

## IX. SUCCESS OR FAILURE?

## 1.

The dazzling glory of the Spain of Charles V and Philip II has vanished before the sun of a new day and, as the arbiter of Europe and the mistress of the seven seas, she is no more. Her sons have degenerated, and her more virile rivals have taken up and carried to completion the work she was scarcely able to begin. The contrast between the astonishing progress of the United States, a former English colony, and the slow pace of the South American republics, proves beyond doubt the inherent unfitness of Spain for the great task of colonizing new lands and civilizing backward peoples. The huge material development of the overseas dominions performed by the modern colonial empires, the amazing growth in wealth and power they have attained, and the floods of light they have shed in their wake throughout the world, show with incontrovertible clearness that a new and superior race of men arose to guide the destinies of nations and peoples who would have remained in the dark ages of the Inquisition were Spanish rule to prevail a while longer.

These are thoughts that occur even to those most detached from nationalistic biases, from the glorification of particular groups, from the blinding effects of racial prejudice.

We are confronted, then, with three facts which tend to justify the prevailing opinion that Spain may be discounted as a factor of any importance in the march of progress both in Europe

and in the world at large. She was unable to withstand the blows administered to her by the northern nations when they decided to wrench from her the scepter of the world; her work of over three centuries in South America is puny and pitiful and pales before the splendors shed by England in North America; and finally, her methods and practices of colonization and the contribution she made to the welfare of mankind, especially in her colonial work, are not worth remembering when contrasted with the truly grandiose performances of other nations, especially those of Anglo-Saxon origin.

A little consideration of the subject may serve to dispel some of the prevailing misconceptions regarding these and other points connected with the vicissitudes of Spain and the role played by other nations in the destinies of the world in the last few centuries.

## 2.

There is nothing astonishing in the fall of Spain as the greatest world power of her time. Empires have arisen and fallen in the past, and empires will arise and fall in the future to make place for still newer ones which will follow the fate of those that preceded them.

Nothing is stable and eternal in this world—empires least of all—, for the principle of evolution applies as much to human institutions as to the organisms or anything else in Nature.

The empire of Alexander lasted a dozen years, and those that arose of its fragments were soon classed as mere provinces

within the framework of the Roman Empire. And this colossus, who endured longer than any other in recorded history, in due time also passed his scepter to other hands.

It may be argued that only the outward appearance of the empire of the great Macedonian was lost sight of, but its soul went on living in the wonderful Greek civilization and culture which it carried to the remotest corners of the ancient world, and whose influence is still felt among all the peoples of the West. Granted. But so does Spain live in her religion, culture, institutions and language, not only, in a small scale, in all parts of the world, but exclusively in nineteen Hispano-American nations, and to a great extent in a goodly part of the United States.

Thanks to the ease with which the lessons of history are forgotten and the delusion they have entertained of their racial superiority, the dominating powers of today have felt that their stability was assured by the very nature of things, that their dominance over other peoples of the earth was to last forever, and that no inferior race would ever have an even chance to challenge their power. But such has been the thought of all great powers that have flourished in the whole course of history. Persia, Greece, Rome, and even the petty Kingdom of Israel, at the summit of their glory, all judged themselves immortal and destined by Providence to rule the whole world forever.

What Russian, German or Austrian could believe on the eve of Sarajevo, that his fatherland was standing on feet of clay? The shot fired by Frinkip was powerful enough to make these great empires crumble to dust, and the most stable governments

of the world were shaken to their foundations. England, whose destinies seemed to be stamped with the seal of immutability, lost her hold on Ireland, Canada, Australia and other dominions, and her supremacy in the seas was first disputed by the United States, then checked in the Far East by Japan, and finally challenged and overawed in the Mediterranean by Italy.

Japan, on the other hand, illustrates the swift and startling shifts in human affairs and in the destinies of nations which may come to pass owing to the most unexpected and trifling circumstances. Her phenomenal rise in the councils of nations also explodes the novel and flattering theory of the racial superiority of certain sections of the Western World, a superiority whose basis is as old as the existence of nations and empires—the accidental possession of swifter and deadlier weapons.

It was only seventy odd years ago that Commodore Perry, in command of a couple of antiquated gunboats, brought the small island of undersized barbarians to her knees, and compelled her to open her ports to our commerce. Whether they had any use for our wares or not made no difference. Our guns were sufficient inducement for the unwilling Niponese to buy them. She became as much at our mercy as Puerto Rico, and any nation could make her bow to its will and insult her in the bargain.

But conditions have changed, and Japan is today the nightmare of the mightiest empires on earth, including our own. It is she now who floods the world with her wares and does not hesitate to slap in the face any and all who presume to give her unsolicited advice, as it happened on the occasion of her conquest of Manchuria.

On the other hand, disarmed Germany and impoverished Italy have both been able, on the Spanish question, to frighten both France and England to utter impotence and shameful cowardice, and more recently to strain the force of both to the utmost.

The fall of Spain as a colonial empire and the arbiter of Europe has been attributed to a variety of causes, each one designed to prove some point in harmony with the particular bias of each writer.

If intolerance, obscurantism, intellectual stagnation, or similar conditions are to be stressed, the Inquisition is called to judgment and found guilty of all Spain's calamities. How the Inquisition had anything to do with all this is difficult to understand, for freedom of thought and expression not only in literature and science, but even in philosophy, theology, and jurisprudence, enjoyed such wide latitude during the Inquisition that in many respects it surpassed even that which we enjoy today in the most advanced nations. And in her exuberant manifestations of genius, initiative, creative power, and prolific attainments, no other nation would then compare with Spain.

Others prefer to attribute her fall to race deterioration. The implication is that the peoples whose empires were built out of the fragments of the Spanish herculean labors are of a better breed; and the conclusion occurs very naturally to the parties concerned, that their superiority is a thing inherent and natural to them alone, a gift from on high which they cannot lose, a characteristic that no other ethnic group possesses, a quality which will be forever denied to other peoples of the earth. But peoples, unlike over-ripe apples or bananas, cannot deteriorate

in one, or two, or ten generations.

On the other hand if national or imperialistic success is made the criterium of racial superiority, then the Egyptians were sometime in the history of mankind superior to the Greeks, the Greeks to the Romans, the Romans to the Spaniards, and these to the Anglo-Saxons. Why should this relentless process of history stop at this point and fail to overtake the Anglo-Saxons and transfer their racial excellency, together with the domination of the world, to the yellow race, for instance? A transfer which in part seems to be already happening with the advent of Japan into the international scene and the immense possibilities of an awakened Asia.

The rise and fall of empires have little relation with racial cults and superstitions. All peoples who have attained some degree of power above all other considered themselves superior to all of them.

However, it is the most trifling circumstances that are in the majority of cases responsible for the rise and fall of empires. The greatness of Greece under Pericles was swept, as if in the wake of a huge cyclone, by an epidemic of bubonic plague in 430 B. C. The splendors of Venice suffered a total and permanent eclipse the day Bartholomew Diaz reached the Cape of Good Hope. Portugal and her vast empire of the Orient became an appanage of Philip II when her youthful and chivalrous King Sebastian was swamped by the hosts of Mauretania in the desolate fields of al-Kasr-al-Kebir. The history of Media and Persia, of Macedonia and Palmyra, of Egypt, Greece and Rome, and of every empire or nation that have succeeded them, is full of instances of the volubility of Dame Fortune.

