

Andrés Bello 1781-1865

Selected Writings

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Allocution to Poetry (excerpt)
(1823)

Divine poetry, you who dwell in solitude,²
taught to enwrap your songs
in the shady forest's silence,
you who lived in the green grotto
and had for company the mountain's echo;
it is time for you to leave effete Europe,
no lover of your native rustic charms,
and fly to where Columbus's world
opens its great scene before your eyes.
There heaven respects the laurel, ever green
with which you crown men's valor.
There too the flowering meadow,
the tangled wood, the twisting river,
offer a thousand colors to your brush,
and Zephyr flits among the roses,
and shining stars spangle night's chariot.
The king of heaven rises, among bright curtains
of pearly clouds; and little birds
sweetly sing songs of love in tones unlearned.
Oh, sylvan nymph, what have you to do
with pomps of gilded royal palaces?

Will you too go there with the courtesan crowd
to offer the foolish incense of servile flattery?
You were not thus in your most beauteous days,
when in the infancy of humankind,
teacher of peoples and of kings,
you sang its first laws to the world.
Oh goddess, do not stay
in that region of wretchedness and light,
where your ambitious rival, Philosophy,
subjecting virtue to calculation,
stripped you of mortals' worship,
where the crowned hydra menaces,
bringing anew to enslaved thought
the old night of savagery and crime;
where freedom is called vain delirium,
faith servility, and pomp greatness,
and corruption bears the name of culture.
Take from the rotted oak your golden lyre
with which you sweetly sang to spellbound men
of meadows and flowers, of the whisper
of the dark forest, the tranquil murmur
of the transparent stream,
and innocent Nature's fresh allure.
Spreading your diaphanous wings,
over the vast Atlantic go,
to other heavens, other folk, another world,
where earth still wears its ancient dress,
and man has scarcely conquered it;
America, the sun's young bride,
last daughter of old Ocean,
where the riches of all other climes
grow and flourish in her fertile breast.

What abode awaits you? what high peak,
what pleasant meadow, what secluded wood,
will be your home? On what happy shore
will your gold sandal first be placed?
By the bright river which first saw

the heroes of Albion humbled?
Where the blue flags
of Buenos Aires flutter, and it proudly brings
the tribute of a hundred mighty rivers
to the astonished sea?
Or where the double peak
of Avila is wrapped in clouds,
and Losada's city is reborn?
Or will the valleys of fortunate Chile,
smile more upon you, beloved Muse?
They bring forth golden harvests and sweet fruits,
where innocence and ingenuous candor dwell
and old-world hospitality combines
with courage and with love of country?
Or shall it be the city that the eagle, perched
upon the cactus, showed the wandering Aztecs,
and its rich soil of endless veins of ore
that almost sated Europe's greed?
The southern sea's beautiful queen,
whose daughters Nature gave a dowry
of grace, offers you a home
under her mild skies, where rains
do not disturb, nor turbulent winds.
Or will you come to rest in lofty Quito,
seated between the snowy peaks,
hearing the storms rage under your feet,
and drinking in clear air to match
your heavenly inspiration?
But listen where the thundering Bogotá,
leaps between sheer rock walls.
Wrapped in a white cloud of vapors
shimmering with rainbow tints,
it seeks the valleys of the Magdalena.
There memories of earlier days
await your lyre; when in sweet idleness
and happy, native innocence,
Cundinamarca's dwellers lived an easy life,
first children of her fertile breast,

before the curving plow deflowered the ground,
or foreign ship had seen her far-off coasts.

100 Ambition had not yet honed her horrid knife;
and man, not yet degenerate, sought refuge
under the dark roofs of caves and woods
that gave him safe and wholesome shelter.
Land had no master, fields were undivided,
towns had no walls, and without laws
105 freedom thrived, and all
was peace, content, and joy.

Then beautiful Huitaca, goddess of the waters
jealous of so much joy, submerged the valley,
making the Bogotá arise and drown it.

110 A remnant of that unhappy folk
took refuge in the mountains, and the rest
were buried in the ravenous abyss.
You will sing of how the dreadful fate
of his almost extinct race

115 roused Nenquetebe's anger, the Sun's son,
who with his divine scepter broke
the stony mountain, opening
a channel for the waves.

The mighty Bogotá, which once
spread its vast lake from peak to peak,
scorning the prison of its narrow banks,
assailed them furiously, and hurled
its waters through the breach.

125 You will sing how Nenquetebe, tenderly,
imparted laws and arts and faith,
and how he changed the wicked nymph
into night's lamp, and how the moon,
her silver coach, first crossed Olympus.

Then come to celebrate the marvels
130 of the equator, sing of gorgeous sky
made joyous by the chorus of the stars,
where the vast dragon of the North
curls his gold tail around the moveless star

135 that points the brave sailor's way,
and the white dove of Arauco
dips her wing in southern waves.

If you prepare your richest colors,
if you take up your best of brushes,
you can paint climes that keep entire
140 their old primordial vigor at the time
when God's omnipotent voice,
heard in the abyss of chaos,
swelled the earth, newly created
out of the void, and covered it
with verdure and with life.

145 Eternal forests, who presumes to name or number
the vast crowds of your green labyrinths,
whose various forms, and height, and dress
seem to make boast of all their being?
Ceibas, acacias, myrtles now entwine,
and reeds and vines and grasses too.
From branch to branch, they all

perpetual warfare make, struggling to reach
the light and sun, and in the ground
155 their roots grow thick and crowded.

Oh, pleasant Poetry, who would not go
with you to Cauca's banks, to breathe
the soft air of her eternal Spring,

160 where she has built her kingdom and her court!
Or if, once freed from care, I might traverse
Aragua's pleasant banks and wander there,
or maybe recline in the green shade
of a palm tree on the plain, and watch,

165 oh Southern Cross, your four bright lights,
burn in the azure dome, which mark
the errant traveler's nightly hours
through the vast solitude.

