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THE SPIRIT OF NATIONALITY IN
THE HISTORY OF BRAZIL

By

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GENTLEMEN OF THE HISPANIC CLUB OF YALE UNIVERSITY:

It seems a natural sequence to speak on Brazil, after having spoken on the Lusiads, as Brazil and the Lusiads are the two greatest works of Portugal. You know the principal points and facts with regard to it. You well know that it is one of the largest countries in the world, as size is an important element in race psychology. I will only mention some of the circumstances that enabled us to keep it united in our hands until to-day. That was the result of early national public spirit and of constant good fortune.

National spirit grew in Brazil as here from very early times. The settlements on the coast, small and separated by long distances, learned as from instinct since the beginning to help each other. The original spirit was, of course, the Portuguese spirit, which would never swerve from fidelity to the King; but distance and abandonment to its own resources, reliance on itself alone, engendered in every settlement a feeling of separate nationalism, which shows itself very early already in the Colonial times. The different Capitanias had to deal with the Metropolis across the seas and so a different individuality, with a touch of particularism, appears in all of them, Maranhenses, Pernambucanos, Bahianos, Paulistas, Mineiros, although they all feel a common, although yet secondary, tie. If the Portuguese allegiance was a pledge of union, so was Religion, Catholicism. Without the religious fervour Brazil would have probably been cast into several moulds, acquiring different na-
tionalities: Portuguese, French, Dutch, Spanish, and most probably English. And if it was Catholicism, it was the Jesuit.

If Portugal had not been made in the time yet of Loyola a Province of the Company, the fate of Brazil would have been quite a different one. Without Father Nobrega, the French would not have been expelled from Rio de Janeiro; without Fathers Manoel Gomes and Diogo Nunes, they would not have been expelled from Maranhão. Without the Jesuits there would be no fixed population until very late, the Indian races would everywhere disappear in the interior and instead of churches and villages the country would only have to show, for a long time, the slave trade paths across the forest as in Portuguese Africa. It is truly a race of giants that of the Jesuits of the 16th and 17th Century, wherever you find them across the world. One could not lament too much that the savage races everywhere were not left to their keeping to be perpetuated, as the Guarânis in Paraguay, and, on the other hand, that they ceased to be Missionaries. What Missionaries, if you follow them either in Brazil or in Canada; among the Iroquois or the Araucanians! Take a man like the Portuguese Jesuit Father Antonio Vieira, a man of genius, whose name in Portuguese letters ranks only after that of Camoens, the powerful orator, to whom the Spanish pulpit has no name to oppose. See him, frail and infirm, make long land voy­ages through the interior of Northern Brazil, on foot or in hamac, for the sake of the Indians, out of love of them. The historian can mark the front of colonial Brazil, either at its birth or at its adolescence, with the two letters—S. J.

From very early the different settlements, on their own account and inspiration, so to say, lend assistance to the distant ones in trouble of invasion. But for the assistance of
settlements that became the States of Bahia and of São Paulo, the bay of Rio de Janeiro might have become French. They united to expel the French allied with the local Indians, the Tamoyos, and from 1565 to 1571 destroyed in the germ Nicolas Durand de Villemaignon's Antarctic France. In the same manner the people of Pernambuco in 1615 under Jerom d'Albuquerque will go to Maranham and destroy in the bud the Equinoctial France of the Seigneur de La Ravardière. What great and incessant efforts of those Colonists to keep the country for themselves! In 1616 they will found from Maranham the city of Pará and following that foundation they expel the Dutch, taking their forts, from the left bank of the Amazon in 1625 and the English from the right bank between 1625 and 1629. From 1637 to 1639 they explore the mighty river from its mouth up to the Quito jurisdiction. Take the expedition of Pedro Teixeira in 1637-39. He takes with him in 47 large canoes nearly 2000 men, ascends the whole Amazon from its mouth to its affluent the Napa; there he leaves his troops and walks to Quito in the hope of going to Lima and see the Vice-Roy of Peru, but he receives from him order to return at once to Pará to watch the Dutch. That represents a voyage of more than four thousand miles in canoe on a desert river with two thousand men.

