

## IV

### THE SPANISH-AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES

**T**HE universities of Spanish America were established on models of the Spanish universities, and received, during the nineteenth century, the influence of the French universities. So, in order to understand the organization, methods, and student life of the Spanish-American universities, it is necessary to bear in mind the principal features of the mediæval universities of Spain, and, at the same time, the main characteristics of the higher institutions of modern France.

We can make a differentiation among the Spanish-American universities according to the paramount influence, either of the Colonial Spanish or the French model. The democratic spirit, the autonomy of the institution, the importance of studies of theology and philosophy or letters, and entire independence from the state, are features of the Spanish universities, while centralization of studies, the control of the government and, therefore, some restrictions in the academic life and thought, and the larger development of scientific work and research, are characteristics of the French and modern influence.

Some examples will make our statement clearer. Let us compare the University of San Marcos, giving attention to its historical background, with the universities of Montevideo, La Plata, and Mexico.

The University of San Marcos, as you know, is the oldest in the New World. Yet it is true that a college in Santo

## The Spanish-American Universities 215

Domingo was established before, and the college of San Pablo in Mexico was founded in 1520, that is, thirty years before San Marcos, but these colleges were not true universities and had not a continuous life from their beginning as the University of Lima had.

The Emperor Charles the Fifth, and his mother Jeanne la Folle, decided by the decree of May 12, 1551, to found in the town of Los Reyes a "general studium that may enjoy all the privileges, franchises, and exemptions that the city of Salamanca enjoys." And you must remember that Salamanca was the most important of the Spanish universities and one of the most famous in Europe, the sister of the universities of Paris, Oxford, and Bologna, the chief studiums in Christendom. Pope Pius the Second confirmed the establishment of the new studium "with the same faculties and privileges." Thus the University of San Marcos was at the same time royal and pontifical. In early times the studium lived under the auspices and on the site of the Dominican monastery. The famous Viceroy Francis of Toledo secularized the University, giving it twenty thousand Pesos from the Indian tributes and building up a new edifice that now belongs to the Chamber of Deputies.

The University included these faculties: Arts or Philosophy, with three chairs; Theology, with three chairs; Ecclesiastical Law, with two chairs; Civil Law and Medicine. Soon after, two colleges were established, the college of San Felipe, and the college of San Martin. At the same time, the different monasteries started colleges of their own, and founded different chairs in the Faculty of Theology, in order to spread the knowledge of the doctrines of their beloved fathers or doctors. By means of these chairs, the theological disputes between Franciscans and Dominicans and Jesuits were introduced into Lima and covered the

largest period of the University during the colonial time. New chairs were created: moral theology, mathematics, old digest, master of sentences, method of Galleno and anatomy. Thus at the beginning of the eighteenth century the University of Lima had the complete scheme of a true university. At this time there lived the famous Peralta y Barnuevo, who was at once mathematician, cosmographer, poet, historian, and lawyer. He was the most important man the University had ever produced, the true representative type of Spanish science and erudition.

What strikes the attention of the student is the democratic organization of the University in spite of the monarchic and absolute régime to which the Spanish colonies were subjected. The sovereignty of the University was vested in a body made up of the professors and graduates or alumni, called "el claustro," that is, the cloister or Assembly. This Assembly elected every year the rector and two councilors. The students had a part in the government of the institution, and they elected another two councilors. So the University of Lima, like its model, the University of Salamanca, was a self-governing corporation composed of professors, alumni, and students.

What a contrast to the organization of your universities, in which the President and Board of Trustees, a restricted and powerful body formed by rich and high-class men, has the control of the institution.

The system of appointing the professors is even more interesting. It was so picturesque and had such an influence in the colonial life, that it deserves some attention.

When a chair was vacant, the faculties called for candidates, whose only necessary qualification was possession of the doctor's degree. Each candidate was obliged to hold a public debate of about a hundred and fifty propositions

## The Spanish-American Universities 217

concerning the subject of the chair. These debates took place before the Assembly of professors, alumni, and students, and acquired very soon the character of not only a scientific contest, but also the character of political and social struggles. The Assembly was often divided into different parties that fought each other with earnestness, thus producing a tremendous hullabaloo and even material turmoil. The professors were elected by popular vote. In order to prevent these disorders, so picturesque and so democratic at the same time, the King decided to restrict the vote in these contests to a small body composed of the highest officers ecclesiastical and civil of the colony: the Archbishop, the Dean of the Cathedral, the Rector of the University, the Dean of the Faculty, the senior Judge of the Tribunal, the Chancellor of the Cathedral, who was at the same time the Chancellor of the University, and the President of the Inquisition.

But the University could not yield to this disposition. It was very jealous of its democratic organization and privileges, and after some remonstrances, strongly supported, it obtained from the King another decree giving the vote to the professors in each faculty and twenty-five alumni and students. This measure did not satisfy the proud and self-conscious University. It caused another remonstrance and the vote was conferred on alumni and students, the number of whom varied in the different faculties.