Would I could see the firefly's gleam
cutting the dusky air, and from the far-off inn
170 hear the yaravi's amorous cry.

A time will come when by your inspiration,
 goddess, an American Vergil will arise
 to sing of harvest and of flocks,
 the rich soil overcome by man,
 the thousand gifts with which the Torrid Zone
 beloved of Phoebus, crowns its children's toil.
 Where sugar cane bears its white honey
 and cactus grows its carmine buds,
 where cotton nods its snowy head
 and pineapple ripens its ambrosia.
 The palm tree yields its varied fruits;
 the plum tree gives its sugared globes,
 the avocado butter, indigo its dye.
 The banana droops under its sweet burden,
 and coffee concentrates the odor
 of its white blooms, and cocoa
 ripens its bean in purple urns.

But ah! do you prefer to sing the horrors
 of impious war, and to the beat of drums
 that fright the maternal breast, depict
 armies that hasten to their doom
 and soak the soil with mourning?
 Would that you offered a less fertile theme
 my fatherland, for warlike melodies!
 What city and what field have not been bathed
 with your sons' blood, and Spaniards' too?
 What bleak plain has not offered human limbs
 to feed the condor, and what rustic homes,
 remote enough to escape fierce civil strife,
 could shun its fury?
 But love of country worked no miracle in Rome,
 or Sparta the austere, Numancia generous.
 Muse, no other page of history gives
 more lofty deeds to supply your song.
 What province will accept your praise,
 what man will first receive the prize?

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*On the Aims of Education and
the Means of Promoting It*

(1836)

E ducation, that exercise of early childhood which prepares human beings to play in the theater of the world the role that Fate holds in store for them, is what teaches us our duties to society as members of it, as well as our duties to ourselves if we wish to attain the highest degree of well-being of which the human condition is capable.' Our aim, in forming a man's heart and spirit, is to secure good things and avoid bad ones, for the individual and others like him. Hence we can think of education as the exercise of the faculties most likely to promote human happiness.

Man's peculiar characteristic is his receptivity to progressive improvement. Education, which enriches his spirit with ideas and adorns his heart with virtues, is an effective means of promoting his progress; and the more truly and rapidly he makes that progress, the more likely it is that man, the only being on the face of the globe capable of progress, will fulfill his destiny completely. If education is necessary, and if it must be perfected through reforms suggested by observation of the human heart, then it becomes a question as important as the question of whether it is necessary to promote the happiness of mankind, and to enable man to attain as fully as possible all the aims intended by his Maker at the time of his creation.

Under any type of government there is equal need to be educated, because whatever the political system of a nation may be, its individuals

have duties to perform with regard to it, to their families, and to themselves. But in no nation is the obligation to protect this important branch of social prosperity greater than in republican governments. For, as reason tells us and a number of writers have observed (among them Montesquieu in particular) in no type of association is education more important than in republics. In every society, the aim of its members is the achievement of general happiness. Republican governments are simultaneously representatives and agents of the national will, and because as such they must follow the impulses of that will, they can never be exempt from directing all their strength to achievement of the great object toward which that will is moving, by rendering individuals useful both to themselves and to their fellow men through education. In addition, the representative democratic system prepares all its members to participate more or less directly in its affairs; and nations could not progress at all politically unless education were sufficiently widespread to endow each person with real knowledge of his duties and rights. Failing this, it is impossible to carry out those duties, or to endow those rights with sufficient value to make us try to preserve them.

But not all members of society need have the same education, though it is essential that all have some, for each person has a different way of contributing to the common weal. No matter how much equality is established by political institutions, there nevertheless exists in all peoples an inequality that I will not call inequality of rank (which can never exist among members of a republic, especially with regard to participation in public rights). There is, however, an inequality of condition, of needs, of style of life. Education must adjust itself to these differences in order to achieve the useful ends to which it is applied. A number of writers, among them Locke in particular, despite their interest in improving the human race, have thought of education solely as a precious gift reserved for the upper classes, if we may be permitted to so describe that group of persons who, owing to the greater gifts of Fortune or their parents' habits, engage in the scientific professions, the management of private interests, or the exercise of public office. But to deprive the less well-to-do classes of this benefit is not only an injustice, it is absurd, for all persons have an equal right to well-being and all must contribute to the general welfare. These classes, as the most numerous and the most needy, require the protection of government to instruct their youth. But because their social needs are different and

their way of life has different means and different aims, they must also be given an education in harmony with this special situation. The times have long passed when intelligence was denied to the masses and the human race was divided into oppressors and oppressed.

It is very easy to think that all men are capable of an equal breadth of knowledge; but since there should only be a question of giving each man sufficient knowledge to attain the happiness he desires in his station in life, the question must be limited to the knowledge most useful for him.

It is universally recognized that one of the principles of the common weal is that there must be as few poor people as possible. Their comforts undoubtedly increase with their dedication to lucrative work; but, though that work is the source of their well-being, it is not so restrictive as to prevent the acquisition of useful knowledge and the exercise of the mind. The first years of life are the most appropriate to achieve this useful aim. Even considering the need to offer advantages to productive labor, it would be preferable for a child not to engage in them up to a certain age, until his faculties have developed completely. For man, like all animals, cannot produce all the usefulness of which he is capable if premature dedication to labor prevents him from acquiring the strength and maturity required of him. Without these qualities, that same labor would be harmful to production, to the economy, and to health, though it is a source of prosperity when undertaken after the earliest years. But if this precious period of life, during which man's arm is as yet unproductive, is used to enlighten his mind, to restrain his passions, and to inspire him with love for his work and instill habits of virtue, the occupations that will later supply all his needs for sustenance will become incomparably more useful both to society and to himself.

