the human elements that populated this region took definite political and social shape, and attained a certain degree of civilization of their own, did they cross the mountains and advance slowly toward the Mississippi Valley, later to cross the great divide and descend upon the Pacific Coast. What a contrast between this process that has been carried on in our days and that of the Spanish colonization! Spain, with an incomparable effort, distributed her vital energies from California to Cape Horn. The nuclei of population were separated by tremendous distances, and they were subjected to the varied influences of climate and of contact and commingling with different races. Economic life and efficiency in administration demand concentration and not dispersion; unity and not diversity. Diversity and isolation were the sociological features of Spanish America. Our only elements of unity were the government and religion. Uniformity of government, as it was imposed by Spain, was ill suited to the conditions, while, on the other hand, unity of religion bequeathed us a strong organization of the family and true artistic education through the decorative character of Catholicism, as has been said by the eminent historian, Professor Bernard

Moses. Anglo-Saxon America did not have uniformity of government, and a diversity of creeds contributed to foster sentiments of liberty and tolerance.

With the picture before us as I have sketched it, any impartial sociologist could do no less than admire the efforts made by the Spanish-American people to achieve a high degree of culture and government, while struggling against economic and historical difficulties. Certain aspects of the work of Spain and of the efforts of the Spanish-American peoples have been prodigious. What first strikes the attention is the achievement of independence, and it has been rightly called "the American miracle." The struggle began in 1810, and it was drawn out for fifteen weary years. Spain combated liberty with her characteristically vigorous energy and her traditional gallantry. The movement for independence originated with an outburst of idealism that strengthened and exalted the heroic energy of the people. The epic of the conquest was repeatedly reversed. The sons accomplished the feats of their fathers in order to attain higher ends.

The *Cabildo* had an important rôle: by its activities, the idealistic or emancipative movement became popular throughout the continent, and upon this intellectual and sentimental preparation the heroes of independence founded their work.

A people's civilization ought, I think, to be judged in the light of its aptitude to understand and to feel new human ideals, and of its ability to produce superior men that can bring them to pass. The application of this standard to Spanish America would show a high degree of culture. The ideals of liberty and political progress that characterized the social philosophy of the eighteenth century, of the French and the American revolutions, were

assimilated by the Spanish creoles in America. Miranda, Moreno, Torres, Narino y Luna Pizarro possessed the qualities required in true leaders, and they were the bearers of new ideals. The noble company of the heroes is still more interesting. The military struggle over the wide stage of the continent, traversing unbounded prairies, crossing vast rivers and climbing rugged mountains, is one of the greatest epics of all the ages. Heroes possess therefore universal and human value. San Martín will always be deemed one of the greatest captains of history; and Bolívar, a consummate genius, may be considered the Napoleon, the human prodigy, of Spanish America.

So it was that democracy arose in Spanish America amid the most unfavorable circumstances, not by means of an historical evolution, but as the result of a difficult task of conscious creation. If I could synthesize the history of Spanish America during the nineteenth century, I should say that it was a struggle for democratic principles against nature and tradition.

Now it is possible to explain the dictatorships, the economic crises, the instability of the governments and the periodic displays of social unrest. In all countries where the upholders of liberty are compelled to fight against serious obstacles, revolutions are unavoidable. History recalls such commotions even among peoples of a higher degree of civilization than those of Spanish America, such as France, Italy, and Spain. France underwent the formidable commotions of 1830, 1848, and 1870. Also in Italy occurred periodic revolutions until she attained her unity; and Spain suffered the consequences of *pronunciamientos* until she succeeded in establishing a democratic monarchy. There is nothing more unreasonable than to abandon hope for the future of democracy in Spanish

America, by taking a superficial view of our past and present turmoils. If we observe the facts carefully, we shall see that democratic principles advance with a slow and triumphal movement. The results were tempered by the obstacles and by the epoch.

Chile had enjoyed the advantage of possessing a certain topographical and racial unity, and also the political support of an oligarchy of land-owners, and on this account she early acquired political stability. On the other hand, her evolution was not marked by the idealistic spirit that characterized the other countries.

Argentina, from the beginning, had to face the conflict between her national existence and the reactionary autonomy of the several provinces. After solving this problem, according to the constitution drafted by Alberdi, she generously opened up her fertile lands to the immigration of all the peoples of the world, and through the activities of Sarmiento, based upon the ideas of the United States, she trained her people in the school of labor and freedom. Since then, her economic development and her political culture have gone hand in hand.

