

DISCOVERY OF THE NEW WORLD.

Paper by George Parsons Lathrop. Read at the Catholic Congress.

The following is the full text of the paper written by Mr. George Parsons Lathrop and read on September 4:

To trace the consequences to religion, brought about by the discovery of America, would indeed be a long and laborious task. Those consequences, as I understand the term, were immediate influences on the human mind and on human action. Under this head must be ranged the prodigious stir caused in Europe by the finding of another continent; the quickening of thought, the wider views it produced; and the fresh openings it made for worldly ambition or energy, as well as for piety, charity and zeal.

The greed or enterprise of monarchs and merchants, of explorers, soldiers, adventurers, formed a part of the consequences that worked their effect at least on the outward history of religion. But what is more important is that the voyage of Columbus, prompted by an overruling desire to serve the cause of Christ—and aided in the same spirit by the benignant will of Isabella the Catholic—opened the channel for a new, a deep and steady outpour of that apostolic zeal always inherent in the Church.

Nature abhors a vacuum; and so does religion, which always rushes in to fill the void of heathen ignorance or agnostic misbelief. The Church in the Old World, therefore, was thrilled and aroused by a desire to occupy and illuminate the whole of America with Christian life and knowledge. This was a consequence of farthest reach; and afterwards it branched out in many other directions. The work and the triumph of Columbus gave a powerful stimulus to further voyages and to commerce with distant places, in all quarters of the globe. We may say that the great Admiral's flag, as it fluttered over the Atlantic solitudes, became a signal which, in the next two centuries, was answered by hundreds of pennants hovering in remote seas and marking the billowy paths pursued by countless missionaries.

It is impossible, in a short paper like this, to discuss the first part of the subject with anything like fullness; and the question of results is that which will need most attention.

Consequences are the rush of the torrent of deeds, as it cleaves its way. Results may be likened to the fixed course of the stream, after it has found its bed; together with the new beauties it has unfolded, the ruin it may have caused at certain points, or the benefit which it confers and the sparkling gold it sometimes brings to light. Consequence is motion, following from a first motion; a current of actions or events. Result is the fact which is established by the flowing of that current. Briefly, results are the summing up of consequences. Hence it is chiefly with results that we have now to deal.

But, first, let no one rest content or indifferent with imagining that this subject is "un-practical." I know it is often said of congresses, schools or lecturers that, if they do not incessantly treat the hard, gritty, grubby facts which confront us all individually, in our business or professional careers and daily problems, they are not "practical." I fully believe in the value and necessity of the immediate, every day, direct view of things, and of instruction adapted to it. But that is simply the limited "practical." There is an unlimited practical, which is far more comprehensive and just as necessary. And nothing can be more unlimited and comprehensive in its practicality than the history and science of results.

In the vast field at which we are glancing the first effect to be observed is the reflex action of the discovery of

America upon Europe, and then we have to note the gradual shaping of results in America itself.

Spain's foothold in the Western hemisphere added immensely to her power among the nations; a fact which had much to do with later complications, political and religious. The jealousy which other European countries felt toward the Peninsular empire, on account of this increased importance and control, arrayed some of them against it and also intensified the fervor with which they espoused the heresies of the "Reformation," since these were unrelentingly combated by Philip II. of Spain. Motley, who has celebrated the Rise of the Dutch Republic and the story of the United Netherlands as a grand campaign of Protestantism in conflict with Catholicity, says: "The object of the war between the Netherlands and Spain was not, therefore, primarily a rebellion against established authority, for the maintenance of civil rights. To preserve these rights was secondary. The first cause was religion. The Provinces had been fighting for years against the Inquisition. Had they not taken arms the Inquisition would have been established in the Netherlands, and very probably in England, and England might have become in its turn a Province of the Spanish Empire."

This, to Motley, is a thought quite unbearable, and it is upon his repugnance to it that he bases his whole treatment of the Netherlands matter. It seems to me that, in so doing, he reads and writes history backward, from the present into the past, instead of forward and straight forward from the past to the present. He injects into it the coloring of his own idea or prejudice as to what might have happened, and turns his narrative into a partisan justification. Thus he becomes one-sided and takes the tone of an advocate, instead of tracing events and results impartially. But the passage just quoted from him shows well enough how a hundred years after the American discovery—Europeans mixed a good deal of religion with their warfare and put a good deal of war into their religion. That mingling of the two will explain why some of the consequences of the discovery were not immediately or wholly favorable to religion pure and simple. Motley, also, tells us of the counsel given by one Roger Williams, a Welshman not the Welsh Roger Williams of Rhode Island, so conspicuous in the seventeenth century, but an earlier though equally pugnacious Roger, who served England and the States-General as a soldier of fortune in 1584, and thereafter. He advised a combined attack by sea on the colonies of Spain. Such an attack the English and Dutch afterwards made successfully. Here we have the first momentous example of the manner in which the New World affected the civil and religious situation of the Old, and was in turn involved and affected by it.

At the same time single-minded faith, apart from worldly considerations had turned many hearts in Europe toward America and kindled the eyes of holy men with the light of a vision. For the first time the sun seemed to rise in the West. The land of the Occident was now the Morning Land of Christian hopes. The period of crusades in the Orient to rescue the sepulchre of Christ had gone by; but the new, more peaceful crusade of the sixteenth century, had for its object the rescue of souls in America from the sepulchral darkness of heathenism. A great breeze of apostolic zeal streamed in that direction. Nevertheless the earliest consequences and even some of the later results appeared, or at least might be fancied, discouraging to the cause of religion or inadequate to its high standard.

