

Mendonça bestows a major part of the credit for the enactment of the Rio Branco Law (1871), the fundamental piece of legislation in the crusade for the abolition of negro slavery in Brazil, upon his idol. The author records on the front side of the ledger many other of the Viscount's endeavors in the fields of legislation and administration.

The reviewer now comes to the less pleasant task of noting the methods employed by the author in compiling his treatise on his subject—undoubtedly, one of Brazil's greatest statesmen. The author nearly always supports his conclusions by quoting long extracts from addresses or writings of public men, performances that were often a part of memorial occasions. While useful, such supports are not strong buttresses in a sound structure. Another defect in method is the failure of the author to show that he has used carefully the monographic literature of other scholars writing on topics closely related to his own. One should think that Uruguayan, Argentine, and Paraguayan scholars at least should have something worthy of consideration to say on some of the diplomatic questions touched upon in the volume. In a word, the book has very few of the earmarks of objectivity.

Finally, it may be noted that the introduction to and the conclusion of the volume are a bit unusual in character. The former is an introduction to the diplomacy of the Paraguayan War only; the latter treats the subject of the Viscount's fatal illness and his last rites.

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*Patria y cultura.* By RAFAEL M. MERCHÁN. [Grandes Periodistas Cubanos, VII, Publicaciones del Ministerio de Educación, Dirección de Cultura.] (Habana: P. Fernández y Cía., 1948. Pp. 277. Paper.)

Tasting ink early in his home town of Manzanillo and in Bayamo as the traditional printer's devil, Rafael María Merchán soon became a contributor to the papers on which he labored. Thereafter he could not long abstain from journalistic effort, whatever might be his means of livelihood. At the instigation of his parents he entered the theological seminary in Santiago de Cuba and took orders, but, not finding the clerical life to his taste, he returned to Bayamo where he continued for a time as a printer and then as a teacher. Habana soon beckoned, and the printer-pedagogue moved to a schoolroom in the capital, where he was quickly involved in a newspaper polemic over corporal punishment in schools. This brought him to the attention of the Conde de Pozos Dulces, whose periodical, *El Siglo*, was an organ of social, political and economic reform. The Count invited Merchán to contribute political

articles, and the two coöperated beautifully until a change of ministries in Spain brought about the collapse of the Reformista movement and the beginning of the Ten Years' War in 1868. Even so, Pozos Dulces and Merchán managed to remain some two years more in Habana as a sort of literary fifth column, slipping subversive writing past the censors. One article by Merchán, "Laboremos," printed in *El País*, November 15, 1868 (reproduced in the present collection), proved a veritable firebrand of which Manuel Márquez Sterling has written:

Dejó Merchán, en Cuba, la confusión y el dolor: su proclama revolucionaria que habfa escapado a los censores del periódico *El País*, leída por los españoles como una vulgar disertación filosófica, enardecía a los buenos; interpretado luego, con fiel criterio, por amigos y enemigos, circuló pronto por toda la isla dejando a su paso el rastro de pólvora que no pudo España barrer de nuestro suelo.

Between 1870 and 1874 the journalist-revolutionary fought with his pen from the United States and France, but financial needs and a desire to visit the land of his father's birth led him to Colombia as secretary to Francisco Javier Cisneros, a fellow Cuban who was then building a railroad in that country. The latter, also a revolutionary with a price on his head, had led six expeditions into Cuba from foreign territory, on one occasion entering Santiago de Cuba itself under the very eyes of Spanish authorities. For some reason, however, the engineer then turned back to his profession, established an office in New York and began construction work on the southern continent. Cisneros and Merchán were more concerned with railroad building between 1874 and 1878 than with Cuban independence. For the time, Merchán's journalistic pen was silent, but after 1878 he appears as a prolific writer in the periodicals of his adopted country.

Merchán was now interested in literary criticism, political reform, and a defense of things American before world opinion. One article on the last topic, "Carta al Señor don Juan Valera sobre asuntos americanos" (for some unexplained reason omitted from the present collection), attracted wide attention. In several articles he attempted to interpret the United States and its policies toward Latin America, an example being that entitled "La hegemonía de la Unión Americana." This was a review of José María Céspedes, *La doctrina de Monroe* (La Habana, 1893), in which, after a survey of anexationist movements in Spanish-American countries, the reviewer makes the statement: "El anexionismo de los Estados Unidos no es, pues, tan de temer: el mas temible es el nuestro."

The outbreak of the final war for independence in Cuba in 1895 threw Merchán once more into the Cuban contest toward which official and public opinion in Latin America was rather indifferent when not

openly hostile. At this time Merchán's writings took on a controversial tone, though they never dropped below the standards of cultured literary criticism. Reproduced in the present volume from this period are "La autonomía," "Tercer aniversario: 24 de febrero," "La redención de un mundo," and eighteen of forty articles on the relation between the Cuban revolution and the United States that were written in 1898 for *El Rayo X*. The author reveals himself in these articles as a polished writer and an observer of wide experience and keen understanding. Dr. Felix Lizaso has called attention to this last quality in his prologue to the present volume. Commenting on the letter to Juan Gualberto Gómez about the latter's *Informe* on the Platt Amendment (which Gómez was opposing in the Cuban constitutional convention of 1901), Lizaso writes:

Mientras Juan Gualberto Gómez afirmaba la seguridad de que nuestro pueblo estaba preparado para salir airoso en el gobierno propio, Merchán, que había salido de Cuba treinta años antes, y había conocido de cerca las dificultades con que habían tropezado otras repúblicas de América, sentía grandes dudas, aunque no se consideraba autoridad en la materia, por razón de su misma lejanía.

Among other things, Merchán had written:

O la experiencia de la Historia no sirve para nada, o el temor de los Estados Unidos es muy racional. Para atenuar o desvanecer ese argumento, deberíamos los cubanos citar el ejemplar de alguna república latinoamericana que hubiese pasado del coloniaje a la independencia ordenada con tanta perfección como una crisálida que se metamorfosea; el ejemplo no existe. No tenemos, pues, en que apoyarnos, por hacer creer que en Cuba no se repitirá la Historia.

But Merchán was no blind supporter of American opinion or policy. When the first intervention government, on the recommendation of Cuban leaders, offered him the chair of American History in the University of Habana, he declined, though he gladly accepted a diplomatic post from Cuba's first president, and came home from a thirty years' exile to be greeted by a series of rousing ovations.

Merchán's writings are scattered through many periodicals and pamphlets. He himself collected a number in *Estudios críticos* and *Variedades*, volumes that were issued from his press *La Luz* in Bogotá in 1894. A complete collection of them would be a contribution to the history of political and literary thought in America. So would a full scale biography. Until such are prepared, however, we shall remain indebted to Dr. Lizaso and the Cuban Dirección de Cultura for this fine volume and its biographical *prólogo*.

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