In recent days, the control of power has passed from the conservative to the middle class without commotions and by means of a reform in the suffrage. An advanced social legislation coincides with this evolution in democracy.

Peru and Bolivia, bifurcations, unhappily, of one parent national stock, adopted democratic constitutions that abolished slavery and the Indian tributes, in spite of geographical, ethnic and economic drawbacks and obstacles. For these nations, the war of the Pacific, in 1879-1883, was a ruinous catastrophe, in which they lost both land and wealth; yet, in spite of this, they recuperated shortly afterward.

A popular revolution in Peru, in 1895, gave us a government with a good administration; one that fostered the industries and established a currency system limited absolutely to gold and silver coin. The Peruvian renaissance then began. In Bolivia, a similar evolution took place through the agency of the liberal movement of 1898.

It is true that Peru lacks an organized middle class, and on this account we undergo certain periods of transition and stagnation; but, in spite of it all, we shall be able to preserve an essential part of the work of 1895, and we have placed upon the statute books the most advanced laws in respect of the social problem. The last revolution in Bolivia was a return to her true international ideal.

Uruguay, a country small in territory but great as a contributor to American culture, after establishing national unity, formerly endangered by the constant strife between the historic parties, is audaciously testing certain venture-some reforms in government by commission, proportional representation, and the most radical provisions for labor.

Paraguay has had an original career in the history of America, because of the theocratic regimen under which she lived during her colonial period and by reason of her heroic struggle for the maintenance of her nationality. She lost, half a century ago, in a war with her neighbors, almost her entire male population. She seems now to be recovering from her past misfortunes, as she is developing in labor the same energy she manifested in war.

Colombia is the nation of South America that has shown the greatest restlessness in the quest for ideals, and therefore she has passed through the most serious political commotions. In order to preserve her unity, it was necessary to moderate the exaggerated federalistic form of her government, adopted from the beginning. There was still

another danger in the existence of this nation: the conflict between the conservatives and the liberals. By the sagacity and wisdom of the recent governments, the struggle between these two political parties is taking place within the normal working of the government.

By means of like factors, a similar evolution has taken place in Ecuador.

Venezuela and Mexico have been the least happy of the Spanish-American nations in respect of their political evolution. Their democratic institutions have had to fight against almost insuperable obstacles. While they have had governments of a personalistic character that were progressive in a material sense, they were not provided with a democratic education, which is the most important preparation for political progress. However, we retain our faith in the future of those nations. Venezuela gave birth to the noblest figures of the struggle for independence, both in thought and in action; Mexico had occupied an exceptional place in Spanish-American culture. The past may be taken as a basis on which to forecast the future, and the present difficulties will serve as a norm by which to estimate the worth of the leaders of the coming regeneration.

In Central America, some personal régimes have come to earth, and now the idea of a confederation of the five republics is growing, and it will be welcomed by all those who sympathize with these peoples, because it will win respect abroad and will establish unity and give strength to their policy at home.

Cuba's economic prosperity ought to go side by side with her political progress, and it depends on the Cubans whether the Platt amendment is to be a theoretical pronouncement or whether it is to be applied practically.

When the present situation of stress and mortification

that exist in the Dominican Republic shall have passed—and may the day of their elimination be hastened—she will proceed with the normal development of her political, intellectual, and economic life.

Although Brazil does not belong properly to Spanish America, we may not pass her by unnoticed. This great country, during the nineteenth century, has reached a high degree of culture by reason of the wealth of her territory and the vitality and activity of her people and the strength of her traditions. The monarchy of the old days was not reactionary, but progressive; and under the republic, there has been an improvement in public administration and a notable development of skill in diplomatic affairs. As we know, Brazil has attained an exceptional international position during the last phase of her history.

The sketch I have presented is positive proof that democracy has been a working factor in the history of Spanish America. These new peoples have perhaps introduced premature reforms into their political structure, but, roughly speaking, consolidation of nationality and democratic organization went parallel among them. Besides the democratic principle, we must deem one of the features of Spanish-American culture to be an ideal of international justice. America has outstripped Europe in democratic evolution. We ought to observe that the republican form of government and universal suffrage were realities in America while Europe was under the regimen of limited monarchy. The Americas have also gone beyond Europe in evolution in the direction of international justice. This longing appeared first in Spanish America from the time of the war of independence. Our representative hero, Simón Bolívar, was the first to formulate it clearly. The congress of Panama proclaimed the equality of nations, respect for

territorial integrity, and the principle of arbitration for the settlement of disputes between the American peoples, and it laid the foundation of an amphictyony or league of nations. They were the same ideas as those that gave rise to the Spanish-American Congress that was held in Lima in 1847 and in 1866. They constituted precedents for the undertakings of the various Pan American conferences that have taken place. Scholars that wish to study the origin of the movement toward the juridical organization of the world may not set aside these facts and ideas that have appeared in Spanish America.

