

BOOK REVIEWS

Origins of Inter-American Interest 1700-1812. BY HARRY BERNSTEIN.
[The American Historical Association.] (Philadelphia: University of
Pennsylvania Press, 1945. Pp. vii-ix, 125. \$2.00.)

Historians of the Western World have generally followed a recognizable pattern which assumes a movement of civilization from Europe to both Americas. What there is in the story of interaction between North and South America has been too often confined to a narrative of the Monroe Doctrine and its effects on American relationships. Even so, as it was told in most books of a general nature, the Doctrine seemed to have sprung full blown from a nebulous, murky set of circumstances. Only in fairly recent years has the story of political interaction during the decade prior to 1823 been made known to a wider circle of scholars.

It is in this tradition of scholarship that Dr. Bernstein's book belongs, except that he pushes back to its earliest days the account of inter-relationships in the Western Hemisphere. More than that he adds breadth as well as depth to an understanding of this interaction by an examination of the economic and cultural threads that ran between North and South America. In these first years of association may be traced the beginnings of our present cultural, political, and commercial relations. Herein lies the book's most valuable contribution because few scholars seem to know that in the North American colonies there was a sharp awareness of the lands south of the border. In fact, one writer in this field not so long ago expressly denied that there were any contacts between northern and southern regions of the Western Hemisphere in the earlier period.

Dr. Bernstein's work is restricted largely to New York, New England, and Pennsylvania and to their communications with all of Latin America, both island and continental areas. After an introductory chapter on European conflicts for the New World, the volume quickly gets to its main objective, with chapters on inter-American trade, the formation of cultural interest, and political ties. As epilogue, there is a brief but good summary of the situation from about 1810 through the 1820's. Trade between the English-American colonies and the Caribbean as well as Spain and Portugal was well established before the American Revolution: "Colonial wars, illicit trade and privateering had familiarized many Americans with Spanish American terrain, ports, currents, trade routes

and geography, while others, at home, were reading about these places in travel books and libraries." By 1800 United States exports to the Spanish Empire were almost evenly divided between the mother country and South America. By 1812 South America's share was approaching sixty percent. The Napoleonic wars made Cuba's trade relations with the United States closer than with Spain. North American ships were also appearing in Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo, and Buenos Aires.

Along with exchanges of commodities went exchanges in ideas. Philadelphia was the center of Hispanic interests; but in New York, Boston, and elsewhere, a number of people were collecting materials on Spanish civilization. A foundation, slight though it was, had already been laid for the superb structure of Hispanic studies created later by Irving, Prescott, and Ticknor. On their part, South Americans looked for inspiration to North American republicanism and liberalism. Apostles of republicanism spread the gospel in South American cities by pamphlets, circulation of the Declaration of Independence, and direct proselytizing. Imperceptibly the consciousness of a New World civilization distinct from that of the Old World captured the imaginations of the leaders of the Western Hemisphere. North American pressure for the independence of the Latin-American colonies was a persistent fact for many years before its accomplishment. Dr. Bernstein rightly concludes that "American foreign policy drifted on inter-American currents toward the Monroe Doctrine."

The slimness of this volume is no measure of the vast research that went into its careful construction. One or two minor slips reveal that even a worthy Beveridge fund publication is not infallible. The New England historian is Thomas, not John, Prince; and William Shaler's role in inter-American cultural relations appears to be more than "slight." While Anglo-American rivalry in Latin America in this period is a familiar fact, it is at least worth mentioning that a few voices, such as Thomas Pownall's, were raised in favor of an Anglo-American alliance to solve problems bequeathed by a dying Spanish empire. These are slight flaws, and so good a beginning warrants the hope of a continuation of Dr. Bernstein's study. A book on the later period would be an invaluable contribution to the growing number of volumes in this field of Hispanic-American scholarship.

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