That was the régime that lasted until the War of Independence.

At the middle of the eighteenth century, the University was in decadency. The instruction was practically given in the monastery colleges. The University was a rather

formal institution, the assembly and the receptions and the degrees absorbing its life.

The suppression and banishment of the Jesuits who had the control of the chief colleges afforded an opportunity to introduce radical reforms in the organization and methods of the ancient University. King Charles the Third, who had as advisers the most remarkable men of his time, true scholars well acquainted with French ideas and entirely inspired by the philosophy of the enlightenment, refounded the ancient colleges of San Felipe and San Martín, thus making a new college called San Carlos.

The committee, whose task was to make some use of the estates and properties belonging to the Jesuits, assumed not only this function, but also academic and scholarly functions. It planned a scheme for the organization of San Carlos and also a new programme for the University. The reform was embodied in the new college, but failed in the University, before the opposition of the conservative professors. Yet in spite of all, this reform marked the second stage of the University of Lima, because the docent body was practically San Carlos for Law, Civil Law and Ecclesiastical Law and Arts. The University kept only a formal and artificial life.

The reform established rigid discipline of the college life, in contrast with the democratic and liberal life of the great part of the student body of the ancient University. But in compensation it introduced new methods and chiefly new ideas. Instead of the scholastic philosophy, San Carlos taught the Cartesian philosophy; instead of the Aristotelian physics, the ideas and theories of Newton were explained; and besides Roman and ecclesiastical law, it devoted also some attention to Spanish law and chiefly to American law by studying the *Recopilacion de Indias*. It

## The Spanish-American Universities 219

is possible to point out two tendencies in the new college of San Carlos: the first concerning the new philosophical and scientific ideas and the second concerning Spanish and American institutions.

It is true that the college of San Carlos was not governed by the alumni, nor were the professors any longer elected in the earlier democratic fashion. The establishment of a new college of medicine in San Fernando achieved in this faculty the same reforms that were attained in San Carlos, regarding the studies of law and philosophy.

When the War of Independence came, in spite of the overthrow of all colonial institutions, the University was preserved, chiefly through the colleges of San Carlos and San Fernando. The Republican Congress, after the Declaration of Independence, met on the site of the ancient University and for many years the formal life of the University began to lessen, and almost disappeared. But the students' life and work continued in the ancient college. In the forties, a remarkable man, Don Bartolome Herrera, was appointed Rector of San Carlos. Under his influence, the philosophy of the enlightenment was replaced by the political ideas of the French doctrinaires and the neo-Catholic philosophers of Spain. The influence of Herrera marks the third period of the University, which we call the doctrinaire period.

In the sixties, the need of reorganization of the University was felt. There arose at this time the idea of uniting the different and separated bodies into which the ancient university had disintegrated: the school of medicine, or college of San Fernando, the school of theology, or college of Santo Toribio, the school of law and philosophy, or college of San Carlos. According to this plan the University was designated as a central institution composed of different

faculties. The ancient faculty of arts was divided, following the French idea, into two faculties: sciences and letters. The faculty of ecclesiastical law was suppressed, and the rigid discipline and autocratic government of the college was abolished. The system of public debates and the election after those debates was reestablished, conferring the vote only on the professors of the faculty. The reform of 1861 or 1866 was inspired at the same time by the ancient constitution of the University and the French model. But the most important aspect of these reforms was the foundation of a new college, the college of Guadalupe, which was not doctrinaire or conservative, but progressive and liberal, and during some years the youth were subject to the contradictory influences of the conservatives of San Carlos and the liberals of Guadalupe. At the end, young professors, educated in Guadalupe, took paramount influence in the faculties of letters and science, and this influence marks the liberal period of the University. In the year 1876 a new law completed the reorganization of the University by the creation of a new faculty, the faculty of political science, and by the establishment of new courses. This law emphasized also the influence of the University council, elected by the different faculties. The new University of San Marcos was an independent body composed of the professors of the different faculties, the alumni having lost their influence and the students their participation in the government and in the appointment of the professors.

The secondary school remained under the control of the government. The University had only certain influence through its representatives on the Council of Public Instruction. The new law of 1901 abolishing this council, extinguished the feeble ties between the University and

## The Spanish-American Universities 221

the secondary school, and put these schools under the absolute control of the government.

In spite of this reform and the creation of the faculty of science, the University of San Marcos during the Republic had retained in the main the features of the colonial university. They were independence regarding the State and the paramount position of philosophical and juridical studies. The school of engineers and the school of arts and trades were created as independent institutions. The faculty of science was not well equipped and could make no use of experimental and practical methods. There was no research work and for some years this faculty was practically the preparatory stage of the faculty of medicine, in much the same sense as the faculty of letters was preparatory to the faculty of law.