It is proper now to consider intellectual culture along its general lines. The intellectual life of Spanish America had to be an imitation of that of Spain; but, even in colonial times, Spanish America made important contributions to the literature of the race. The greatest epic poems of the language, *La Cristiada* and *La Araucana*, were written by Spaniards who lived in America. Juan Ruiz de Alarcón, one of the greatest Spanish dramatists, and Juana Inés de la Cruz, the first of our mystic poets, were born in Mexico. Subsequent to the establishment of independence, political freedom coincided, to a certain extent, with intellectual emancipation. Although we have continued to profit by the literary currents of Spain, we have had intellectual movements of our own of such importance and vitality that they have exerted an influence upon the nations of to-day.

The originality of Spanish-American literature consisted in the following three movements to which I ought to devote some attention. These movements were: first, humanism, in what was formerly Greater Colombia—composed of Colombia, Peru, and Ecuador; second, the socialism and political realism of the Rio de la Plata; and, third, the revival of poetry, to which many people contributed.

Let us consider, first, the humanistic movement. The Venezuelan Andrés Bello began the scientific study of the language by writing the best grammar; Rafael Baralt deputed the language by pointing out the Gallicisms; Rufino José Cuervo, in his dictionary of regimens, erected a most noteworthy monument to Spanish philology; Miguel Antonio Caro was not inferior, as an essayist and critic, to Spain's best masters; and the prose of Juan Montalvo continued the strain of Cervantes.

It is interesting to observe the correspondence between the intellectual movement and the emancipative movement in Spanish America. To the emancipative movement in the north led by Greater Colombia, belonged the humanistic culture of which I have already spoken. Another movement for emancipation sprang up in the south, led by Argentina, and actuated not only by idealistic motives, but also by economic factors. To these movements corresponded a social thought and political realism that we must now consider. The Argentine Domingo F. Sarmiento, with the insight of genius, described the social reality of his country in his celebrated works of *Facundo* and *Recuerdos de provincia*, and he attempted to write a true account of social conditions in *Conflictos y armonías de las razas en América*. By the power of his intuition of genius, Sarmiento acquired the standpoint of Buckle and Taine and he formulated principles and observations that no sociologist treating of American questions may ignore. Alberdi discovered the true basis of the Argentine constitution and he pointed out the cause of political crises in America, attributing them to lack of population and the weakness of the national economic organism. Sarmiento and Alberdi, in spite of their differences and their hostility to each other, were the professors

of an active and practical nationalism, and they were, in a way, the forerunners of the talented Joaquín Costa, the herald of the Spanish renaissance.

The development and influence of the Spanish-American intellectual movement was even greater in respect of lyric poetry. The Spanish-American poets have enriched the lyrics of the Spanish language, not only in sentimental value, but also in expression and rhythm. So-called modernism in Spanish literature found its leaders in Spanish America. The precursors were the Cuban Julián del Casal and the Mexican Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera. The Colombian José Asunción Silva, in original rhythms, reflected a new feeling in the presence of the mystery of the universe and of death; but the true leader of the new literary movement was Rubén Darío, whose compositions constitute undreamed of elements of exquisiteness, elegance and musicality. The Mexican Amado Nervo contributed to the renewal of poetry by his Christian and Franciscan compositions. The Peruvian Santos Chocano presents the case of a new epic with imagery full of color and rhythms of splendid sonorousness. His motive is the wild nature of America and the heroic energy of those that triumphed over it. The Argentine Leopoldo Lygones and the Uruguayan Julio Herrera y Reissig express subtile shades of feeling and thought in novel language. The influence of these writers on Spanish letters is well recognized by the Spaniards themselves. Darío, Nervo, and Chocano are considered true teachers by the new generation in Spain and in Spanish America.

Peruvian literature has made to Spanish America contributions that correspond to the rôle played by Peru in the political evolution of the continent. Peru was the land of Incan culture and the chief organism of Spanish colonial government in America. The masterpieces of our litera-

ture reflect these two important periods of our history. The life of the Incas and the picturesque legends of the early days of the colonial period were collected and recorded by the historian Garcilaso de la Vega in a style full of ingenuity, color, and grace.