The defeat of the Spanish Armada is viewed by many as the beginning, if not the cause, of the fall of Spain. It is also made to prove the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon over the Spaniard <sup>and</sup> by some rather peculiar kind of logic—of the whole world. However, the defeat of the Armada made very little change in the status of Spain throughout the reigns of Philip II and his two successors. In other words it did not determine in any way the fate of Spain. Her fate, as in general that of whole nations or peoples, must be looked for in factors more universal, factors that had been shaping the whole complexion of Europe and the world for several centuries past, and which were to a great extent, the result of the very heroic deeds of both Spain and Portugal.

On the other hand, the defeat of the Spanish Armada only by a great stretch of the imagination can be attributed to the English superiority in any sense whatever. In a game of chance there may be or there may not be luck, but not superiority or inferiority, except as these terms connote good or bad luck. A big storm in the North Sea scattered the Armada and made possible for the English and Dutch ships to attack those of Spain one by one. And these were the circumstances that exactly fitted the kind of fleet England had at her disposal.

The Spanish Armada was an instrument of peace rather than one of war. Its business was to protect commerce rather than to attack and destroy those who cared to plow the seven ~~main~~ seas. England, on the other hand, had no regular armada. The ships under Drake and Hawkins had been constructed and fitted for sudden, swift, and unexpected attack against single ships or small groups of them, as was the custom of pirates. They had to be the last

word in armaments with crews of desperadoes who valued loot more than life itself. With about eighty ships of this description, and with the good offices of the natural elements, they sank about forty Spanish ships. It was a great victory, no doubt, but a victory by default. That England harbored so many pirates in her hour of need, and that a violent storm should arrive just in time to tip the balance in their favor, was her good luck, but good luck is no sign or proof of inherent racial superiority.

What, then, caused the fall of Spain? I do not pretend to be able to answer this question. There has never been any agreement regarding such a complex problem either about Spain or about any other empire or nation. Each author offers his own solution for this or similar problems but none is able to answer them with absolute finality. Here is my own solution, which anyone may accept or reject as he sees fit.

It has always been the fate of those who have to be envied by those who have not, and the latter will refrain from attacking and plundering the former only as long as the risk is too great. Apart from a thousand causes that men are unable to control—the displacement of routes of commerce due to floods, earthquakes, and other natural disasters, for instance—this is, I think, the most decisive cause of the fall of empires and the rise of new ones.

When both Portugal and Spain started that movement that was to place in their hands the greatest sources of wealth the world had ever seen, they had thereby sowed the first seed of their downfall by arousing the envy and cupidity of those who had been left out of the richest prize ever presented to men. This



downfall was inevitable and a mere question of time, for the simple reason that the actual physical power of the whole Iberian peninsula was only a very small fraction of the potential power of those who coveted her wealth. The only condition necessary for the realization of their dream was the mastering of strength sufficient to overcome that which the Iberian peninsula could dispose of. Portugal had a population of about two million people, and Spain less than six million, while north of the Pyrenees lay a population of scores of millions. What prevented the Northerners from falling upon the treasures of the Iberian peninsula as soon as they were revealed to the world? Their want of unity of purpose and action.

Two unusual circumstances furnished the pretext and the impetus to this unity. Spain had become the master of Europe. Italy, Germany, Holland and other parts of the continent were under the Spanish rule. France was the battle-ground of the Spanish hosts and England trembled at the thought of the Spanish navy. This alone was sufficient to arouse the discontent and finally the hatred of these nations against Spain. Then came the Reformation which divided Europe into two fiercely hostile camps; Spain, on one side, and all the Protestant countries on the other. France, whose faith wavered between the Catholic and the Protestant tenets, sided with the have-nots for the plundering of the Spanish possessions, which then consisted of all the discoveries and conquests of both Spain herself and Portugal combined.

Before a collision of rising powers on the verge of starvation for gold and for those articles of merchandise of East

and West, then considered more valuable throughout Europe than gold itself, it is absurd to suppose that any nation, disposing only of the smallest fraction of the physical power of all Europe combined, could possibly withstand the onslaught of so many enemies attacking her from every side and overcome her. The wonder is that she endured for such a length of time and that she was able to keep her colonial dominion almost intact up to the time of Napoleon. As for Portugal, the few fragments of her maritime possessions she still holds make her yet one of the four or five present largest colonial empires.

Thus the rise of France, England, Holland and even the United States, at the expense of the two small Iberian nations, was anything but heroic and glorious except in the most materialist sense of the term. It was, we concede, a piece of good luck similar to that of a band of desperadoes who put a city to ransom and get away with it. But it is a perversion of all that is great, noble, generous and just to attribute it to such qualities of a higher order as heroism, justice, humanity, excellent administrative ability, or racial superiority.

Suppose that a band of sparrows succeeded in dislodging a couple of swallows from their nest and keep it for a season. Does that prove the superiority of the sparrows over the swallows except in regard to unscrupulousness and brute force? For the moment, everyone will admit, the sparrows were more lucky than their victims, but it is absurd to attribute to the sparrows characteristics of greater excellency, more ability, artistry, and usefulness than those possessed by the denizens of the air.

the ornament of hamlet and home, the benefactors of field and garden.

## 3.

It has been asserted that of all European nations, Spain was the most unfit to colonize the New World and civilize the millions of natives who came under her rule.

The fact that Spain did colonize America and did civilize her countless tribes, while northern Europe remained for about a century in almost complete and sterile inaction, should be sufficient proof of her fitness for the difficult task, above all others. Moreover, in spite of the fact that the accusing nations have had ample opportunity in the last century or two to demonstrate their superiority both as colonizers and civilizers, Spain is still the only nation that in the whole compass of written history gave birth to twenty nations of her own religion, language and culture. Such a nation scarcely needs to apologize for the inevitable mistakes she made in the performance of her gigantic work at a time when, without any models to guide her, she had to improvise everything in the way of colonization and the conversion of the nations to better ways of life.

In order to prove the alleged unfitness of Spain for the work under consideration it is customary to compare the United States with her sister republics to the South and attribute the astonishing progress of the former, as compared with the latter, to the superior colonizing ability of England and her almost divinely appointed mission of carrying on her shoulders the

white men's burden. The slow progress that has been made by the Spanish-American republics, on the other hand, is ascribed to the inherent inability of Spain to rise to the heights of the new conception of the true role of a modern colonizing power.

Let us examine for a moment the roles played by England and Spain respectively in the colonization and civilization of the two Americas.

In the first one hundred and twenty years of Spanish labours, during which Spain had conquered nearly three-fourths of the vast American continent, built hundreds of cities, civilized millions of natives, transformed the wildernesses of half of the New World into sources of the most varied agricultural and mineral wealth, the maritime exploits of England were confined to the futile voyages of Cabot, Raleigh, and a few others, in search of gold, which they never found, or to the piratical and the slave-trading adventures of Drake, Hawkins, Davis, and others which, even if they brought some slight profit to England, failed to add to her glory or to the luster and honor of her sovereigns.