Nothing, however, will show you so well that already in the XVII century Brazil had a strong national life as the fight of the Pernambucanos with the Dutch. In 1580 Portugal disappeared from among the European Nations, her crown being united to that of Spain. The Dutch, who were enemies of Spain, brought their attack to her new possessions across the sea and conquered a large portion of Brazil. At one time, during the government of Prince John Maurice of Nassau the Dutch Power seemed finally established there. There was a great deal of wealth in Pernam-
buco. Here is what is told of Olinda, its chief town, by a monk writer of the time. “Gold and silver wares were without number in the costly houses and he who had not his silver service was held as very poor. The women did not content themselves with taffetas, velvets and other silks; they wanted the fine tissues of gold and silver, and brocades; jewellery was so plenty as if it had rained on their heads and necks pearls, rubies, emeralds and diamonds. . . . There were daily banquets and games, so that the place was a picture of the terrestrial Paradise.” In place of that city Prince Maurice preferred for his capital the place near the port, the capital of the present State of Pernambuco, Recife, so called from the long reef that stands on its front. The Dutch books of the period are monuments of his enlightened Government. There was around him more culture than in the rest of the Continent. He was surrounded by a group of naturalists, painters, architects, writers, of which he was the soul. He was a noble type of ruler; he lighted in that age, in the western point of Brazil, those two great lights: liberty of conscience and commercial liberty. If he had remained, nobody can say what would have accomplished a spirit so much in advance of the state of the country then. But the company of the West Indies recalled him and showed it wanted Brazil only as a factory. It was a long effort that of the distant young Portuguese colony in South America to throw out the Dutch invader; it lasted some thirty years, but it had the perseverance and the obstinacy of fully grown national spirit.

During the Dutch occupation in Brazil Portugal freed herself from the Spanish rule and at one moment was willing to purchase her peace in Europe through the abandonment of Brazil to the Dutch. It is the national spirit that leads Fernandes Vieira, the Pernambuco planter, leader of the popular movement, to resist the King and his order to lay
down arms. "I will first," was his answer, "throw the Dutch out of Brazil, and then I will submit to any penalty for having disobeyed His Majesty." But for England entering the sea against Holland, Vieira's attitude might put in peril the position of Portugal in Europe; for him already Brazil came first. Is that not the true feeling of nationality, the spirit of the Continent? It is that spirit, above all, that wins for the people of Pernambuco their two victories of 1648 and 1649, which decide the fate of the Dutch power in Brazil. Robert Southey, in his History of Brazil, sums up the Dutch attempt in these words: "The ambitious struggle which the Dutch carried on so long, with such inhumanity and such an expense of treasury and blood, produced no other benefit than that of proving, as a warning for other Powers, how impossible it is to effect a permanent conquest of Brazil. A people of such determined nationality as the Portuguese, in such a country, are invincible by any human force."

Take the South, the Paulistas, for instance, the descendants of the first Portuguese colonisers of São Paulo. They travel throughout the country, nearly from end to end, in their adventurous expeditions for the discovery of mines. They know the interior as it is not perhaps known to-day so well in large tracts. The spirit of those men was freedom and independence, it is the spirit that grows with the race, by which every child born in the New World distinguishes himself from the father born in the Kingdom, nay, by which every European father takes the nationality of his children. I could accumulate many other signs of its early growth in Brazil fostered by every element that took part in her colonisation notwithstanding the policy of the Mother-country afraid to lose her.