Of the two branches in which education can be divided—namely formation of the heart and enlightenment of the spirit—the first of these fundamental principles can only be owed to domestic education. Impressions of infancy exercise a power over all people which usually decides their habits, their inclinations, and their character. And since the period when these impressions establish their sway is precisely that period when we know no guides to conduct other than our parents, it is obvious that we owe to them this part of the exercise of our faculties, which would come too late were it delayed to the age when we were

ready to receive public education. During the first periods of the regeneration of a people, and a regeneration such as we Americans have experienced, it is almost impossible to achieve perfection in guiding the human heart during childhood. There are vices in our customs; virtues are more a matter of instinct than of persuasion, and this moral situation does not permit domestic education to hold to fixed rules whose application assures success. But, if the generations are successively improved with the help of public education, it is not difficult to predict that the day will come when we can generally make a beneficent and philosophical use of parental authority.

As for public education, we need not ponder the matter very deeply to discover, as I have already said, that it must not be confined to preparing men for different kinds of literary careers and for the highest professions; for it is not only the welfare of a small portion of society that must be promoted. Placing it within the reach of all young persons, no matter what their aptitudes and type of life, encouraging them to acquire it and aiding this acquisition by a large number of establishments and uniformity of methods, are effective means of giving education an impulse that will best benefit the nation's prosperity. After our emancipation, this is one of the most important reforms. When we were educated only to obey, we lacked intellectual needs. But once elevated to a political hierarchy worthy of man's nature, we have seen those needs come into being along with our social transformation, and we observe that civilization daily broadens their scope.

At first glance it seems difficult to make public instruction sufficiently widespread to render it accessible to all classes. But what obstacles exist in any society that cannot be smoothed away by laws adjusted to the character, the personality, the needs, and the moral condition of each nation? We must also recognize that, fortunately, we live in a century in which we do not have to abandon ourselves to the inspirations of genius to reform our nations, but have examples to follow and can call solid experience to our aid.

No matter how numerous the less well-to-do class in our society may be, educating it is fortunately not a task beyond our powers. At first it may be difficult to get parents to give up their children spontaneously for the purpose of acquiring assets of whose advantages they are unaware. But are there not any number of pressures that could be applied to oblige them to make this sacrifice, which would only be considered

as such until the first results began to show? After that, education would be an indispensable need, and it would be easy to fill the schools with pupils. In Prussia, thanks to such efforts, hardly a child can be found in its national territory who does not know how to read and write.

To make instruction general and at the same time uniform, nothing is more obvious and effective than the creation of teacher-training schools. By cultivating the perfection and simplicity of teaching methods in these schools, and then distributing the best-trained students throughout the Republic like so many apostles of civilization, young people everywhere would find the same means of acquiring this very important advantage, and would be prepared from an early age to engage in the kind of labor that would give them the resources to make a living. In a number of places in Europe, and more particularly in northern Germany, establishments of this kind are being promoted with very great success.

The scope of knowledge acquired in these schools, built for the impoverished classes, should go no further than what their needs require. Anything more would not only be useless but actually harmful, for besides exposing them to ideas that would not be of proven value in the course of their lives, young people would stray too far from productive labors. Well-to-do persons—who acquire instruction as a sort of luxury and engage in professions that require more study—possess other means of acquiring a broader and more careful education, in schools intended for this purpose.

As for the ideas that must be acquired by that large proportion of a people which owes its livelihood to the sweat of its brow, and which is fully worthy of the protection of governments and should be considered as one of the chief instruments of the common weal, the question presents no difficulties. The principles of our [Catholic] religion must necessarily occupy first place, for without them we could not have a standard to guide our actions, one which, by putting the brake of morality on the heart's wild impulses, enables us to perform our duties to God, to men, and to ourselves.

No matter what method we adopt, we cannot omit relations with other individuals; and since the spoken word alone is insufficient for cultivation of these relations, the ability to read and write is a necessity for all men, who without this aid would also lack the means to preserve, in safety and order, the few or many affairs in which they will engage.

How can such affairs be trusted exclusively to the weak and fallible processes of memory?

Reading and writing cannot be learned except very imperfectly if the study of grammar is not added to them. And they cannot be expected to render all their usefulness in the exercise of any profession if, content with the above subjects, we should omit arithmetic. This branch of knowledge, one of the most important in education because it is the one most constantly and frequently applied to men's activities, cannot be ignored without its lack being felt at every step in life; from the largest and most extensive mercantile speculations to the poorest and humblest branches of industry, all need its help.

Perhaps it would be too much to ask in the infancy of our nations, but it would certainly be a pleasure to lovers of our country's prosperity were we not to limit ourselves to the acquisition of these very necessary subjects and were to enrich popular education with other ideas—ideas perhaps not indispensable in the ordinary course of life, but which elevate the soul and offer the means to occupy usefully those moments free of the tasks that form our chief occupation and constitute the happiness of many moments in our existence. Among these ideas we might include, as the most advantageous, some principles of astronomy and geography, not taught in the depth of which these branches of knowledge are capable and which require knowledge of other scientific elements, but in brief compendia and in the form of axioms and information. Also a few scant notions of history that would impart some knowledge of the world in past centuries, and the chief events that have taken place since its creation. Even if these limited ideas did no more than to arouse curiosity, and encourage the love of reading to satisfy it, a positive good would have been done to the people. How many hours sinfully sacrificed to vices, or lost in idleness, could be employed in useful recreation! Perhaps these indications seem suggested by a desire that is exaggerated and impossible of achievement; but it would be very easy to convince oneself that there is no exaggeration or fantasy in this, if we consider that even in many places in India, English missionaries have given all this latitude, and more, to the education of the poorest classes.