It was only in 1620 that England got her first foothold in the West coast of America with the advent of the Pilgrim Fathers. In what manner was England responsible for these beginnings of her American colonization? In the manner of a tyrannical ruler who loads a boat with a handful of recalcitrant subjects and sets them adrift in the unknown waters of a treacherous sea! Not with a motherly farewell did she send these unfortunate undesirables to perpetual banishment, nor did they themselves come to America for the love of adventure, or to bring to other unfortunate ones the blessings

of a higher culture or of a larger conception of the universal brotherhood of men. They came to escape the fury of a bigoted mother and because only in the distant wildernesses of an unknown world, among the untamed and savage tribes of America, were they able to find a place of escape from the tyranny of England.

Soon their number was swelled by the arrival of new exiles cast away from home, rather to perish in the hazards of a perilous journey across the seas than to build colonial outposts of English civilization and culture. From every land came victims of religious bigotry—Puritans and Quakers from England, Catholics from Ireland and elsewhere, Huguenots from Catholic France—none to colonize America or civilize the natives, but to flee from the unjust and cruel persecutions to which they were subject at home.

It was only after their comparative success in the land of their exile that England made the first discovery concerning her future American colonies. She found out that in spite of her efforts to eliminate these disturbing elements of the realm, and starve them out of civilization, they could live and even prosper in those supposedly inhospitable regions of the New World. With a practical acumen so characteristic of old Albion she decided on two, to her thinking, very important measures. One was to exploit the unexpected success of the children she had repudiated; the other to clean up her own streets, slums and brady-houses of criminals and undesirables of every sort by shipping them to America, thus converting it into a penal colony.<sup>(1)</sup> Such were her contributions to the colonization and civilization of America.

---

(1) Andrews, loc. cit., p. 64.

In fact things did not go so badly for these castaways. After the most harrowing pangs of dejection and homesickness had been supplanted by the cares of the new day ahead of them, the survivors of those frightful voyages went out to survey the land and make ready to build a permanent abode for themselves, their children and their children's children. What a wonderful opportunity had fallen to their lot through the intolerance of their mother country! Virgin forests, adequate for all their needs in the years to come, spread everywhere beyond the reach of the human gaze. Limitless tracts of fertile land dotted the landscape round about, and there was everywhere abundance of excellent water. Later on universal wealth was found to be abundant, the sea offered inexhaustible supplies of excellent food, the forests were well stocked with a great variety of game, the Indians proved to be friendly human beings, and the climate was all that could be desired. The conditions of life were in fact more favorable to the growth of strong and rich communities than anywhere in the continent of Europe.

Banished from their own country and set adrift in an unknown world from which they could not escape, they might consider themselves, and probably did consider themselves, the master of their own destiny. They started by establishing some form of government, but instead of creating new social institutions, with that conservatism that is so characteristic of the English people, they adopted the English institutions, which they already knew, supplementing them with those injunctions of the Bible that were in harmony with their own set of religious beliefs.

As there were no princes among the first colonists and there was a great degree of economic equality among them, that kind of equality that since the inauguration of capitalism determines all other equalities it would seem natural that their form of government should assume the character of a full democracy. It was this fact, of initial economic equality, the feeling that each one had as much title to kingship as anybody else, that determined them to lay the foundations, though very imperfectly, of those checks and balances which were to distinguish our present democracy, at least in theory, because the economic disequilibrium, which was soon to give rise to so many kings in our land, was destined also to change the meaning and scope of those checks and balances. In fact the checks have become the means of tipping the balances to the side of the kings, who are, after all, the real center of gravity.

Even so, "the government of the colony was never a democracy in the modern sense of the term" says Andrews. (2) And though he speaks of the Bay Colony, the doctrine applies with slight modification to the other English colonies of North America.

It is quite clear that the medium where the outcasts were to live, the peculiar circumstances that brought them here, compelling them to start in the road of a more democratic form of government, without, however, being in need to create institutions radically different from those with which they were already acquainted, gave them such advantages over those of their brothers, whom a

---

(2) Andrews, The Fathers of New England, p. 37. Toronto, Yale University Press, 1919.

different set of circumstances, constrained to remain behind, that it would be anomalous if they did not overtake and then surpass them economically; for it is in this sense, after all, that our progress towers above that of other countries.

Another great advantage the English colonists had over those who had penetrated the rest of America from the West bank of the Mississippi, throughout the whole breadth and length of the two continents, was the absence of a native problem. This fact may seem to have little bearing on the comparative development and progress of the two sets of colonies—the English, on one hand, and the Spanish, on the other—but I think that it makes all the difference in the world.

I do not wish to imply that there were no Indians in North America for in fact there were about three million from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Only a handful of them, however, came in contact with the new-comers and it was fortunate (for the new-comers) that they did, for the Indians were, generally speaking, a most gentle kind of people, friendly, hospitable, complete strangers to greed, honest and truthful. Consequently they rather helped than hindered the settlement of the pale faces among them and, on occasion, saved them from starvation and certain death. The colonists, in turn, acted friendly and with generosity towards them during those trying days of the beginning of the colonies. However, these same Indians were soon in the way of the colonists, not through any acts of hostility, but because they possessed lands and other wealth that their guests coveted and, naturally enough, because, after all, they were just Injuns and, as such, had no rights in the eyes of a good Anglo-Saxon. And



so the pale faces bode their time, concentrated their forces, armed themselves to the teeth and finally took off their masks of friendship and humanity. The natives, who were not used to treachery and deceit, who believed that the white man's word was as good as theirs, were caught napping and were unable to defend themselves. Thus they were wiped off the face of the earth in thoroughly Anglo-American fashion. In this way we came into possession of their riches, at the same time getting rid of what would necessarily prove to be a tremendous drag in the march of progress: material progress, that is, for such has been our specialty.

With the Indians entirely out of the way; with untold wealth waiting to be garnered in ever increasing quantity and variety; with a fast growing population recruited from the most dissatisfied—and consequently most recklessly enterprising—ranks of all Europe and the rest of the world; with the advantage of an early enough separation from the tutelage of England; with the introduction of steam and, soon after, the finding of inexhaustible supplies of coal, oil and gold; with the addition of immense and ever richer territories unscrupulously and not too heroically grabbed from Spain or Mexico whenever the latter happened to be wholly occupied with more pressing problems at home and unable to ward off the unfair thrust; with all these advantages, some of which were gifts of capricious nature, while others were the result of unscrupulousness, it would be astonishing if this nation had not set a record in the amassing of wealth and in dazzling the world by her material progress.

But her progress was mostly material, and that so extremely unbalanced and haphazard that it cannot possibly be the source of general happiness and well being. For while we have a few

immensely rich people who arose by literally stumbling upon fabulous treasures, not of their own making, our silent legions of paupers and starvelings have grown and will continue to grow at an astonishing rate in the midst of an incalculable abundance which cannot be used by the former and is ruthlessly denied to the latter. It is very questionable, indeed, whether it is a blessing, and a thing to be proud of, or whether it is a curse instead and a shame of shames, an opulence that is nothing more than the product of economic slavery of at least one-third of our population, and of a more effective and more universal slavery a few generations hence, should our philosophy of rugged individualism prevail.

This pernicious philosophy, which is an euphemism invented to sugar-coat the concept of ruthless exploitation of both Nature and men, and which accounts for the astronomical wealth of a small minority and the degrading poverty, squalor and misery of the greatest number, has a racial and historical background. I shall take up this subject a little further on. Presently, I shall refer only to the last phase of its development.

