

A SPANIARD ON THE UNITY OF SPANISH-SPEAKING PEOPLES

IN a recent number of *España Moderna* (Madrid) there appeared an article by Señor Pío Ballesteros, dealing with certain aspects of the respective relations of the United States and Spain with the South and Central American republics. The writer begins by calling attention to the gradual though belated awakening of Spaniards and Spanish-Americans to a sense of their close relationship. On this point he remarks:

Any observer of moderate intelligence who directs his view beyond our frontiers must note with genuine satisfaction, if he be patriotic, the tendency toward a moral approximation with our brothers across the sea. At first sight, it may seem strange that the production of so natural a phenomenon should have been delayed for so many years; but, strictly speaking, this has been due to the almost total ignorance among Spaniards regarding things American. He whom we do not know, we do not like. From the Spanish-American republics no news reached us except of occurrences whose striking importance caused them to be reported far and wide, and it has rarely happened that we learned anything regarding the moral or material progress of these lands, an order of facts too often disdained by those who only value what is sensational. Therefore, we have had news of wars, of assassinations, of disasters; but we have heard little or nothing of noble deeds, of political progress, of the advance of scientific culture, or of the elevation of the social level. In a word, we have known less of Spanish America than we have of the countries of Asia.

The writer proceeds to analyze the causes of this state of affairs, and attributes it in part to the frequent constitutional changes and political vicissitudes in Spain, which have left Spaniards but little time or inclination to study the development of other lands. Moreover, Spain's administration of the colonies remaining to her after 1823 was of the same character as that which had induced the revolt of her South and Central American colonies. These circumstances at once prevented Spaniards from gaining an acquaintance with South American politics, and caused Spain to be viewed askance by the young republics.

However, in spite of all this, "deep down in the hearts of both Spaniards and Spanish Americans, there is a strong though undefined consciousness of the brotherhood of the Spanish race."

Of Spain's failure, during such a long period, to properly appreciate the true significance of this and its transcendent importance, Señor Ballesteros writes as follows:

Spain, all unconsciously, was neglecting the heritage that neither one nor a hundred insurrections could take from her, the survival of these three primal elements: community of descent, of traditions, and of language. The first of these produces like sentiments, passions, and ideals; the second comprises the most profound element of civilization; the third, the sum and compendium of the others, is one of the greatest and most potent stimulants to union. Through his language, the Spanish-American can look upon Spain as his own country, and the Spanish emigrant, in his turn, does not have to struggle with that painful sense of isolation which arises when a foreigner no longer hears the accents of his mother tongue.

In Señor Ballesteros' opinion, it is Spain's failure to appreciate the true value of these elements of union that has given the United States an opportunity to pose as the elder sister of the Latin-American republics.

The conception of Spanish unity offered by Señor Ballesteros is presented in a somewhat more philosophical form by Prof. Vincente Gay, in the same issue of *España Moderna*. Professor Gay sees in the future the development of a new phase of Spanish life and thought, one that will include the Portuguese peoples of the mother country and of Brazil. This he denominates "Iberianism," and he indicates the necessary conditions for its evolution as follows:

A more intense spiritual current, traversing these peoples, a more active and generous effort, especially on the part of their representative intellects, will bring to light all that is now latent in the souls of the Iberians. Thus an ideal will be defined, which can only gain form by the constant and conscious effort of the race.