But it was not the national spirit alone; it was also good fortune. I will give one or two facts. Even the Spanish
occupation of Portugal did result in a large increase of our territory. We almost owe to it our part of the Amazon basin. If Portugal had not merged into the Spanish Monarchy in 1580, Spain would most surely have disputed the Amazon river, whose mouth had been discovered by a Spaniard, Yañez Pinzon, in 1500, and which had first been navigated down from the Andes to its mouth by a Spaniard, Orellana, in 1542. Besides that, the river was comprised in the part of the World assigned to Spain by Pope Alexander VI and by the demarcation of Tordesilhas. Under the union of the crown of Portugal to their own, the Spanish Kings did not care to which of the two crowns the Amazon remained subject, as both were theirs. Owing to that circumstance, not only they made good the claim of Portugal over the estuary of the great river of Orellana, but they assigned, besides, to the Portuguese crown both its banks up to the Quito jurisdiction. When Portugal broke off the yoke of Spain, her old Colonies followed her and, in that way, Brazil kept all the Amazonian territory that had accrued to her during the Spanish occupation. I call that good fortune, God's favour.

I call also good fortune the circumstances that immediately preceded and surrounded our Independence. Spanish America begun the fight for separation from European rule earlier than Brazil, but our escape from the sway of a far distant Metropolis took place earlier than that of any Spanish Colony. In November, 1807, the Prince Regent of Portugal, afterwards King Dom John VI, who then governed in place of his Mother, the Royal family, the Court, the Government left hurriedly Lisbon for Rio de Janeiro on the news that the French Army had crossed the frontier. In his Manifesto of the 1st May, 1808, to the friendly Powers the Prince Regent said that he addressed them from the shores of "the new Empire which he had come to create." Rio de
Janeiro was then the true capital of the Monarchy. We were no longer a Colony. In 1822 Brazil will proclaim her separation, but ever since the Manifesto of Dom John the idea of Empire will absorb her and she will consider herself first and not the second partner.

It was also to the flight of the Royal Family to Rio de Janeiro that we owed the rare fortune that attended our Independence. It was indeed an unique circumstance in History that an heir to a Crown preferred to build a new throne for himself to take that of his ancestors. If, instead of making himself Emperor of Brazil, the Prince Dom Pedro had obeyed the Cortes of Lisbon and returned home, instead of a peaceful Independence, as took place in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Minas Geraes, Pernambuco, and nearly all other parts of the country, we would have had every where the resistance of the Portuguese troops, as in Bahia and Pará. It would have perhaps been a bloody Independence, and England, on account of her traditional alliance with Portugal, might possibly have supported the policy of the Holy Alliance to suppress the Republican upheaval in Latin America. Not only that: although the national sentiment was already formed and would certainly have inspired the Country, it was yet too early to obtain without the prestige of the old Dynasty a perfect blending of local rivalries. What happened under the Regency from 1830 to 1840, a dangerous distension of patriotism, might have occurred ten years before, under a much aggravated form, breaking perhaps Portuguese America in several large blocks as was the case with the Spanish.

I will point one good fortune more: the character of the Rulers Brazil ever had. In the XVII and XVIII Centuries during the Colonial period they belonged to the class of the old Portuguese governors trained in the strictest sentiment
of loyalty to the King and civic responsibility. With the XIXth Century came Independence. Our first Emperor, Dom Pedro ISt, was rash, obstinate, masterful in his ways, but upright, chivalrous, and liberal. He died and lives still the popular hero of two Countries, like his friend and supporter, General Lafayette. He gave Constitutional freedom both to Brazil and to Portugal. His son, Dom Pedro II, who became at the age of five, in 1831, the ward of the Brazilian Nation, ruled it from 1840 to 1889,—he had entered his fiftieth year of reign when the Monarchy was overthrown,—and during his whole reign, to paint it with one trait only, the freedom of the Press was not once interfered with. His principal client was always the Opposition, and the Opposition knew it well; he felt anxious that every wrong would be made public and discussed against his Ministers; he believed in the rotation of the political Parties, and insured it. His Palace was kept open to the people. Every one could go to him. With that, a character remarkable for his abnegation. His civil list was secretly open to the poor. On that account he had only debts when he left the country, and he paid them by the public sale of his furniture. He did not care for the throne. “If the unwise attitude of the Monarchical Parties gives the victory to the Republican,” he wrote on the margin of a political pamphlet, “what would it prove? . . . I always place the welfare of the Nation above that exclusive consideration of the monarchical interest.” In one word, he is a crowned Benjamin Franklin. Then, all of a sudden, on the 15th of November, 1889, the Republic was proclaimed. The ideal of democracy, without the hereditary principle at its head, had ever appeared to the Brazilian youth as the political goal. That was the never broken attraction of the powerful magnet erected in the dome of the Washington Capitol. After that not a single doubt has been raised on the absolute integrity of the six
Presidents, who form the series of our Rulers since Dom Pedro II. The first two were old Generals of the Empire, elected by Congress while the Republic was yet in its cradle, and there was fear of convulsions. The popular elections of the four others were all the most enlightened choices that could be made for the special task each had to fulfill.