Owing to circumstances that need not be treated in detail, our pioneers underwent extreme hardships during the first years of their sojourn in the wilds of North America. The winters were more rigorous than they expected, and through failure of crops and other adverse conditions they were unable to gather sufficient provisions for those forced periods of idleness. They were often threatened with famine and actually suffered great privations. The spectacle of wives and children subjected to direct want must have been a most harrowing experience. The most

unreasonable fear of impending starvation became with them a second nature, a maddening obsession. Consequently as soon as they were able to make ample provision for the long winters, they did not stop at the level of every conceivable need they might come to face but went on stocking their larders two, ten, one hundred times beyond their capacity and beyond what they could possibly consume, not in one winter but in ten. The harvest went on unceasingly, maniacally, without let or hindrance, and became an end in itself rather than a means for higher and loftier ends. Everything that could possibly have the remotest use found its way in quantities immeasurable into their capacious store-houses.

As the nation advanced this mania grew to huge proportions. All sources of wealth in sight, and all those that have been uncovered since, were sponged dry without any thought that the next generations, that is, our own children, or our children's children, might possibly come to starve on account of our stupendous greed and incomprehensible stupidity. If the same methods of exploitation had been used in the rest of the world most of it would be by now a barren and dismal desert. The number of even our farms that are being abandoned through sheer exhaustion grows by leaps and bounds, so that much of it is being turned every year into vast deserts of flying dust.

The wealth thus extracted from the land has been colossal, fantastic. It gives us the reputation of the richest and the most prosperous nation on earth. But is it, if by prosperity we mean a certain degree of happiness?

Now, this unprecedented success, whatever its merits may prove

to be, was not England's. It came about in spite of her rather than through her colonizing ability and the excellency of her institutions. It was due to the exceptional wealth of the soil, to the thorough and ruthless extermination of the natives, to the immense quantities of gold (already here before we came), to the sweat of nameless multitudes of workers who have been exploited mercilessly, to the fact that in a few years some of us appropriated to ourselves the riches of past milleniums, while taxing our descendents for many centuries to come.

If we now turn to the Spanish-American republics, we observe an entirely different picture. They had, in their colonial days, very few of the natural advantages that greeted the English refugees in the wastes of North America, and, in turn there were many powerful obstacles to a meteoric career of material progress similar to that which took place in the United States, obstacles that the latter never experienced.

The Spanish colonists who, by the way, did not come as exiles but willingly and, in a general way, with a loftier purpose, settled in all parts of this vast continent, in the fertile as well as in the arid and in its most inhospitable regions; in the midst of the gentle Pueblo Indians as well as among the fierce and cannibalistic Arancenians and Caribs.

These colonists did not come by compulsion but by choice and through devotion to a great ideal. Though among them there were, naturally, many individuals of the grasping type, whose main purpose was to obtain wealth, their thirst for riches was not of the kind that can never be appeased. Even these were quite alien to the idea of sacking clean every possible source of wealth and

accumulating superfluous and unusable riches. When such had acquired sufficient for a probable lifetime of leisure, they usually stopped grabbing and gave somebody else a chance. An estate in the open spaces or in the countryside with a garden or a vineyard which they generally worked with their own hands, and where they could entertain everybody, or commune with nature, had more charms for them than the sanctum of a down-town bank, or the stuffed and unsanitary office of the broker or of the business house.

None made their appearance in America as hunted animals and therefore ready to become hunters themselves of the weak and defenseless. The great bulk of the colonists were imbued with the lofty ideals of the universal brotherhood of men and the sincere desire to transform the untutored natives into Christian, civilized, and happy human beings like themselves, without being at all conscious of any distinctions of race or color. They did not propose to accomplish this by just covering their nakedness with so many yards of calico and by preaching to them a Gospel which promises full equality only in the world beyond. On the contrary they regarded the savages as their own blood brothers whose redemption was their duty and privilege to accomplish rather than a favor to be bestowed on inferior beings.

This feeling of the Spaniards towards the Indians was so spontaneous and sincere that the number of churches and schools they built for them far exceeded those which they ever built for themselves. Every high institution of learning was open to them and any of the natives who qualified for any high position was accorded the same honor, privilege and respect as the most favored Spaniard. After the first flush of conquest had subsided and

legislation adapted to particular conditions of the colonies was made possible every Indian was freed from compulsory work; those who wished to work for the Spaniards were to be justly remunerated.

The women and children could not be employed in the work of the mines, and all could marry Spaniards without hindrance or stigma on either side. All this was contrary to our notions of rugged individualism and race inequality, but was certainly more humane and very creditable to the sincerity and piety with which the Spaniards tackled the problem of American colonization and civilization.

This policy formed by Spain in regard to her colonies required, naturally, the creation of new institutions, radical adaptations to new conditions, herculean work of building up a new order of things. This evolutive process in the creation and formation of new race and culture by the amalgamation of so many ethnic groups and their various cultures, made the progress of the colonies very slow from the Anglo-Saxon point of view.

In fact, however, it was one of the quickest transformations that ever took place of such multitudes of savage peoples, for, while in the United States the colonies were exclusively of European blood and culture and no new social and cultural manifestations were expected or desired, the whole of Spanish-America was radically changed ethnically and culturally into a new race with a civilization which, though fundamentally European, contains much of the native element, has been in the making for over three centuries and its evolution is not yet complete.

These two methods of colonization and their results might

be compared to the work of two gardeners who proposed to transfer their activities to a virgin land. One brought the seeds of the plants he already knew, with which he had worked all his life, and which had been tamed for centuries. Coming upon the most fertile and productive parts of the new land, he proceeded to exterminate all the native plants, which in his eyes were just so many weeds, planted the seeds of the tame plants he had brought, and was thus able to gather a large crop at the end of the first season. His material success cannot be denied, but there is nothing extraordinary regarding the purpose, the work, or the results of this utilitarian gardener.

The other, for whom purely material interest was secondary, and who, for the love of Nature and devotion to an ideal, preferred to create something new and original, proposed to transform the untamed native plants into a garden of beauty of their own. He tamed these plants, even the wildest of them, wherever they might be found; in the fertile valley, as well as in the most barren desert. His crop was very scanty the first season, and yet in the second, but it represented a real contribution in the art of gardening, it was full of originality, and the future possibilities of his work are the most promising. The magnitude of his labours, his spirit of sacrifice, his abnegation and idealism in the cause of humanity, how can they be sufficiently appreciated, or even understood, by those whose primary aim in life are immediate and unlimited material returns?

These two methods, the first adopted by the English, the second by the Spanish colonists, explain to a great extent the difference of results obtained in the United States and in the

Spanish-American republics respectively, and it is not too soon to arrive at the conclusion that the second method was by far the more beneficial, not to a particular breed of the human species, to be sure, but certainly to the humanity at large.

In other words, the Spanish colonists who came to America did not concentrate in a small strip of land like that occupied by the English colonists in the east coast of North America, but spread throughout the whole breadth and length of this vast continent. They did not have the advantages of a continuous stream of enterprising emigrants from all parts of Europe and the world, like the English. They had to contend with enormous masses of native population, with great variety of tribes at different levels of cultures. They had to subdue the four most warlike tribes of the whole continent, the Aztecs, Incas, Arakanians, and Caribs. Many of the vast regions they settled and transformed by cultivation had not the fertility of New England; in fact many of them were almost inhabitable deserts. Often they lacked water and in many parts the climate was abominable and mortiferous.