But though these branches of instruction, because not a prime necessity, could be omitted in the early stages of our social transforma-

tion, the same must not occur with knowledge of our political duties and rights. Ruled by a popular, representative system, each person forms part of the people in whom sovereignty resides. And it is very difficult or impossible to behave correctly in this social position if we are ignorant of what we can demand of society and what society can demand of us. Hence the study of the Constitution must form an integral part of general education, not with the depth necessary to acquire full knowledge of constitutional law, but merely committing its articles to memory in order to grasp the organization of the political body to which we belong. Without this we can never perform our functions as its members, nor can we have the enthusiasm that we ought to feel about the preservation of our rights, nor will we ever see lighted that public spirit which is one of the principles of the vitality of nations.

On such an important matter, the vigilance of governments can never be too great. Promoting public establishments intended for only a small part of the people fails to promote education, for it does not suffice merely to form men who are skilled in the higher professions. We must form useful citizens, we must improve society, and this cannot be achieved without opening the area of progress to the largest part of that society. What good will it do to have orators, jurists, and statesmen, if the mass of the people live submerged in the night of ignorance and cannot cooperate, insofar as they are able, in the management of affairs, or in the expansion of wealth, or attain that well-being which the vast majority of a people deserve? Not to concentrate on the most appropriate means of educating that mass would mean not to care about our country's prosperity. We will wait in vain for the great mercantile companies, the improvements in industry, the cultivation of all branches of production, to give us rich sources of wealth if men do not dedicate themselves from their earliest years to acquiring the knowledge necessary for the profession they wish to embrace. And, stemming from the habit of keeping busy that they contracted early in life, they must be prepared not to look upon work as tedious. The impressions formed in childhood exercise an irresistible power over us, and often decide our happiness. It is difficult for anyone who has passed this beautiful period of life sunk in abandonment, who did not learn in childhood to stifle his natural inclination to idleness, and who failed to create the need to employ several hours of the day, not to regard work with horror later on, and to prefer poverty to achieving ease and comforts that he thinks too costly if the price is the sweat of his brow. With persons of this kind, can there be morality, can there be wealth, can there be prosperity?

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American Congress

(1844)

I

We do not find convincing the objections to the plan for a congress that would represent all the new states on this continent and would discuss and regulate their common international interests.⁵ We will admit at the outset that there was a time when those objections bore some weight with us. We looked upon the idea as a beautiful utopia, sterile of practical consequences for our America. Today we are of a different opinion. Let us suppose that the undertaking will not produce all the results that we anticipate. If some are achieved, this alone would justify it; and the points to which the planned congress ought to give its attention are so many, and of such importance, that the least of them would compensate for the small costs and effort necessary to bring together and organize this body. But let us imagine that the plenipotentiaries spend their time in useless discussions, and that they adjourn without having established a single beneficent institution, without settling a single stable and advantageous basis for action. What would we have lost? The expenses of a mission that would perhaps have been necessary for other reasons. Chile, for instance, in any case must have a representative in Lima. Bolivia, Ecuador, and New Granada are in the same situation. The other states have less interest in this diplomatic exchange with the southern republics, but it is undeniable that all of

them need to approach one another, observe one another, and communicate with one another. The experience of each can serve the others; the mutual contact of nations, even were they more strange to one another, even were they linked by less strong ties, has always been one of the ways to extend and circulate civilization and enlightenment. Until now the different parts of America have been too separate from one another. Their common interests invite them to association, and nothing that can contribute to this great end is unworthy of consideration by governments, statesmen, and friends of humanity. For us, even a common language is a precious heritage that we must not squander. Were we to add to this link the tie of similar institutions, a legislation that recognizes substantially the same principles, a uniform international law, the cooperation of all the states in preserving peace and administering justice in each (of course, with the well-known and necessary restrictions having to do with individual security), would this not be an order of things worthy in every way, for the sake of which we would attempt much more difficult and costly means of achieving it than those required by the meeting of a congress of plenipotentiaries?

It is believed possible that "some points of American international law might be sanctioned," and this sanction is placed among "matters of pure form." Would recognition of the immunity of the flag, or of neutral property, or extradition of criminals who have committed horrible crimes, or forgery, or fraudulent bankruptcy—would those be matters of pure form? Would the establishment of general rules be pure form? Would rules to help litigants in one state acquire proofs in another, to assure that sentences in the official courts of Chile would be carried out in New Granada [Colombia] or Mexico, to establish the rights of succession of Mexicans or New Granadans to inheritances in Chile, and vice versa; that in the case of rival claims, spread over two or more territories, competence and method of procedure would be defined in the most equitable and impartial way for all concerned? These are some of the points of international law on which it would not be very difficult to agree; and certainly, decisions that may be made about them do not seem to us to be such insignificant things that they deserve to be called "pure form."

The Minister of Foreign Relations has indicated in his Memorandum the internal navigation of the great rivers that bathe several different states. One need only cast a glance at a map of South America

to see to what degree Providence has wished to ease the trade of its peoples and make them all a society of brothers. The family alliance which must unite all the nations that occupy its immense regions is stamped on our continent. But we do not regard this vast aquatic system as an exclusive possession, as solely a way of uniting Americans; opened to every trading nation on the globe, it would offer an increase in the fortunes of the entire human race, facilitating immigration and with it the populating of broad spaces that abound in precious products and are now either totally deserted or only occasionally occupied by savage tribes. With population would come the pacification and civilization of those same tribes, and with them trade, industry, and wealth for all.

The only weighty objections refer to political relations with European powers; and we are not far from agreeing that it would be dangerous to establish a basis for armed intervention in disputes that might arise between any of the confederated states and any of the great European powers. Not only would we regard it as dangerous, but also as untenable. At the same time, however, we believe that the confederation could usefully employ other means than that of open force: mediation, for example. And we believe in the efficacy of those measures without relying on anything but the self-interest of the European powers. All strong nations have abused and will continue to abuse their power; there is no congress in the world that can offer effective resistance to a law whose origin lies in man's moral constitution. But at least it is undeniable that the votes expressed by any combination of nations whose good will is not entirely indifferent to those who speculate about them and regard them as a market, will always count for more than the isolated vote of one country. Let us encourage, insofar as possible, the feelings that ought to unite us; once these are expressed, the hope that they can be considered at least up to a point, and that they will not be stirred up lightly, is not so illusory. Trade has done more to improve international relations than all other causes put together. Trade is calculating by definition, and the better it calculates its material interests, the more openly it will regard them as dependent on the cultivation of friendship and peace.