The secondary school comprehended in its programme six years of studies, but under the reform of 1904 this training was reduced to four years. The idea was to give to the secondary school the character of preparation for life and business. The students that wished to follow professional careers ought to enter the faculties of science or letters, before matriculation in the faculties of law or medicine. So in the new universities, we have not your institution of "the college," that existed during the colonial time and the early years of the Republic. The task of your college is performed practically in our faculties of science and letters, and only for two years instead of four. From this point of view there is more similarity between our colonial institution and your college than between the modern Spanish universities and American universities.

In spite of the French influence in the reforms of the University of San Marcos, there existed a main difference between our institution and the Napoleonic university. We

have kept the entire autonomy of the university in the academic and economic fields, while the French university is still a dependency of the Minister of Public Instruction.

These main characteristics, supported by its historical and traditional prestige, have given to the University of Lima a paramount position in the Peruvian social, intellectual, and political life. The University has been the centre of new ideas and reforms. It has educated the leading class of the country, has maintained the cult of liberal and democratic principles, and has defended academic freedom and economic autonomy against all régimes.

And now, the University of Lima is passing the acid test. The present government of Peru, perhaps the only instance of dictatorship in our history, on account of the criticism of its policy on the part of certain professors in the University, has threatened the freedom of the University. The professors decided to suspend the faculty until the government should give satisfaction to the offended institution by declaring acceptance of and respect for full academic freedom. Instead of granting this satisfaction, the government has declared the chairs vacant, and has attempted to build up another university under its control. No professional man, and there are many thousands in Peru, has accepted the chairs offered by the government. There is a consciousness among the university people of Peru that the University can live only with entire academic freedom and entire independence from executive control. Democratic traditions, liberal ideals, and new principles have in the University of San Marcos a true stronghold.

The representative type of modern university in Spanish America is the University of Montevideo. It is supported by the state and is practically a branch of the Ministry of Public Instruction. The University comprehends a faculty

## The Spanish-American Universities 223

of commerce and a faculty of agriculture and veterinary science. There is no faculty of humanities or philosophy in Montevideo.

In the University of La Plata we can remark the same tendencies towards scientific and practical studies. The University of Mexico is also a government institution and lacks the economic and academic autonomy that characterize the type of university to which the University of San Marcos belongs.

There are some instances of privately endowed universities in Spanish America, like the Catholic University of Chile. This University has neither the democratic character of the colonial university, nor the absolute submission of the official universities. In spite of the differences between the several types of universities, a principal feature common to all of them is the rôle they play in the intellectual, social, and political life of Spanish America. It is possible to say that the universities, official or free, are the chief organs of intellectual culture in Spanish America and have through the education of the leading men of the future a paramount influence in the destinies of these countries.

Let us consider along general lines the problem of the secondary school. For many years, we in Spanish America have considered the secondary school merely as a preparatory stage for higher education following the ideas of colonial times. The development of a middle class, and the progress of commerce and industry, requiring general rather than special training, gave to educators a correct conception concerning the rôle of the secondary school. The notion that the secondary school should give general preparation for life and business was spread everywhere. At the same time it had to be borne in mind that young men

seeking professional careers had to receive secondary instruction superior to such general training as was sufficient for business and practical life. An attempt to conciliate these two purposes of the secondary school gave rise to the idea of creating two types of high schools, elementary schools (high) and superior high schools (under the Argentine law, Liceos, and under the Chilean law, "Colegios"). The elementary high schools in Argentine comprehend four years and the superior high schools two years more, in which Latin and philosophy have chief place among the studies.

Other countries, for example, Uruguay and Peru, established secondary schools of four years. In Uruguay, this type of school is flexible, the programme varying from place to place, while in Peru a new law has extended the period to five years.

The type of secondary school in Peru and Uruguay corresponds to the elementary school of Argentine. Preparation for professional careers takes place in the University, namely, in the faculty of letters in Lima, and in a section adjoined to each faculty, in the University of Uruguay. This preparatory section now corresponds to the American college, philosophy and literature being preparatory to the law, and natural sciences to a professional course in medicine. The principal problem in secondary education is the status of the teacher. Teaching in secondary schools was not a distinct career in Spanish America. The teachers devoted only a part of their time and attention to classes. Argentine and Chile have been the first countries to establish reforms in this direction. The pedagogic institute of Santiago, the normal school of Buenos Aires, and the pedagogical section of the University of La Plata, prepare young students for teaching in secondary schools. In Peru

## The Spanish-American Universities 225

there is a strong current towards the establishment of a normal superior school along the lines of the ancient faculty of letters.

The rich countries in Spanish America have introduced practical methods and experimental work in the secondary school. This example has been followed to a certain extent by other countries, but in spite of all it is possible to say that philosophical and literary studies have still a larger place in the Spanish-American schools.

A comparison of the higher institutions of the United States and Spanish America reveals three chief differences: first, the marked importance of philosophical and literary studies in South America, and the lack of attention to practical studies; second, the absence in Spanish American schools of enthusiasm for physical training and devotion to field sports; third, the sharp separation of the sexes in high school education and the small number of women in attendance at the universities.

In these three respects, we need in Spanish America the sane and stimulating influence of the United States.