By recognizing the rights of the natives to the absolute possession of the soil which they claimed as their private property, and by giving to the other natives the best of the public domain, the vandalic exploitation of all natural resources in a scale comparable to that which went on and still goes on in this country, was made impossible. This policy prevented a few unscrupulous exploiters from becoming the masters of the rest of the people and from amassing fabulous fortunes at the cost of millions who would thereby be condemned to economic servitude and starvation, which is inevitable whenever the greatest part of a nation's wealth is owned by a few who do not and cannot use it.



By means of this policy the number of millionaires of South America are conspicuous by their absence, but on the other hand unemployment on the grand American scale is unknown and the cases of starvation, which in this country ascend to millions, can be said nonexistent in the South American republics. Moreover its natural resources have not been destroyed or wasted, and its future is better assured than ours, for we cannot live for ever on gadgets and on the admiration bestowed upon our master millionaires but on the products of the soil and of our labour.

And so, while the United States owes really very little or nothing to England, and while most of our so-called success is not of our making but has sprung from the soil and fallen in the lap of a few lucky ones, or has been bought with some of the gold which we came upon in this same soil, the Spanish-American nations are a positive credit to Spain and the Spaniards who, without the advantages enumerated above in regard to North-America, but almost entirely through their genius, their heroic efforts, their abnegation and devotion to an ideal, their spirit of equality and earnest brotherhood of men, transformed the numerous tribes of America into civilized nations with a most hopeful future before them.

## 4.

The fall of Spain as the dominating power in Europe in the age of the Reformation, the relatively slow progress of her American colonies, especially when compared with the rapid material development of the United States, and a number of other shortcomings, some real and others imaginary, are often adduced as post factum

justification of the assaults made against her by France, England and other Anglo-Saxon States, which coveted her sources of the most varied wealth, assaults which, in due time, succeeded in wrenching from her all the fruits of centuries of herculean labours. The real motives of these assaults and why Spain was finally overcome, we have had already occasion to show.

That Spain made blunders in her vast work of colonization is undeniable. It would be miraculous if she had not. She, as well as Portugal, were pioneers in the field of large scale colonization among backward peoples. They had no examples to imitate, no pattern to follow. They had to learn everything from the ground up, and to profit by whatever blunders they might make in the first steps of the colonizing business. In spite of all this the whole work of Spain in the field of colonization in America is, without the least doubt, the greatest and most creditable monument of its kind ever built by any colonial power.

After all the charges that have been made against Spain, especially on the matter of colonization and civilization of backward peoples, it would be natural to expect that those powers who fell heirs to her labours of centuries, and who have been loudest in their vicious recriminations, would have reversed her policies, not only because of their assumed monopoly of righteousness, but also because they had ample time and opportunity to learn much from both the successes and failures of their rivals. Instead, what have been the accomplishments performed by these fault finding nations in the field of colonization and civilization, not only in America, but in Asia, in Africa, and in the vast expanses of Oceany? This we are going to try to find out.

Speaking of the distinctive characteristics of the European colonization in general, M. Salomon, quoted by Juderías, makes this statement: "The history of the colonies has always started by violence, injustice, and the shedding of blood, and its result has always been the same everywhere: the disappearance of the savage races in contact with the civilized ones...No nation can accuse any other in this particular; some may have had better intentions than others; the methods of some may have been less repulsive than those of others; but all have errors to admit, crimes to deplore, generous resolutions to adopt in the future." (3) Although the author must undoubtedly include Spain in this indictment, it is undeniable that it fits her less than any other colonial power of modern times, as has already been shown and is patent to any one conversant with such matters.

On the contrary, the history of the colonization of other European nations in all parts of the world—Asia, Africa, America, and the islands of the Pacific Ocean—is an uninterrupted succession of abuses of every sort, of robberies, of vexations, of murder and slaughter in the grandest scale, all obeying to the fundamental principle of unrestrained exploitation of their wealth. In other words, modern colonization does not aspire, does not even pretend, to elevate the native, to bestow on him the blessings of civilization, to share with him the better things of life. Its only and exclusive purpose is to rob him of all his wealth, to squeeze out of his own body all that he may produce,

---

(3) Juderías, *loc. cit.*, p. 496.

and, when nothing more is expected of him or he becomes an hindrance in the path of its cupidity, to put him out of the way, kill him, annihilate the despicable vermin. England, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Italy and the United States (in relation, especially, to our Indians) have never known or practiced any other method in dealing with the native populations of their respective dominions.

What policy has England followed in the whole history of her so-called colonization? That of civilizing the natives or sharing with them the benefits of her culture and the patrimony of those experiences of mankind which we call progress? Has she ever had the least thought of the inferior races, or considered these less privileged brothers with a claim to her sympathy, to her devotion, to her generosity, to her sacrifices? Preposterous! Unthinkable! The policy of England towards her colonies, from Ireland to America, from India to Tasmania, has been one and indivisible: the grabbing of wealth wherever it may be found, by whatever means at her disposal, even at the sacrifice of a few years residence on alien soil. Lord Bacon himself, a very clever and practical man indeed, voiced the sentiments of his compatriots when he maintained that the ideal place for colonization was that where there were no natives, for in such a case there would be no need to extinguish them, which obviously is a lamentable waste of very precious Britanic energy. Sir Stamford Raffles, considering things more objectively, and convinced that in certain cases, like that of India, for instance, the British can never expect to solve the native problem in the simple Baconian way, avers that commerce and trade, that is, material profit, are the

only object of the English colonial system. (4)

Thus while Spain lay the basis that would transform the wilds of the vast continent of America into nineteen civilized and independent nations, what independent nations have originated in the more enlightened and progressive systems of colonization and civilization of England or any other modern nation? The United States, Canada, Australia? The first and last grew out of penal colonies, and none of them is a monument of redemption in behalf of natives, nor yet of less favored races or groups. Each one of them is old England herself, and does not reflect in any way spiritual ideals and lofty purposes on the mother country as the Hispano-American nations do in relation to the work of colonization and civilization.

Thus, while at the beginning of the XIVth century Portugal laid the foundation of all maritime enterprise of modern times, and pursued vigorously a movement that was to transform the whole world from isolated units unknown to each other into a community of nations, what were the other nations of Europe doing? They were sound asleep, as Lummis expresses it. After 1442 Prince Henry the Navigator thought that they had slept enough and appealed to them "for cooperation in his plans of discovery and conquest." Of course the main objective of the Navigator was to reclaim the heathen peoples for the Christian religion and a higher standard of culture as then understood in the western world. His appeal was not heeded and those states continued in their state of coma,

---

(4) *Juderias*, loc. cit., p. 498 ff.

because only the glitter of gold could have awakened them.

By the end of the century Spain, which had till then been occupied with the reconquest of her own home-land, started her heroic career of discovery, conquest and settlement of the New World. Immense wealth began to flow into Spain. This startled the nations which only cupidity could arouse. Cabot was sent by Henry VIII on a voyage of discovery in 1496, that is, 54 years after the invitation of Prince Henry. And the result of this voyage as well as of a few others that followed, in an haphazard way, was nil, until 80 years later a few persecuted dissenters decided to change their heartless mother country for the wilderness of the American continent.