In our government's view, the congress must not interfere with the inner workings of any state. In a war between different states it could intervene as an arbiter or mediator. And for its regulations to have general sanction, it would not be necessary to resort to arms. Punitive

measures could very well perform this function, as for example suspension of commercial and war rights of the rebel state, insofar as they related to the other members of the confederation. To form an exact idea of the advisability of the project, it must be considered within the limits established quite clearly by our Foreign Minister in his Memorandum. Stating the obstacles that would be produced if these limits were overstepped does not mean refuting the project, but rather supporting it.

The fact that most of the American states do not as yet possess settled institutions is no obstacle. They do have *de facto* governments, they draw up obligatory treaties; they can, in consequence, join together. If one of them is unfortunately in a condition of complete disorganization, what prevents the others from getting together and settling their common interests without it? For Chile to preserve her neutrality and avoid aiding any of the political parties that are making war in another state, to prevent *émigrés* from abusing the hospitality they are being given in her territory by organizing armed expeditions in Chile against some of the governments with which we are at peace, she needs only to act as she has done up till now, without becoming a criminal in the eyes of a congress in case the political *émigrés* might have escaped the government's vigilance. But would it not be desirable, if Chile's conduct is based on sound principles, to have other governments adopt them, and to make them obligatory for all? If Chile violated a rule once she had established it, she certainly would be a criminal before the congress; that is, she would be responsible for her acts, just as any nation that has infringed its promises is responsible to those with whom it has signed them. There would be nothing new in this, unless it might be said that we ought not to sign any treaty simply to avoid the responsibility of observing it. But even so we would have natural obligations to fulfill—abstract, vague obligations—to which only pacts can give a precise form. Every nation is responsible for its conduct toward other nations, and one of the great benefits that we could promise ourselves from a federation would be precisely this: determining that natural responsibility and replacing general theories with practical and concrete rules.

The congress, some say, will bring the aid of force to all *de facto* governments and to all tyrants; it will expel the *émigrés*; it will ban them from legitimate use of the press. Does this not amount to believing

that the congress will not know its mission? Does this not mean attributing to it principles and bases very different from those that the Minister has indicated? Does it not mean presupposing a different congress from the one that is envisaged? If these presuppositions were found to be true, there would be no congress, for Chile and the other governments who think as we do would refuse to join an immoral alliance from which nothing good could be expected. The congress can cooperate for peace and external order without becoming the instrument of persecutions and rancor; and if the mere possibility of abuse were a reason, we would have to destroy all institutions, for there is not one that could not be abused if one of them harbored sinister intentions, undermined constitutional guarantees, and flagrantly defied public opinion.

2

After considering the objections that have been made to the idea of an American congress in the abstract, let us briefly examine those being raised against the plan sketched out in the Foreign Minister's Memorandum.

The title of "confederation" has seemed strange to one correspondent of *El Progreso*, for a very strange reason: because it was the title of the German Confederation of the Goths. But it was also the title of the Antifiontic Confederation, the Aquean Confederation, and the Helvetic Confederation; or rather, it was not the title of any confederation in particular, for it is an appellative noun, generally denoting an association of states for any particular end, and can apply to any imaginable association of states, good or bad, meaning one thing or another according to the adjective attached to it. Just because an association of Goths or Vandals wanted to call itself a confederation, cannot an association that is neither Gothic nor Vandal give itself the same name? And what name should it give itself to avoid incurring a similar problem? "Alliance" and "league" are words no less free of the stigma of having been connected at various times with the Inquisition and the monarchy. Nor can we understand why a confederation necessarily has to be one of absolute and not popular governments; a confederation, alliance, or league is a society of sovereign states, and where the people are sovereign the government confederates in their name, just as it

contracts and stipulates in their name in every pact between two nations. "Confederation," says the correspondent of *El Progreso*, "is not possible among governments that are still nothing and peoples which are everything, at least by the power of the mob and of anarchy." We do not understand what is meant by this. Is he trying to say that it is impossible for the governments of the new republics to confederate or join, or to form an alliance or union for some special object, by representing their respective nations? This would be like saying that the American congress, whatever the objects it may deal with, is impossible either *de facto* or *de jure*; that it is the opposite of what the author of the articles on this subject published in *El Progreso* seems to believe. After all, there is no reason to suppose that the title of the proposed league has to be the one that sounds so bad in the correspondent's ears. Our Minister has employed it, and has no choice but to continue to employ it provisionally, until that society of nations gives itself a name. He has not liked the plan for the congress because it aims "to settle domestic affairs with puerile meticulousness before settling the more important ones that result from contact with the world, and which are frequently disturbed by that very contact." We would like to know what important points these are, so superior in importance to those mentioned in the Memorandum, and beg the correspondent of *El Progreso* to be so kind as to tell us what they are. Do not the rights of peace and war, of belligerents and neutrals, of refuge and asylum, of navigation on the great rivers that cross, or form the borders, of different states, arise from contact with the world? Do not the border police pertain directly to contact with the world? Are not the property and family rights that the citizen of one state can possess in the territory of another state things on which the legislations of the different states are not only in contact but in conflict, and which can be, and often are, disturbed by that same contact and conflict? Chile, like each of the other states, can undoubtedly settle some (not all) of these points by her own laws, and that is why the writer of the article thought of them as material for domestic legislation. But what Chile can do at home does not suffice: Chile wants the rules that she applies to citizens of other nations in her territory to be applied to Chilean citizens in the territory of those other nations, or, if her rules are not sufficiently just and liberal, wants others to be promulgated so that there can be fraternal reciprocity among all the countries. This is an object not covered by civil legislation, and must be settled precisely by international

pacts. Absolutely speaking, each state can establish the border police that it thinks best; but to how many disputes, how many complaints, can the rules that she establishes give rise, and justly give rise? And how to avoid those disputes, unless the nations come to agreements to settle them? So true is it that what the correspondent of *El Progreso* calls the objects of civil legislation also belong to international relations (or, to use his phrase, contact with the world) that there is scarcely one of them that is not found today even in elementary works of international law.

