

CHAPTER XXXVII.

MR. SMITH ON THE INTERCOURSE BETWIXT THE MOTHER-COUNTRY AND HER COLONIES, AND THE EVILS WHICH ATTEND MAL-ADMINISTRATION.*

Havana, February, 184—.

MY DEAR NED—A vast deal has lately been written on the subject of Colonisation, and the intercourse which ought to exist betwixt the Mother-country and her dependencies, but I fear that an immense deal more must be written before so important a subject obtains the attention it merits from our Government. It must be admitted that the Secretary of State for the Colonies has too much to attend to, his attention is too much diverted by, and divided betwixt, the conflicting interests of Canada, the Cape, the East and West Indies, Australia, and the other vast possessions of Great Britain. It is utterly impossible for one man, were he a Solon, to make himself thoroughly acquainted with the exigencies of our various settlements, even were a whole life devoted to that particular study. The one clamours for the emigration of healthy materials into the Colony, the other petitions for the introduction of coolies, the other prays for the non-admission of convicts, another for the equalisation of the tariff, and so on, until the Colonial Secretary is really put to his wits' end. What Colonial Secretary has been more abused than Lord Stanley? Where, if I may judge from rumour, is the Colonial Minister to be found, who has done less for the Colonies than Lord Stanley? But enough of this—my object is to treat on the intercourse betwixt Spain and her Colonies, not that of England and her possessions; and you must judge for yourself whether Cuba is worse treated by Spain than our Colonies are by England and her Colonial Secretaries.

How came Spain to lose her vast possessions on the continent of America? This simple, but momentous question, is easily solved—she lost them from mal-administration! How came we to lose our North American possessions? I again reply to this question by that significant word, mal-administration! Experience, we are told, makes fools wise; if this proverb be applicable in its fullest extent, how comes it that Colonial Secretaries will not profit by experience and become wise? How comes it that they continue to treat Colonists in a measure as aliens; and why should our relatives, because they have emigrated, not be entitled to the same advantages and privileges as ourselves? Why make this distinction with countries who acknowledge the supremacy of the British flag? Are we to be burthened with Colonies, and maintain large forces of troops, priests, and missionaries, at an enormous outlay wrung from England's hard-working children, merely that the sovereign, or those who glory in vast dependencies, may exclaim, "Behold, the sun never sets on England's flag!" Or, are our Colonies to feel the Mother-country to be a mill-stone about their necks, merely because it is an honour to be part and parcel of a vast empire?

* We presume that Fray O'Donnell's narrative induced the worthy citizen to indite this letter to his friend.