

resist them. 'There was no general opposition to their advance,' writes the shrewdest among the Spanish writers contemporary with the Conquest, 'for each province merely defended its land without aid from any other, so that the only difficulty encountered by the Inca was in the annexation of the districts round Cuzco. Afterwards all the conquered people joined them, so that they always had a vastly superior force, as well as more cunning in the art of war. Thus it was seldom that they were completely defeated, though sometimes they were obliged to retreat, and desist from a war during a year'.¹ Gaining in momentum by every conquest, the Inca power forced itself with little difficulty along the natural channels which determined its course, and overcame all obstacles by a steady and over-increasing preponderance. The career of conquest, maintained by the economic organisation devised to support it, once fairly begun, it was easier to proceed than to stop; and in this way more ground was eventually covered than could easily be retained under the primitive conditions in which this archaic dominion was created. No one can trace the growth of the Inca dominion, having regard to the physical character of the country, without being convinced that the process of conquest must shortly have given place to disintegration. A civil war, which threatened such a result, followed the death of its founder's grandson; and the vast area covered by it is now divided among four sovereign states—Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile.

In conclusion, we may briefly re-examine, in the light of what has preceded, the opinion which attributes a missionary character to the Inca conquests. 'The character of religion,' it has been said², 'was impressed on all the Peruvian wars. The life of an Inca was one long crusade against the infidel, to spread wide the worship of the Sun, to reclaim the benighted nations from their brutish supersti-

BOOK II.

Aboriginal
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'Missionary' character of the Inca conquests.

¹ Polo de Ondegardo, *ubi supra*, p. 152.

² Prescott, *Hist. of the Conquest of Peru*, Book I. chap. 2.