We repeat that we do not see points of importance greater than those pointed out in the Memorandum of Foreign Relations. We cannot understand what other great questions can result from contact with the world. We ask him to enlighten us on this matter. In a club, perhaps, the fine points of a loftier and more transcendental policy can be discussed; and so it might be that the writer of the article considers the American assembly as a club on a grand scale. When we are told what some of those points are, we will see if they are the kind that can usefully be discussed in a congress of plenipotentiaries.

Moreover, where does the correspondent of *El Progreso* get the idea that it is a question of settling the points mentioned with "puerile meticulousness"? What is there in the Minister's language that justifies such a concept? The Minister merely gives us a catalogue of topics, indicating the need to subject them to precise rules. Rules must necessarily be set down; the object of the congress can be nothing but that. But why meticulous and puerile? The European powers have subjected the navigation of their great rivers to certain regulations. Are the clauses that they contain, with the aim of protecting the navigation and trade of all nations and placing obstacles to the arbitrary behavior of each, insofar as it may injure the others, a matter of puerile meticulousness?

But the writer's scorn for the matters mentioned by the Minister on the grounds that they are merely domestic suddenly changes to horror, for they seem to him to be fraught with discord, and likely to cause horrible convulsions on a ground that he feels shaking everywhere under his feet. There is no correlation between these two charges. The writer of the article clearly recognizes that the things he referred to a short time ago as domestic are now transcendental questions, the kind that arise from contact with the world, the kind in which dreadful explosions are produced because of that very contact. And he is right about this, but not about the consequence that he deduces from this principle.

Because of the very delicacy of these questions, the natural susceptibility of the states on those points, it is desirable to work toward preventing collisions and explosions by means of prearranged general rules; rules agreed upon at a time when things can be seen coolly, without the irritating circumstances that always accompany real events. What a congress of plenipotentiaries does is the same as what ten or twelve people do who have complicated affairs in which their interests are mutually involved: they sign a contract in which they foresee, insofar as prudence can, occasions for dispute and the conflicts of rival claims. And they set rules in advance to settle them in the way that they think most equitable. This, which common sense dictates to individuals, is prescribed to states by that same common sense; for it is certain that if these agreements are left to the time when the partners have begun to contend and quarrel about some given object, and when after their passions are aroused they are least likely to hear the counsels of reason and justice, a friendly agreement will be infinitely more difficult.

The correspondent of *El Progreso* has emphasized the point of refuge and asylum, and does not think it worthy of an American congress "to busy itself with a practice, of a right if you will, which until now has not been granted by all civilized nations as a routine matter, but only through particular agreements according to the degree of fraternal relations that reign among the signatories." First (supposing that he is speaking of the right of extradition or expulsion, insofar as it is closely related to asylum), that practice, or that right, is in fact granted by custom by all civilized peoples. No doubt there are differences in the methods of applying it, but in substance they are the same. In the second place, something that is worthy of two or three states that make particular agreements cannot be unworthy of a congress of states, unless he is saying that what is suitable for two or three persons in private is not suitable for a group of ten or twelve. In the third place, the right of extradition has to do with each state in its relations with all the others, not only to those with which it is most closely linked. It is important to the administration of justice in Chile, for example, that the right of extradition and the rules of equity and humanity that must restrict it be recognized in New Granada and Mexico, and if possible in China and Japan, as well as in Peru and Bolivia. In the fourth place, it is much better for an arrangement of this kind to be made among ten or twelve states at one time, rather than in separate binary com-

binations between the same states, for in this way a not inconsiderable object is attained: uniformity, which assists in the knowledge and observance of every law. In the fifth place, what stronger brotherly relations can be imagined than those that link the new American states? When has there existed in the world a group of nations that more truly forms a family? The correspondent of *El Progreso* believes that this principle must be modified according to the nature of each state. There will always be a common ground on which changes can devolve; and this common ground can be decided upon in a congress, leaving to each two states the opportunity to make those additions or restrictions that the circumstances require.

Civilized nations recognize a common international law, which they observe in their general relations; but this does not mean that they lack the freedom to restrict or add to that general law in the pacts they make with one nation or another. Thus, the obstacle that overwhelms the correspondent of *El Progreso* in this regard is entirely illusory. We say the same of his fear that international jurisprudence will extend to so-called political crimes or misdeeds, which often will not be crimes except in the territory of tyrants. What astonishes us is the idea that it can be thought possible that the Chilean government might want to extend the right of extradition to such crimes; what we do believe is that our government is not so liberal that it would consider compatible with its obligations toward other states the freedom of certain abuses of the right of asylum, which have more than once caused ill-fated clashes. The writer of the article, however, even without knowing what agreements will be made on this point by the American plenipotentiaries, imagines with horror the "chain of scaffolds" which that agreement would "make necessary from one end of the country to the other." Pure oratory. The question here is the persecution of terrible crimes, punishment of which is the desire of all associations of beings who are human in more than name; and we cannot see that to deprive such crimes of one of the ways that most often allows them to be committed with impunity can be a bad thing for humankind.

Border police, and the promptness and safety of the mails, are regarded as matters to be handled internally. The author of the article has not thought about all the international questions that can arise from the crossing of frontiers, nor has he considered the connection of this matter to that of the pursuit of criminals on foreign soil, and other

matters concerning the administration of justice. As for the mails, we would like to have him tell us if it is not in the common interest of the new states that the mail of the citizens of each country reaches its destination with all the promptness and safety that the protection of the law, and the authorities of the countries through which it must pass, can give it. New Granada and Venezuela have made a pact exclusively for this purpose, and their example is worthy of imitation by the other republics.

