

EDITORIAL

WHERE CASTRO SLIPPED.

By DANIEL DE LEON

TO say of the Cipriano Castro who has just mopped the earth with Secretary Nagel and the rest of the Taft Administration, shortly before they went out of office, taught them all a lesson in International Law, and even brought home to them several lessons on the jurisprudence of this country itself,—to say of that Castro that he has slipped somewhere, sounds unlikely at this season. Nevertheless, that is just what the ex-President of Venezuela has more recently done when, in the course of his triumphal reception at Havana he said:

“My dearest wish is that Latin America may be free and independent of financiers.”

That Latin Arnerica—being part and parcel, a good part and parcel, at that, of the globe, in general, of the American continent in particular—will be eventually “free and independent of financiers,” goes without saying. But that day is not yet. What is more, freedom and independence from financiers is a status reached only through the portals of subjection and dependence to financiers.

The disturbed condition of most of Latin America illustrates the consequence of progressive aspirations on retrogressive paths.

What is called the Revolution in Latin Arnerica—emancipation from Spanish control—took place at a time when the world, at large, seethed with revolutionary aspirations, but Latin America, in particular, happened to stand where the roads fork—one road leading back to the feudal autonomy of large armed landed proprietors, the other leading “forward” to the extinction of such feudal autonomies, and their merging into a feudal monarchy. The latter road led forward, tho’ seemingly backward because the head of tyranny, history teaches, can be cut not before it has been consolidated upon one neck. Events in Europe arrested this development in

Latin America just about the time it was to take place.

When the Great Napoleon kidnapped the King of Spain, Fernando VII., and made Spain an appanage of the newly schemed Napoleonic Universal Empire, the feudal lords of Latin America saw their opportunity to slip the centralized feudal lasso that was tightening around their necks—and they seized the opportunity. They refused submission to Napoleon, and presenting a droll historic manifestation, declared their independence, not from Spain, but from Napoleon. That original uprising took place, significantly enough, to the tune of “Long live Fernando VII.!”—cheers for the very centralized feudalism that the Latin American feudal lords were just preparing to overthrow in their own home. The circumstance evidently determined the course of events for the next hundred and more years.

When Napoleon fell, and Fernando VII. returned “to his own,” and his emissaries arrived in Latin America with honeyed words of appreciation from the over-lord to his “loyal subjects,” the “loyal subjects” sent the emissaries packing. They were de facto free from Spain, and did not choose to return to vassalage; and when their subjugation was attempted by force of arms, they triumphantly met force with force.

The regimen thus established was one of petty feudal lordships—one step further back from capitalism, or be it the “financiers,” the necessary stepping stone to ultimate freedom. The consequences were speedily felt by Simon Bolivar, the foremost of the feudal lords, whose military genius rendered him the Liberator of South America, and, with South America, of the whole of Latin America, Portuguese Brazil excepted. Bolivar, broken-hearted, expressed the conviction that Spanish America needed “re-conquering” before her people could enter the march to progress, seeing that emancipation from Spain had brought on disorder. To-day, did Bolivar still live, he would have expressed himself with greater precision. Instead of saying that Latin America would have to be re-conquered by force of arms, as he implied, he would have said: “Latin America has relapsed into autonomous feudalities. That implies the disorder typified in England during the wars of the Roses, and in France during the Burgundian and Armagnac feuds. The path to order cannot now any longer lie via centralized feudalism. The path to order now lies via capitalism, or the ‘financiers’ stage of popular enslavement.”

In the meantime, like a traveler lost in the woods, Latin America is floundering

about in a state of perpetual upheavals of various degrees of virulence, ranking all the way from Mexican bloody convulsions to Bolivian and Venezuelan military insurrections.

Castro should know as much—he has figured and is figuring in both propositions, the “financiers” and the “military” proposition.

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