The first gold taken by Columbus to Europe was made into a chalice, which

is now preserved in the Cathedral of Seville; and it could well have been hoped that all the other first fruits of the New World would equally be dedicated to the service of God. But the first settlements planted on Hispaniola became—notwithstanding the aspirations of their founder, and the religious devotion connected with them—a scene of strife, moral disorder, injustice and cruelty. Columbus, himself in one way the chief sufferer from these evils, also inflicted a great evil upon the original inhabitants by sending home cargoes of them to be sold as slaves. And yet from this enslavement of the natives, destructive though it afterward was to them, arose Isabella's noble indignation at the traffic, and the first protest against human slavery in America, uttered by Father Anthony de Montesinos in 1511.

The San Domingan cities of Columbus crumbled; his colonies faded away, and have been overgrown by something little better than the wild weed of civilization. Still, the country he first occupied has never again become un-Christianized. And, on the other hand, as an example of the complete triumph of gentle religion, we have the mission of Las Casas, afterward Bishop of Chiapa in Mexico, who throughout his life successfully defended the Indians through slavery and oppression. Near Guatemala there was a province, Tuzulutlan, which the Spanish had invaded three times, suffering each time a bloody repulse. They called it "The Land of War," and did not dare to approach it again. Las Casas offered to subdue it; but on condition that only spiritual weapons should be used, and that no Spanish colonist or soldier should be allowed to enter the territory for five years. This being agreed to, he penetrated with other Dominican Fathers among the hostile dwellers there. In a few years they tranquilized and made Christians of the natives; and, in consequence of this, what had been so long "The Land of War" received from Charles V. the name which it bears to-day—that is, *Vera Paz*, or "Land of Peace." Soon afterward Las Casas received the brief of Pope Paul III., which pronounced excommunication against all who should enslave or rob the Indians.

In the next century we find the great Franciscan, St. Francis de Solano, the apostle of Peru, overcoming alone and unarmed a furious multitude of savage warriors who were about to attack his native neophytes; and, eventually, spreading the Gospel among those dusky swarms. When he died a hundred tribes, throughout a tract of two thousand miles, burned lamps day and night in his honor, and besought him as their advocate in heaven. Although Urban VIII. forbade public devotions to Francis Solano until the claims of the saint should be further examined, the Indians—although faithful and docile in everything else—refused, for the space of twenty years, to cease from their open veneration. Then, realizing at last that they were doing their beloved apostle no honor by opposing the command of the Vicar of Christ, they brought in and surrendered all their lamps, and waited nineteen years longer for the decree of Beatification.

Thus, as Las Casas had taught the Indians of Tuzulutlan the lesson of peace and had impressed its name upon their very country, so the natives of Peru learned, through St. Francis Solano, the lesson of true Obedience.

Marvellous were the achievements of these and other missionaries, and wonderful was the fabric of spiritual culture which they reared among the peoples of Southern and Central America and Mexico. Many suffered martyrdom, and all would gladly and gratefully have accepted it, had it come to them. The thought of violent death in such a cause had no power to

alarm or deter them; but the violence and cruelty of some among their nominal followers, Spanish adventurers and soldiers of the baser sort, toward the natives, must have been hard to meet and endure. This was a consequence detrimental, indeed, to religion; and reference to it has often been made by men of later generations, to show that because the name of religion was sullied by these unworthy hang-ons, therefore religion itself must be false or unworthy. But do we not find records of similar cruelties in New England, toward both the red and the white man, and in the injustice perpetrated upon North American Indians in this great country of ours, not by arbitrary and lawless invaders or soldier governors, but by the lawful authorities of a constitutional government, which makes a special claim of loving justice and of maintaining the freedom and equality of all men? The truth is that every age and every race has exhibited the same conjunction of the sordid and sublime. Evil seems to delight in settling down as the next-door neighbor of good.

But, by the very contrast which the misdeeds of some of the Spanish invaders offer, the pure, unselfish course and the holy labors of monks and missionaries glow with a lustre all the more clear and brilliant. They counteracted even this drawback, and overcame every other obstacle, by a power more than human. Instead of allowing the native races to be swept away by fire and sword, they saved them body and soul, and drew them gently into the fold of the One Shepherd. And there these races remain to-day. Some small proportion of them are still unconverted; but a modern French naturalist, Alcide d'Orbigny, who personally visited thirty-nine nations of pure American race in South America and gathered accurate statistics concerning them, found that among all these nations or tribes there were only 94,000 pagans, while in the same district the native Christians numbered 1,600,000.

In his comprehensive and valuable book on Christian missions, T. W. M. Marshall says: "When nature divided the great American continent into two parts, she seems to have prepared by anticipation a separate theatre for the events of which each was to be the scene, and for the actors who were destined to perform in either a part so widely dissimilar. The one was to be the exclusive domain of the Church, the other the battlefield of all the sects."

We who do not measure progress by material things only, or by mere smartness and superficial popular education, can rejoice heartily in the noble Christianizing of Southern America—which Mr. Marshall calls the Church's domain—and the thorough education, ingrained with religion, which the Church established there. In the later days of some of those Spanish-American countries, churches, convents and colleges have been robbed or crippled by selfish, ambitious and sometimes wholly irreligious men, who have masqueraded as republican leaders. But the damage appears to be on the surface only. The people are still Catholic. It is easier to rob churches than to steal souls.

These disasters came late in Southern America. Turning to North America, "the battlefield of all the sects," we see that things there have gone just the other way; disaster which for a while seemed overwhelming came first, and now a prosperity of the Church has resulted, which even one hundred years ago would have been regarded as impossible of realization.

In the region which is now the United States, as Gilmery Shea well remarks, the church did not wait for the formation of colonies. "Her priests," he said, "were among the explorers of the coast, were the