France entered in the scene still later and with the same results, which led Gil Gelpi to say that "the compatriots of Montesquieu, who compares the Spaniards to the Turks in their aptitudes to govern a great empire, proved that they were unable even to seize a desert. They arrived in the New World, cut some wood and refilled their casks with water for the voyage back home and returned to France very proud of having seen the famous coasts of the Indies,"(5) After other fruitless voyages they finally succeeded in establishing a colony in Canada in 1561, that is, 119 years after Prince Henry appealed to the Christian kings to collaborate with him in his great work of discovery, conquest, and redemption of less privileged peoples. If he had offered gold no one would refuse to cooperate in the great crusade, but all he offered was the fulfillment of an high ideal, a rather

strange recompense for the votaries of Mammon.

That colonization meant nothing more, especially for the Anglo-Saxon countries, than the acquisition of wealth regardless of the most elementary rights of the natives, is shown by the cruelty practiced by these nations against these defenseless creatures wherever they might be an hindrance to the ruthless march of their insatiable cupidity and materialistic aims. Leroy Beaulieu who, as Juderias observes, is an avowed adversary of Spain, writing in his De la Colonisation Chez les Peuples Moderns, says of the colonists of Holland: "The monopolistic spirit and commercial rivalries forced them to indispensible cruelties, which resulted in rebellions, wars and considerable expenses. Thus in Banda they destroyed almost all the natives and turned Polareon into a desert; in Amboyna they butchered both English and Japanese after giving them torment, and in 1740 they staged in Java a terrible massacre of Chinese..." (6) Further on he adds: "The massacres of Malays in Banda and of Chinese in Java were not exceptional and isolated deeds. The purpose of the Company was twofold: to limit the production in the islands it had seized, and to limit also the population of the same so that the contraband might be more difficult and easier to detect. Its success could not be greater in such an inhuman undertaking." (7)

Of the colonial policies of Italy, which had not yet reached the same of frightfulness displayed so lavishly in the conquest

---

(6) Juderias, loc. cit., p. 504.

(7) Id., ibid.

of Ethiopia and in the ravishment of fair Spain, Van Paassen has this to say: "The colonial record of Italy in Libya is perhaps the most distressing episode in the history of African colonization. There, according to official statistics published by the League of Nations, the Turks left a population of two millions, six hundred thousand, when they ceded the territory to Italy. After fifteen years of Italian administration two million natives had perished or had emigrated, one million and a half of these under the reign of the famous Graziani. I have seen refugees from Italian rule in Tripoli trudging through the the desert of Sinai. They had walked across Libya and Egypt and were making their way wearily and hungrily to the Holy Land, not unlike the ancient Hebrews three thousand years before. Viceroy Graziani, it may be said in passing, had not entirely forgotten his former subjects in Libya when he was conquering southern Ethiopia. For the benefit of his Eritrean infantry, who did all the fighting and whose casualties were never listed by Rome, he imported hundreds of young Libyan boys and girls to serve as prostitutes." (8)

How has England colonized India whose three hundred and fifty million people she was unable to suppress as she had done with the inhabitants of Australia, Tasmania, parts of America and other colonies? By applying the invariable system of ignoring them as if they were not existent, except to exploit them with thorough ruthlessness. By the principle of divide and conquer, pitching Mohamedans against Indians, Brahmines against Untouchables, princes against the people, and then, when occasion arouse, falling

---

(8) Pierre Van Paassen, Days of our Years, p. 298. New York, Hillman-Curl, 1939



on separate sections of the country with the furor of desperate crusaders. Describing one of the episodes of the English cruel exploitation of the natives enacted in the cities and country side of Rohil Kund, Lord Macaulay remarks that the whole district was buried in ashes and blood, and that more than one hundred thousand persons left their homes and hid in the impenetrable and mortiferous forests, preferring to be the prey of the tigers and death itself to the tyranny of man, to whom the English government had sold their wealth, their happiness, and the honor of their wives and their daughters. (9) In a pamphlet on the English rule in India William Jennings Bryan avers that the Indian government is as arbitrary and despotic as that of Russia and worse. India pays England over \$200,000,000 a year for the privilege of being tyrannized and insulted by the sons of Perfidious Albion. (10)

It shall not go into further details regarding the colonizing methods of those nations which, by concerted action dictated by covetousness became the inheritors of the Hispano-Portuguese colonial domain. Holland, England, Germany, and France to a less extent, have all acted in relation to their colonies for purely materialistic purposes, never with the primary object of ameliorating the condition of the natives, of sharing with them the benefits of their culture, of their advance and progress.

One colonial power, however, the newest that arose in Europe almost in our own days, deserves special notice in connection with the present subject, not only because it epitomizes the

---

(9) Juderias, *ibid.*, 505.

(10) *Id.*, *ibid.*, 508.

spirit and practice of the methods and policies followed by the modern colonial powers, but also because it represented a kind of international undertaking; it appeared under the cloak of the most benevolent Christian philanthropy, and applied in fact the most modern principles of acquisitive and exploitive colonization known to history. I refer to Belgium and her Congo adventure of colossal and shameless robbery and murder.

This adventure was dramatically advertised and propagandized all over Europe before it was ushered into existence. It was to be the last word in those great enterprises of redemption ~~to~~ to which the backward peoples of every continent and island had been submitted since the beginning of the Industrial Age, that is, following the unscientific, inefficient, and old-fashioned work of the Hispanic peoples. This last great experiment in colonization was to be a thing of perfection, for its supervision was entrusted to the most civilized and advanced nations of Europe. They well knew the failures of both Portugal and Spain in their colonial adventures, and they did not want to take any chances in an enterprise of such magnitude, an enterprise which involved the welfare of millions of innocent and helpless natives. The concern they had for these millions was so deep that they placed every conceivable safeguard around this project and, to make its success doubly sure, they covered it with the white mantle of a benevolent and religious institution. This was to be the work of God rather than that of men, and certainly not of ignorant, brutal, covetous, and bloodthirsty men like the Spaniards. The Belgians, who had themselves been the victims of the nefarious Spanish regime, governed by a benevolent Cobourg, who also had good reasons to

hate Spanish methods, were to be entrusted with this great crusade of civilization and progress a la modern.

The history of the Belgian Congo is intimately connected with the famous voyage of exploration made by Stanley. He became greatly interested in that little known region not only for its great sources of untapped wealth but in a particular manner for the great number of natives who were calling aloud for the work of redemption which only Europe was in a position to confer upon them. Stanley was undoubtedly an idealist of sorts, but he proved to be very little conversant with the guile of the big merchants and traders of human flesh and blood.

With those two aims in mind the great explorer tried to interest England and other countries in a great crusade of liberation for the Congolese and fat rewards for those who should undertake such a difficult mission, but no one seemed to envisage the tremendous returns promised by Stanley and soon to become a reality.

The king of Belgium was the first to perceive all the possibilities of this enterprise and accepted the great responsibility of bearing upon his broad shoulders this no small part of the white man's burden. This was Leopold I, but it was reserved to his son Leopold II, the unloved, to consecrate all his life to the Congo dream—a dream of black gold, amassed in the blood of millions of innocent and defenceless natives.

This was to be a quasi-international enterprise whose purpose was, in the first place, to lift the native tribes to the dignity and advantages of free men and exemplar Christians, and, in the second place, to open to all legitimate enterprise of commerce and trade one of the great virgin regions of the Dark Continent.

