

SOUTH AMERICA AS IT REALLY IS

Thanks to the way some of the non-Catholic missionaries describe South America the impression is pretty general here that the people of that section of the world are a poor, ignorant lot (says the *New York Catholic News*). But now and then a level-headed American business man returns after a trip to one or more of the republics down there and does not hesitate to say that the Latin-Americans have been outrageously misrepresented. These truthful glimpses of our South American neighbors, we regret to say, are not as numerous as we would like them to be, especially as the missionary brand of assault on the people is always in circulation. Now, however, we have from a competent authority a verdict on South America that should have the effect of silencing for all time the slanderers of our southern neighbors. In the *New York Times* of February 12, the Hon. John Barret, the Director-General of the Pan-American Union, who has passed several years in South America and is thoroughly familiar with the conditions there, paid a tribute to the proficiency of the University students in the South American Republics, and to the ideal home life of the people. He said in part:—

'I must now make a statement I am sorry to put forth, because it reflects upon the young men of this country; but in making it I am simply telling the truth and doing justice to our neighbors. A contrast will explain just what I mean. Pick at random a hundred young men who have just been graduated from one of the great Latin-American universities, and then pick the same number at random from the graduates of any of the principal universities of the United States. Let them be examined competitively and tested by comparison, particularly in regard to manner, clearness of speech, capability to write well, knowledge of language, of history, of literature, of the sciences, and in almost all the branches that are supposed to constitute the best part of the education of a graduate from a modern university, and the result will be so overwhelmingly in favor of the Latin-American student that such of us as may have done it will bow our heads in shame at even having criticised the educational methods of Latin-America.

'It is interesting, in this connection, to note that the majority of young Latin-Americans who come to the United States to study in our universities, as ours go to Europe to study in the English and the German universities, stand well in their classes and have a reputation for scholarship which reflects credit on their race. It may be excusable to point out, in a discussion of this kind, that in Lima,

Peru, a university of high standing was in existence 100 years before John Harvard founded the great university which fears his name and is one of the prides of the United States.'

Mr. Barret did not hesitate to say that the Latin-American has many virtues. 'Take his home life,' he said. 'Rich or poor, he can be accused of anything but race suicide. The best families in Brazil, Argentine, Chile, and Mexico average two or three times the number of children characterising the best families in the United States. This may be due to the prevailing religion and its teachings in this matter, or it may be due to race psychology; but the fact remains.'

'And how about divorce?' he was asked. 'Almost unknown,' promptly responded Mr. Barret. 'There, again, the prevailing religion possibly has much influence, but whatever may be the cause to which conditions may be due, it is the case that one hears rarely in the Latin-American republic of such cases of domestic infelicity as are reported constantly in the newspapers of the United States.'

Home Life in Spain

Family life in Spain centres wholly about the mother of the family (declares Mary F. Nixon-Roulet in *The Spaniard at Home*). The word of *la madre* is law to the children; and it is equally so to the father.

As mothers, Spanish women are devotion itself. From the highest to the lowest Spaniards are devoted to children. Devotion to her offspring is equalled, by a Spanish woman, only by her loyalty to her husband. Their home life is the only thing in the world for them, and there are few things pleasanter than the Spaniards at home.

The most striking thing about Spanish home life is its mirthfulness. The servants sing about their work, the children chatter, the women talk gaily, the men jest, everyone is pleasant and obliging. The whole tone seems to be taken from the lively, talkative *dona* at the head of the house.

Customs vary in different ranks of life, but the general tone of family life is the same. Even among the peasantry one seldom hears quarrelling at home. Perhaps because he is temperate, Diego is easier to live with than his English or American cousin, and the plain little white-washed cottages of the poorest country districts seem to breathe a spirit of content.

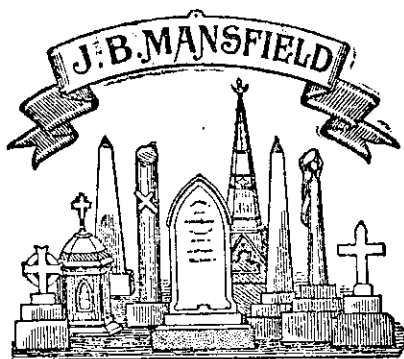
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