The correspondent of *El Progreso* is mistaken in believing that an attempt is being made to provoke controversies about borders or controversies of any other kind. What is being attempted, if such controversies arise, is to submit them to arbitration by the congress before angry answers begin to fly, or before rash actions occur. He is also mistaken in believing that the creation of new armies is being implied. "Means of repression" is not the same as "armies."

After this the writer of the article goes on to indicate the "transcendental" points to which the assembly of plenipotentiaries must give its preferential attention, leaving aside as less important those enunciated by our Minister. The writer of the article proposes six, and two of them coincide with some of those mentioned in the Memorandum of Foreign Relations, which are condemned en masse because they did not arise from contact with the world, nor did they run any risk of being disturbed by that same contact.

First, the correspondent of *El Progreso* wants the assembly to sanction "the absolute right of all the American republics, in cases where they are not linked by preceding treaties, to legislate in accordance with their own interests and even their whims." We suppose that it is tacitly admitted, in the cases where our interests collide with outside interests, that there are natural laws in addition to treaties which impose duties on us vis-à-vis other nations and humankind as a whole. These duties are no less sacred, no less to be respected, than those which have their origin in agreements. But the absolute right that he indicates is, with those two restrictions, both express and tacit, one of those elementary axioms that does not need the sanction of any congress. And if it is considered necessary for the American plenipotentiaries to declare and promulgate it, why not do the same with other equally important natural laws? Is there anyone who really believes that such declarations and promulgations lead to some practical result? That principle has

often been violated and trampled upon, it is true; but the same people who infringe it, and at the very moment of infringement, not only recognize but perhaps invoke it. It is like all general principles; it is vague, an abstract generality which with very little mental effort can be interpreted, twisted, and evaded. Civilized nations, when they try to insure their rights by pacts, do not do so by setting forth incontrovertible axioms, but rather, practical rules that are very clear, very precise, and very detailed.

Second the writer of the article wants the assembly to establish the rights of the new states' neutral flag. If he wants the assembly to aspire to recognition of those rights by the powers of the Old World, he is asking the impossible. The Old World will laugh at this quixotic claim, and the United States will laugh loudest. All that the new republics can do is to establish a special right among themselves, imitating what the great republic of the North, a model of wisdom and sanity, has done in its pacts with them.

Third the writer also recognizes the advisability of an agreement on navigation of the great rivers. But it seems that he wants to make their use exclusive to the American nations. Our opinion would be to open them to the world, and we believe that this is the opinion of the Chilean government. But on this point our government can express no more than theoretical judgment and impartial counsel. The states that have rivers are those who must decide: Chile only wants the rights and obligations of the interested parties clearly defined.

Fourth, the writer wants to make a kind of republican propaganda statement out of the assembly. The object is irreproachable, but the means do not seem appropriate to us; and the correspondent of *El Progreso* appears to agree with us when he calls this aim "almost exotic, if North America does not agree." We would like to know what kind of propaganda the assembly would use. We know of only one: the kind the United States has employed with such success. Let us have wisdom, let us have order, let us have an intelligent and active democracy, let us prosper, and our example will spread. If, on the other hand, we continue to give the world a bad example by ambitious aspirations and revolts, if we are heard to stammer theories while we lack commerce, arts, national income, primary schools; in short, if we are seen as stationary if not retrograde in the race of civilization and industrial prosperity, as is the case in most of our republics, then the reasoning and homilies of all the con-

gresses in the world will not win us a single proselyte. We will discredit republican institutions, and tarnish the luster imparted to them by the great work of the Washingtons and the Franklins.

The aims indicated by the Minister all tend to the propaganda of practical lessons, which we look upon as the only effective kind. But there are other aims tending toward the same end which do not enter into the sphere of pacts and confederations. The international policy of the new states will be sterile if rational and progressive and civilizing institutions do not emerge within each of them.

"Offensive or defensive alliances, sometimes general and sometimes reduced in scale according to geographic affinities," is the fifth of the aims enumerated by the correspondent of *El Progreso*, who is forgetting here the arguments with which it attacked the point of refuge and asylum, and of the increase in the size of armies that it seemed to perceive in the idea of the "repressive measures" necessary to sanction the assembly's agreements. Special alliances must grow out of particular negotiations. A general offensive and defensive alliance requires a scale of forces and mobility which our America will not achieve for a long time. Imagine Chile and Bolivia sending their contingents of troops and warships to a Mexico invaded by a French army or blockaded by a British squadron. Only one war is possible between the new and old institutions: that of its positive effects. Only one general alliance is possible among the new states: that of acting together for an end that is common, just, great, and beneficent.

The correspondent of *El Progreso*, who waxes indignant about the Assembly of Plenipotentiaries getting bogged down in puerile and meticulous arrangements, such as property and family rights, navigation of the great rivers, and the other bagatelles indicated in the Minister's Memorandum, finds it lacking in the grave and arduous problem of *ceremony* in the new states, which is the sixth and last of the "transcendental" points in his summary. We can assure him that neither this matter nor others of equal importance have been forgotten; but they did not seem important enough to be mentioned beside the others.

We recognize the American spirit, the love of freedom and humanity that shines in every line of the articles that we are refuting; but really, do they contain the good sense and logic that their author has been unable to find in the plan that he criticizes?