The different aspects of the Peruvian colonial life, which are reproduced more or less in all the countries of Spanish America, were painted by the gifted pen of Ricardo Palma, who created a new literary genus intermediate between history and fiction. His *Tradiciones* are original productions in Spanish-American literature that possess, at one and the same time, grace and the maliciousness of Spanish literature.

The legends of Garcilaso portrayed the historical background of Spanish-American literature and culture, but they became active and dynamic in the productions that sprang up and gathered about the struggle for an independent life and democratic organization and social and pedagogical reforms.

The letters and speeches of Bolívar reflect the thoughts and ideals of all Spanish America during the opening years of the period of independence. After the democratic and republican ideal, proclaimed with inimitable eloquence in the documents written by the Liberator, there was to come a new ideal, and it was that of the mastery of the soil, the wresting of its wealth and resources: the ideal of economic education in order to strengthen the political organism; and these ideals, heralded by Sarmiento and Alberdi, mark the second stage of our intellectual evolution. At the present moment we are witnessing the birth of new ideals.

It is true that the larger part of the Spanish-American people desire to strengthen the economic organism, to exploit the natural resources, to increase their population,

or, in brief, to develop the material bases of society, which it lacked on the eve of independence; but the leaders of the mind of Spanish America—without ignoring this fact—are in accord with the idealistic traditions of our culture and with the romantic and unselfish aspects of our soul. Besides material development, they proclaimed the cult of disinterestedness of thought, love of art, faith in the new spiritual value. These neo-idealistic movements coincide with the affirmation of national personality in all of our countries, that is, a nationalism that desires, at one and the same time, to be nourished by our own traditions and to enrich and to broaden our life. It is not based on the hatred of other countries or trust in the military power. Its aim is to accentuate the national personality by its moral strength and influence.

The masters of the new ideals in Spanish America agree among themselves upon the general lines of thought. There is a mental similarity that may not be explained as a mere coincidence. It is due rather to the same spiritual consanguinity. We should observe the same features in the work of Enrique José Varona in Cuba; Justo Sierra in Mexico; Carlos Arturo Torres in Colombia; Francisco García Calderón in Peru; Joaquín Gonsález and Ricardo Rojas in Argentina; José Enrique Rodó and Carlos Vaz Ferreira in Uruguay. All these writers have the same spiritual plasticity in comprehending thoroughly every human disquietude, the same devotion to the essential and eternal framework of our culture, a particular fondness for the traditions and the soil of the small countries and enthusiasm for and faith in Spanish America's destiny as a spiritual unity.

This movement in response to European currents of

thought, strengthened by the Great War, is an evidence of the high degree attained by Spanish-American culture.

At the same time, there developed in Spanish America a strong trend toward social reform.

Professor de Onís has remarked that the fundamental characteristics of Spanish culture are individuality and variety, rather than unity and organization. This is true also in respect of Spanish-American culture. Our nations are not artificial creations, the mere product of political events. The principal of individuality, so characteristic of Spanish civilization, in contact with the diversity of geographical and ethnic factors that existed in America, resulted in divers national *physiognomies*. Uniformity is the rule in Anglo-Saxon America, while variety and multiplicity are the rule in Spanish America. We must observe, however, that as they continue to grow in strength, without losing their characteristic physiognomies, they gradually develop enduring and common elements, thus producing a rich spiritual unity. Without conscious and artificial propaganda, without prattle regarding fraternity, and only through progress, the Spanish-American peoples will approach each other and will unite. The weakness of our nations resulted in a misunderstanding of each other and in international aloofness; internal strength will incline us to international solidarity. Anglo-Saxon America will comprehend that her sisters are acquiring spiritual unity and approaching political unity, not in the form of a state, but as a league or association. This movement ought to be regarded with sympathy by all men of good will in the United States of America. Let the out-of-date imperialists think, if they will, that the Spanish-American countries are condemned to perpetual economic vassalage and foreign political influence!

The richness and efficiency of the civilization of the continent demand the development and invigoration of Spanish-American culture side by side with that of Anglo-Saxon culture. On the harmony and "interrelation" of these two contiguous elements will hinge the destiny of America, and perchance that of the human civilization. We must work with enthusiasm for mutual comprehension. We of South America need the economic organization and discipline, as well as the democratic spirit, of North America, and you will do well to view with sympathy our artistic feelings, our idealistic faith, and our devotion to all human longings. Instead of misunderstanding, distrust, and hostility, let us extend and strengthen the bond of sympathy that ought to unite, that does unite, the souls of the two groups of peoples for the good of mankind.