

PROTESTANTISM IN SOUTH AMERICA.

South America has not figured to any marked degree in the religious history of the world. This fact may be accounted for by the reason that during the periods most familiar to historians the southern continent was a dependency of two of the most unprogressive nations in Europe—Spain and Portugal. These faithful children of the Papacy sternly repressed all aspirations for liberty, either of conscience or of intellect. In them for long centuries the church and the state were intimately united. Religious interests usually dictated what should be the policy of the state and the secular arm enforced the decrees of the ecclesiastical court. Liberty of thought was a crime in these lands of the Inquisition, and any departure from the papal standards was menaced by the sacred office and the *auto da fé*. Besides, the commerce of the continent was completely in control of these powers and the people were thus shut off from any liberalizing influence that might spring from contact with Protestant nations.

The history of discovery tells of a time when the continent, at least large portions of it, possessed a high civilization and adhered to pagan faiths. The Incas of Peru were supposed to be descendants of the sun, and the Mexicans when Cortez found them, regarded the person of their emperor as sacred. The natives knew and had availed themselves of the rich mineral wealth of their country. The fabulous ransoms which the Peruvians offered for their imprisoned Inca seem to almost stagger belief. In their religion human sacrifice had a place, but other details are meagre and very much colored by Spanish fanaticism. But both the faith and the civilization of antiquity were swept away by the European conquerors.

A nation's religion is often interwoven with the story of its struggles and revolutions, and the present religious conditions in the southern continent will be best understood when we know how it was Romanized. With what feelings might a