Government and Society

(1843)

Nothing is easier than to criticize a government by accusing it not only of all the bad things that exist, but all the good things that do not; this second theme is a vast one, susceptible to oratorical exaggerations so facile and brilliant that few writers have sufficient discipline not to let their pens run freely, even at the expense of reason and justice." What defense can our government make against the magnificent catalogue of everything we lack? Decrees and regulations are called routine and meaningless because they do not have the magic power to confer as rapid a movement on social life as we see in other nations, whose material and moral advantages, as everyone admits, are far beyond comparison with ours. Yes, the catalogue of what we lack is immense, and the comparison of our social situation with that of more privileged nations offers us little motive for pride. But reason and justice demand that, to attribute this difference to the government, we would have to find out: first, to what extent government is responsible for it, and what specific measures, in the opinion of the critics, would produce the instant metamorphosis they yearn for; and second, to what extent these marvels of public spirit and industry are owed to the economic measures of governments in those fortunate countries that they present to us as models.

It is an fact that social activity, rapid movement of industry, and accelerated increase in prosperity, have not been the work of govern-

ment in those countries, nor have they been owed except in very small part to administrative procedures. The chief agent in the production of these phenomena is the public spirit of those countries' inhabitants, favored by particular circumstances. Among these are: race (as some people believe); a very old moral and political education that has had time to put down deep roots in customs; geographical location, abundance of natural products endlessly desired by other nations and easily exchanged for the products of foreign industry; and internal transportation systems provided on a large scale by nature herself. In one place there exist virgin soil with immense possibilities for expansion and colonization, vast and fertile stretches of territory, bathed in all directions by voluminous and navigable rivers, and a torrent of European immigration brought there first by necessity and later by custom. In other places there are an ancient culture, flourishing arts and sciences, and capital accumulated over centuries. Do the new American republics have these means within their grasp? Is it possible for them to change the profound and mysterious effects of organic action, which, according to some, make the Anglo-Saxon fiber so different from that of the Celt or the Iberian? Is it possible for them to change customs in an instant? Is it within their power to create, where they do not exist, those colossal instruments of greatness to which the United States owe their rapid progress, or those precious crops that in a few years have multiplied the wealth of Cuba ten times over? Shall we say to the mountains, be moved, and to the turbulent rivers, lend your waters to internal navigation? Even if we had all that power in our hands, we would have to perform a new miracle by bringing our coasts closer to the world's great markets. If we compare in good faith what the Chilean nation has achieved along all lines by the means that Heaven has placed at her disposal, with the gifts that nature has lavished on other nations, we will find no reason to humiliate her. For on this point the government and the nation have a joint task. It is useless to regard national prosperity as the exclusive province of the government. Everywhere, prosperity has been the collective work of society; and if we cannot blame society for what it does not do without taking its material elements into account, much less can we blame the government without simultaneously taking into account matter and spirit, customs, laws, and moral and political antecedents. To do otherwise would be a manifest injustice. Let everyone say what we lack, and welcome; repeating it will

never be out of place. But let us explore the causes of that lack and then point out means of correcting it; then, examination of the social accomplishments of other countries will be both instructive and abundant in practical results.

What the government can promise to its voters is a fervent desire to merit public approval, an assiduous attention to the community's interests, and a firm resolution to find its inspirations in those interests and not in the atmosphere of partisan politics. Imbued with these sentiments, it will always welcome the suggestions of the press as long as they are founded on reasonable and just principles of politics and economics. Never has the government been more ready to listen to the press than when, served by enlightened writers and zealous advocates for humanity and the people, it is seen as ready to fulfill its highest and most beautiful mission: that of proposing and discussing useful innovations and simultaneously preparing for them. But clear and definite advice is needed, not airy speculations. Golden dreams and theatrical concepts are no match for the severe and inflexible laws of matter and spirit, laws that place quite narrow limits on human legislators' sphere of action.

We have to see things as they are. Government cannot act without the agreement of the nation; and even the meeting of all the political powers cannot control material accidents. To change moral phenomena it must do so by means of laws, which influence customs all the more slowly the more necessary it is to depend on them in order to be effective. The progress of our republic will not be like that of Homer's gods. But who ever said that all republics, or even most of them, have progressed like that? In our opinion, social progress has been more rapid where a fortunate combination of circumstances has favored it. Because of those circumstances the North American states progress rapidly; because of them, New Holland and Cuba, which are not republics, also progress. If those natural and moral circumstances develop prodigiously under the influence of democratic freedom, it is not impossible that their action may sometimes be so powerful that even the hobbles of colonial servitude will not slow them down. And the influence of those circumstances is so necessary that without them freedom itself, the most active and influential of political influences, will operate in a relatively slow and feeble way on material developments.

Each nation has its features, its aptitudes, its method of moving

forward; each nation is destined to pass more or less swiftly through certain social phases. And no matter how great and beneficent the influence of some nations on others, it will never be possible for one of them to blot out its peculiar character and adopt a foreign model; and, we insist, this would not be suitable even if it were possible. Human-kind, as one man who best understood the democratic spirit has said, does not repeat itself. Freedom develops industry in modern societies, to be sure; but this development, in order to be as rapid in one country as in another, must be based on equally favorable circumstances. Freedom is only one of a number of social forces, and supposing this force to be equal in two given nations does not mean that it will produce equal effects in its combination with other forces, which, either in parallel or in antagonism, must necessarily come together in it.

Hence freedom is not as exclusive as some believe. It allies itself with all national characteristics and betters them without changing their nature; it allies itself with all the predispositions of the mind and gives them vigor and daring. It gives wings to the industrial spirit wherever it can be found and cultivates industry where industry does not exist. But it is not in the nature of freedom to act except with the two great elements of all human actions: nature and time. Administrative measures can undoubtedly either retard or accelerate movement. But we must not exaggerate freedom's power. There are moral obstacles that it should not face head-on. There are natural accidents that it cannot change. Those who accuse freedom of being inert or timid will do the public a great favor by pointing out the route it ought to follow in its progress. Above all, do not forget that it is under the influence of popular institutions that customs can least be disregarded, and that abstractly useful and civilizing, progressive measures—adopted without concern for the circumstances—can be very harmful to us and can involve us in endless evils and calamities.