In Brazil, as you see, freedom was never given up for the sake of order; on the contrary, it kept coming out, as its fruit, from the same tree of order planted in our Independence. I know that order precedes liberty, and that it is useless any attempt to have liberty, where order is not first secured, and therefore I would never fail in rendering homage to the great rulers who stand as the saviours of society in countries where liberty does shake and destroy its necessary foundation, which is order. But we never needed such men, and yet it was our greatest good fortune that at no moment of our life we happened to enter into one of those political mazes, in which some of our sister Nations have laboured so long. If Brazil, under the Monarchy, instead of being for years a solitary case of liberal self-government in Latin America, had been an example of despotic rule, the germs of political freedom would have burst much later all around her. As to the Argentine Republic, the Brazilian liberal example was certainly a potent cause in the transformation of the local despotisms into a liberal national Government.

Brazil has always had the conscience of her size and has been governed by the prophetic feeling of her future. She showed it, as a Nation, since her first day, by taking for herself the rank of Empire, while Portugal, the ancient mother-country, remained a Kingdom. The Prince Dom Pedro, on preferring the new American to the old European crown,
only followed his father's advice. Since John the IV, according to the revelations of his Queen to the great Jesuit, Father Antonio Vieira, Brazil became the ultimate hope of the Portuguese dynasty.

Among the fortunate circumstances that helped us to preserve our territory without having to fight for it again after the fall of the Dutch Power, we must also count, during the Colonial period, the traditional friendship between Portugal and England, and, since the Independence, the influence exercised upon Europe by this great Nation. The wish of Europe to obtain your good will has let the Monroe Doctrine pass unchallenged. It was a good fortune that Monroe came in the time of Canning. The conjunction was certainly a most lucky one. To see that the immunity of Latin America greatly depended on the prestige of this Country, however silent and unfelt that force of presence remained both to those whom it hindered and to those whom it benefited, it is enough to remember the fact that at the moment of the Secession War, when to many it seemed likely you would be rent in two separate bodies, all of a sudden came the invasion of Mexico by an European Army, bearer of new political institutions.

Brazil realized so much the good fortune which the Monroe Doctrine was for Latin America that she was the first of the new Nations to uphold it. Sixty days after it was issued, in the Message of December 3d, 1823, the Brazilian Government sent instructions to its Representative in Washington to propose to the American Government an offensive and defensive Alliance. Long before our Independence, when it was a crime to think of it, Brazilian patriots were turning their eyes towards the new American democracy. As early as 1787 they tried to interest in it Jefferson, then in France, and Jefferson did not refuse his sympathy, although bound as a Diplomatic agent, to refuse his co-operation.
That has been the course of the national sympathy on our part ever since.