By the Berlin Act which gave birth to the Congo Free State not only the regeneration of the natives was promised, as the high aims of this philanthropic enterprise, but freedom of trade was solemnly pledged by the Belgian monarch upon whom was then conferred the stewardship of that immense region and numerous population.

Thus, by putting forward these two aims—regeneration of the natives and freedom of trade—the two most powerful forces to be reckoned with were won over in their entirety. One was religion, which saw in this move the opportunity to redeem millions of heathens and bring them to the true ways of salvation. Cardinal Lavigerie, who had great influence in aristocratic circles, became the apostle and prophet of the new dispensation accorded to the Congolese and recruited the sympathies of the Church in most of the Catholic World. Thus both he and his religion were turned into powerful tools in the hands of the unscrupulous, whose only aim was the ruthless exploitation of the natives. Free and orderly trade and exploitation of immense wealth was an even greater incentive to those whose real purpose in life is gain and unrestrained profit at the cost of the unfortunate and powerless.

Abir, which stands for the Anglo-Belgian India Rubber Co., was organized with Leopold at its head. He became the real taskmaster of millions of newly made slaves, and the manager of a thousand international captains of industry whose only thought was rubber and the huge amounts of gold it would bring regardless of the unheard of series of countless victims of their greed and cruelty.

The kind of free trade that resulted from this arrangement and of the freedom and other benefits that accrued to the inhabitants of the Congo Free State may be deduced from the first important act performed by Leopold after the signing of the Berlin Act. By a decree dated August 17, 1889, all the lands not specifically occupied by the natives were declared the property of the state, which meant the Congo Free State, or, to be more accurate, the Belgian King's Estate.

At first sight the dispositions of this decree seem fairly innocent, and substantially the same as those Spain put into practice in her American colonies. Let us see if such was really the case.

Among the Congolese it was a very rare occurrence for any native to occupy land specifically. All the lands were free, and any one could use any part thereof as he saw fit, moving to and fro according to his own fancy. The few vegetables they raised did not require as much as four or five percent of their dominion and all the rest belonged to all in a general and vague way. The result of the Belgian king's decree, therefore, was the appropriation in behalf of the Congo Free State, that is, the king, of no less than 90% of the land which was the common property of the natives. Another result of this decree was that "By establishing a state monopoly of untilled land, in practice the whole of the Congo was withdrawn from foreign trade."<sup>(11)</sup> Native freedom and freedom of trade, the two purposes of the creation of the Congo Free State, were thus thrown overboard with a single stroke of the pen.

---

(11) Bauer, L., Leopold the Unloved, p. 249.  
Boston, L. Brown and Co., 1933.

No such thing happened in Spanish-America. In the first place most of the American natives had real and specific ownership of land, and only a small part of it belonged to their gods or to the state. It was the latter that the Spanish Crown appropriated by right of conquest, a procedure which was then considered in harmony with international law. But Spain went further than this. Not only did she leave the natives in peaceful possession of their own lands but out of the public lands she had appropriated she allotted enough of it, and the best that could be found, to all those who had none, so that they might live with independency and decency.

The stakes in which Leopold and the Abir were especially interested was rubber, the new king of the business and industrial world. The demand for this commodity was so great, and grew so fast, that its profits increased almost in a geometrical ratio as compared to the increase in production. Now "an increase in the amount of deliveries could only be achieved by terror. Brazil, the other great source of wild rubber, had no Leopold and no Abir. During the years in which the Congo multiplied its supply of rubber manifold, Brazil was not able to double the yield." (12) (~~Bauer~~). In order to speed up the constantly increasing demand for more and more rubber the best way that could be devised was to make the multitude of agents in the field copartners in the work of expoliation. And although it is not necessary to suppose that all the agents of the Abir were murderous fellows "it was plain enough to them that they must flog, burn and murder, for

---

(12) Bauer, loc. cit., p. 271.

otherwise they would not be able to deliver enough rubber, would lose their jobs, and have to repay their passage money. In such circumstances they were not even allowed to travel home on the state boats so that they were prisoners of the system." (13)

After the state took over the land of the natives, who became thereby aliens in their own ancestral home, it decreed their effective and unescapable state of slavery by means of the most hypocritical subterfuge. A tax of from six to twenty four francs was imposed on every black of the Congo Free State. Currency of any kind was, of course, practically unknown to the natives, who, on the other hand, had just lost all their lands and their means of a livelihood through the unparalleled rapacity of their self appointed teachers and benefactors. The obvious way for the natives to pay their tax was, naturally, with the sweat of their brows, not to the value of six to twenty four francs but many times over that amount. In fact, ignoring, as they did, the value of the franc; being under arbitrary and tyrannical rule; and working under the greedy and heartless servants of the absentee masters of the Congo destinies, who were not interested in the means by which rubber was obtained, but in its fast and fat returns, the natives worked in reality, according to L. Bauer, the equivalent of from twenty to forty times the value of the amount they were supposed to pay. (14) Our own southern slavery of the good old days was like a big holiday compared with that established in the Congo Free State in the eyes of all civilized Europe.

Each man was supposed to spend forty hours a month in the

---

(13) Bauer, loc. cit., p. 274.

(14) Id., ibid., p. 283 ff.

harvest of wild rubber. This does not seem altogether unreasonable, but when we realize that "the rubber vines were many hours march from their villages, that violent storms are frequent in tropical forests, that the rubber gatherers were in an unfamiliar world and full of dread," that "they had to bring the agent every settlement of taxes personally, many of them marching a hundred miles through a trackless wilderness in order to discharge a levy of a few francs," (15) the arbitrary imposition assumes an aspect of the most irresponsible cruelty and disregard for the most elementary rights of these victims of an imperialism run mad. The agents, on their part, added to their degradation and misery by robbing them of their just dues, because their reward by the company depended on what they made out of the helpless natives.

Their condition, under this inhuman system, was truly among the worst ever experienced by the less favored peoples of any land since the beginning of the industrial age. The amounts of rubber thus collected so far exceeded the value of the taxes imposed that "calculation showed that in payment of the tax a negro had to supply rubber to the value of about 450 francs per annum, and for this received about 12 francs" (16) What wonder, then, that the Abir, which started with a capital of only 232,000 francs should yield profits amounting to as much as 5,000,000 in one year, or nearly twenty two times the initial investment?

This policy of over-exploitation, both of men and of the natural resources, was not essentially different from the one we

---

(15) Bauer, loc. cit., p. 288.

(16) Id., *ibid.*, p. 288.



have been following for over a century and it "show that, from the outlook of immediate advantage, Leopold and the Abir were perfectly right. What they overlooked, however, was that they were destroying both the rubber vines and the men who garnered the harvest... Anyone who looked twenty years ahead had to recognize this. But the companies did not wish to think about the future. All they wanted was to make fabulous profits within a few years." (17)

Although rubber was the most important commodity to be had at any price other sources of immediate wealth were not forgotten. The Congo agents were instructed "to gather all the values of the Congo State, and, especially, the harvest of ivory and rubber. These were reserved for the state, which signified nothing less than the complete and uncompensated expropriation of foreign merchants and of the natives to whom nothing was left but their huts, their domestic animals and their tools. The Negroes must hand over ivory and rubber to the State agents. A trader who should get possession of any would become a receiver of stolen goods. The Negro who continued to do what he and his ancestors had hitherto done unhindered, and had taken as a matter of course, became a thief." (18)

In order to see to it that every bit of this wealth went where it did not belong—to Leopold of Belgium and his international confederates—the monarch himself "had 20,000 agents in the country, sharers in his interests...; under their orders were 20,000 blacks, many of them cannibals, as soldiers, let loose to work their wile upon alien tribes. Children of the wild-

(17) Bauer, loc. cit., p. 271.