If you asked me what is the chief national characteristic of Brazil, I would certainly say it is idealism. Of that idealism Americanism makes part. We are, and always have been, loyal to our Continent. Our Nation could never be enslaved to a selfish, low task; imagination governs her. She will always obey her idealism. On that account she has never known arbitrary or personal rule; she could not even produce the despot, and he would feel the vacuum around him, if he was possible. Every movement in our history can be accounted for by idealism, and by idealism only. Interest or selfishness would explain none. Take our two Emperors: one is a liberator, a national hero; the other a philosopher devoted to his Country. The attitude of both, throughout life, on the throne and in exile, was a constant idealisation of the part they should play to be worthy of the applause of posterity. That is why they will ever receive it. And, speaking of idealism in the throne, history does not present many more brilliant and impressive examples than that of the Princess Imperial Dona Isabel, who while Regent of the Empire, in 1888, caused by her own act the fall of a Cabinet in order to call a statesman, decided to propose to Parliament the immediate abolition of slavery. And she did it, knowing that the old Conservatives would leave the throne to itself before the progress of the Republican agitation in the country. What grander page of idealism is there in history than the course of the movement for the abolition of slavery in Brazil? The slave-owners themselves did most splendid work. They freed their slaves, often by hundreds, a fact which is not recorded as general even in the time of the Persecutions, when Roman society was carried away by the new ideal and by the vivid anticipation of a higher life. And
the passing of the Abolition Act through Parliament within seven days! Take our Presidents: each had one idea to carry out; each came with a plan to execute in his Administration, submitted everything to it, and left the work finished, his name attached to it. That is idealism. The Independence, the Abolition of Slavery, the Republic, all three, came out untinged with blood, owing to the national idealism, which lulls to sleep all offended interests and disappointed expectations, however great, when one of the Nation's destinies has to be fulfilled. Great political events matured on the tree and were gathered perfectly ripe.

I am sorry that instead of myself you have not heard today my countryman, Senator Ruy Barbosa. You would see there is nothing in American science of Politics and Law, or in American literature, that is not known in Brazil. Nobody seemed to have heard of him abroad, although he was the most conspicuous intellectual figure in our politics for the last twenty years; yet at the Second Hague Conference he at once made a world-wide reputation. There he showed himself worth a whole legion. I am sorry he once had to disagree from the American Delegation, but the principles he advocated are bound to triumph, as without them it is impossible to conceive a Court of Arbitration really available to all mankind. What made him get so much credit? Be sure it was no intellectual power alone; it was intellectual power at the service of idealism. Take our Foreign Minister, Baron do Rio Branco, a name honoured throughout all Latin America. He was Foreign Minister with President Rodrigues Alves and he continues under President Penna. This shows that the Country removed its foreign policy from the political or partisan sphere, as soon as a man was found who could be identified with the idea of Country exclusively. He had been a student of Brazilian geography, of Brazilian history and foreign relations, a
watcher of the integrity of our territory, which he made greater, not only because he won entirely two secular cases in which our frontiers were involved, one before President Cleveland, the other before the Swiss Federal Council, but also because he added himself to it a large tract in the Amazon valley, acquired by negotiation and purchase. Is this not a proof that the Country is ruled by her highest aspirations? Is this not idealism of the true kind, the one that is always wisdom?

Gentlemen, allow me one remark more. Dom Pedro II of Brazil, General Mitre, of the Argentine Republic, and General Porfirio Diaz, of Mexico, were the three greatest figures of Latin America in my time. Dom Pedro visited this country in 1876, he was a friend of Longfellow and Agassiz, as of every great poet and naturalist of his time; you often showed how highly you held his character, as, for instance, when the rulers of the Union and of the Confederation, refusing a mediation during the Civil War, were reported to have added that, if the time ever came for it, the Emperor of Brazil would be the natural mediator; and when you and Great Britain asked him to appoint one of the Arbitrators in the Alabama Case. General Diaz lives across your frontier; you have seen, so to say, with your own eyes, the great work he has done for Mexico. But the third, General Mitre, remains still a total stranger to you. It is sad, from the Continental point of view, that a South American national hero, with such a long, brilliant, and noble life, as General Bartholomé Mitre, could live and die unnoticed by this great Nation as a whole. It is useless to add any other proof of how little Latin America is known in the United States. Much, however, can be done by the American Universities to draw the attention of the American youth to what really is deserving among your fellow Republics of the South. Remember, if I can repeat what I said the other
day at the laying of the corner stone of the future house of the American Republics in Washington, they were coheirs with you in the great Columbus estate and that our partnership is undissolvable.