(18) Id., ibid., p. 251.

ness, with fire-arms thrust into their hands, allowed to give free reign to their murderous impulses, and punished if they did not extract a sufficiency of rubber..." (19)

"At first the Congo officials went to the chiefs, demanding the workers they wanted... The Chiefs handed over what slaves they owned; for, despite the fine talk in Brussels, of course there were still slaves. But, in so far as they were taken over by the Congo Free State, they were regarded as 'enfranchised,' for people were most virtuous in the Congo. What the enfranchisement amounted to was that they were heavily laden, that their skeletons bleached by the roadside, that those who survived were flogged with hippopotamus-hide whips for as long as they could keep afoot." (20)

If the blacks ran away, as they did by the thousands, across the French or the Portuguese frontiers, the chiefs were seized and compelled to work or held accountable in other ways; the wives and children were seized as hostages; armed native soldiers from distant tribes were quartered in the villages of the recalcitrants, in the midst of these unfortunate children of nature, who saw their immemorial homes turned into hell by the white man's thirst for rubber and human blood.

Under such terrible circumstances the population began to dwindle rapidly, and "densely populated areas through which Stanley passed on his first voyage of discovery became almost completely depopulated. Lord Cromer noticed this in his journey up the Nile to Lado... The thousands upon thousands of those who were directly

---

(19) Bauer, loc. cit., p. 273.

(20) Id., ibid., p. 259.

murdered were but a small part of the victims; the others ran away into the wilderness and perished there from famine or from the ever spreading diseases. There can be no question that the light which Leopold had proclaimed his intention of introducing into Darkest Africa was the light of hell-fire." (21)

That these crimes were not merely the work of irresponsible and perverse underlings, but the inevitable result of the deliberate policy of plunder on which Leopold, the Abir and the high circles of finance had embarked, regardless of the fatal consequences for the natives, is shown by the ruling of the Court of Appeal at Boma, when it passed judgement on the case of an official who participated in the Mongalla massacre. "It must be taken into consideration," says the Court, "that the heads of the concessionary company, if not by direct command, at any rate by example and tolerance, had induced their agents to disregard the rights, the property, and the lives of the natives... Above all, however, some of the authorities have tolerated and allowed the seizure of women who were held as hostages in order to compel the villages to deliver goods and workers." (22)

Just as in most of our great industrial centers, and in many parts of our South, where pionage is considered the natural order of things, and the worker is either bled white or let starve to death, it is an extremely dangerous business for any one to raise his voice in behalf of the oppressed, so in Congo "very rarely, when...it became impossible to hush up an atrocity, were com-

---

(21) Bauer, loc. cit., p. 278.

(22) Id., ibid., p. 288.

plaints made; but even then, the guilty were protected by the system. In general it was the accusers who were seized and treated as guilty. If a missionary, suffering from pangs of conscience or from irrepressible indignation, made complaints, and tried to attract the attention of the world, he would die suddenly and mysteriously..." (23)

"It is true that again and again indignation was expressed about what was going on in the Congo—voiced chiefly by rival rubber purveyors in other hands, whose skins were pinched by Leopold's dumping." (24)

Although the English stockholders of the Congo human slaughterhouse were perfectly indifferent to the groans of millions of victims of this huge international crime, there were many whose interests were suffering considerably in other fields, and these, together with the vociferous protests of some influential philanthropists both of England and other nations forced an inquiry into the shameful conditions that prevailed in the Congo Free State. The first move of this kind was undertaken by Roger Casement, and his findings, which were confirmed by the consuls Theisiger and Smith, and by many other pieces of evidence, were embodied in his famous report.

Among other things "He saw a boy of eleven, both of whose hands had been cut off, the only survivor of a family of six, the rest having been murdered. There were others who had been similarly mutilated. Upon one village a fine of 55,000 rods of brass (worth a sou apiece) was imposed. To pay the fine, the natives had to sell their wives and children. There was no living

---

(23) Bauer, loc. cit., p. 273. (24) Id., ibid., p. 269.

domestic animal left in the place. Ten-year-old girls were sold to make up the sum required. Fines were inflicted at the sweet will of the officials, not being counted in the Congo budget, but accruing to the commandants who imposed them. One of the joint stock companies needed 72,000 rifle cartridges in three years for use in the gathering of rubber. The black corporal sent on a rubber-hunting expedition was given cartridges, and for each cartridge that had been used when he returned he had to show a right hand. If one...used a cartridge to shoot game, for food, he would cut off a living man's hand in order that the tale should not be short. On the Majembo river, in six months, 6000 cartridges were used, this meaning 6000 negroes slain--nay more than this, for the children were brained by the soldiers with their rifle butts ..." (25)

The murmurs of a few powerful voices that might shape public opinion against the horrors of the Congo Free State compelled the king of Belgium to send a commission of inquiry into the rubber-hell of himself and his associates. Very naturally the commission went to justify his conduct rather than to condemn him and the whole system. And yet the evidence was so glaringly damning that the commission's report could not avoid a certain modicum of censure. And though the proceedings of the inquiry were kept secret, their conclusions, published in the last day of October, 1908, would be sufficient to blacken the whole history of Belgian colonization. Some of the statements are: "The state has absolute and exclusive ownership of the whole territory." The economic

---

(25) Bauer, loc. cit., p. 267 ff.

condition of the natives is stagnant... The demands of the agents are often excessive, for they have a personal interest in the yield of rubber... In the majority of cases a native must march one or two days before he can reach the part of the forest where a fair number of rubber vines can be tapped; there he spends a few extremely disagreeable days, without food, without his wife, exposed to the severities of the weather and to the attacks of wild beasts... He can hardly stay in his own village for so long as two or three days... It can hardly be denied that in all the settlements of the Abir the imprisonment of women as hostages, the forcing of the chiefs to do degrading work, the flogging of the rubber collectors, brutality on the part of the black officials, have been the general rule... The complaints of murders by the black soldiers have been justified by various evidence and by official reports... The agents have never attempted to deny the charges made against their black soldiers... In official reports concerning punitive expeditions we find the following expressions: 'Energetic measures... Numerous killed and wounded enemies... Loot... Villages taken by surprise... Great abuses... Men, women, and children shot while trying to escape.' (26)

These horrors did not take place in the ominous age of the Inquisition, but in our own days. They were not perpetrated by Spaniards, but by agents of the king of Belgium who was, in turn, the agent of some of the most supposedly advanced European powers and European interests. They happened under a system that was heralded as the last word in methods of colonization. They

were an effect of a colossal spirit of cruelty and greed, and show how inhumanity seems to grow in proportion to our so-called progress, civilization and enlightenment. They also show how insincere and hypocritical are the accusations those very nations have made against Spain and the Spaniards, who made of the American natives a part and parcel of their own people.