

numerous. Of those printed in English, the most noteworthy are : "The Standard" and the "Buenos Aires Herald" (Argentine Republic); "The Montevideo Times" (Uruguay); "The Mexican Herald" and "The Star and Herald," of Panama. The two last mentioned are published also in a Spanish edition. In the list of semi-weekly, weekly and monthly magazines and other periodicals put forth in English, may be mentioned "The Review of the River Plate," "The Brazilian Review," "The Chilean Times," and three in Mexico, namely, "The Pan-American Magazine," "The Mexican Investor" and "The Mexican Mining Journal."

## CHAPTER XX

### LITERATURE

DURING the wars of independence the Spanish-American mind busied itself chiefly in the composition of fierce invectives against the mother country, and of ardent appeals to the patriotic spirit of the time. The scenes and memories of the struggle were slow to find recorders in the poet and the historian. Instead, the necessities arising out of the new situation appeared to demand that attention should be given primarily to matters of political import.

Even for a half century after independence had been won, literary endeavor displayed itself largely in assailing or extolling the various governments, along with the aspirations or achievements of the individuals who shaped them. So complex were the questions offered, and so acute the differences of opinion among the factions and leaders, that the tinge of partisanship was exceptionally marked. Most of the works, indeed, published during this period served little more than to reflect the local attitude or the personal sentiments of their respective authors.

As conditions in one state or another became relatively free from internal disturbance, constitutional and international law, political economy and education were the subjects that occupied a position of prominence. Written mainly from an external or abstract point of view, the various treatises on these matters were apt to lack definiteness of application to purely national concerns. Descriptive only too often of institutions and practices in Europe, their presentation could not exercise a direct and potent influence on the life and thought of those to whom they were addressed.

Since about 1876, however, when the Latin-American nations in general began to be brought into closer contact with the world

at large, a keen interest has been aroused among them in social and economic problems of a concrete character. Journalists, essayists, novelists, poets and historians have come to take an active part in the discussion of the principles and measures that may tend to solve these problems, so far as they have arisen in their own countries. Instead of dealing with what concerns Europe, many of the authors have sought inspiration in the characteristics and environment of their own people. The inclination of former days to mistake the locality for the nation, and the individual for the community, is giving way to a spirit of vigorous and intense nationalism in all that lies within the realm of the intellect.

Though repudiating the political authority of Spain, the earlier writers of Spanish America long adhered to its literary ideals and forms. They had been educated exclusively in the traditions of the mother country. The languages of other European lands they scarcely knew. With the close of the wars of independence the pure literature engendered by the struggle came forth; but its expression ran in Spanish molds, and followed their changing structure from neo-classicism to romanticism.

Restrained by the tendency of the age to concentrate effort on political themes, dis-

couraged by the animosities of party strife, bereft of communication with the world of culture beyond, imaginative thought was unable to develop freely its own resources. When it finally met the flood of modern realism surging to the north of the Pyrenees, it was overwhelmed. Escaping the Spanish Scylla, it encountered the French Charybdis. Only of recent years has Spanish-American literature begun to display the vigor, freshness, spontaneity and originality which its environment ought to suggest.

The mother country left to its former colonies a rich, sonorous and flexible language, together with a literary style at once rhetorical, ceremonious, artificial and florid. Since then it has watched with disapproval what it regards as an abandonment by the Spanish Americans of the narrow path of correctness closely guarded by the canons of the Spanish "Academy of the Language." It reprehends their departure from pure Castilian, not only in actual speech and orthography, but in syntax and diction as well. On their part, the Spanish Americans assert that they have a more scientific conception of the development of speech. Their circumstances, also, they believe, justify them in making the Spanish language an instrument of expression, broader and more plastic than is possible in Spain itself.

So long as neo-classicism held sway in Spanish America, at all events, the standards of the Golden Age were strictly upheld. The great masters of the seventeenth century alone could be imitated, and criticism dealt harshly with the few daring spirits who strove to seek inspiration and guidance from some other source. Useful though it was in furthering the acquisition of taste and style, the model of the Spanish classicists proved to be too rigid, too stilted, if not altogether too antiquated, to suit the mental processes of the modern age. Nor was the situation improved by the excessively ornamental, and even bombastic, qualities of Spanish romanticism, which tended to hamper the employment of directness, simplicity and conciseness in expression. Accordingly the great body of Spanish-American poets and prose writers, unable to overcome the traditional usages, crossed the Pyrenees and surrendered themselves unconditionally to the ruling thought of France.

While the Spanish-American mind was passing through these vicissitudes, the course of intellectual development in Brazil bore quite a different character. Portugal had not endowed its former dominion with a literature so rich, so abundant and so varied as Spain had done in the case of its own pos-

sessions oversea. Brazilian authors, therefore, while using the Portuguese language as their natural vehicle of expression, were bound by few, if any, canons of masters and academies. Their literary standards they formed rather to suit their needs.

Exempt from the violent contests that were agitating the republics of Spanish America, the thought of Brazil concerned itself little with practical politics, or with theorizings about the state and its functions. Instead, it sought and found subjects for song and story in the aboriginal life of its own land. The result was that a fervid and devoted "Indianism" pervaded the literature of the earlier years of the empire.

Later, in proportion as Brazil came into a more intimate relationship with Europe, its men of letters fell inevitably into the currents of Old World mentality. English, German and French philosophy took a firm hold on the Brazilian imagination. Evolutionism, monism and positivism—each had its representatives; but positivism, the "religion of humanity," triumphed over its competitors. "Order and progress" became the national watchwords, and the influence of French methods and principles has remained in the ascendent, more extensive perhaps than profound. Yet with all its submissiveness to the control thus exer-

cised, the literature of Brazil is perhaps the most distinctly American in Latin America at large.

Without attempting to point out precisely how the intellectual supremacy, which France still enjoys in the twenty republics, is displayed, it may be sufficient to remark that the language and literature of that country appear to embody most of the qualities that fascinate the Latin-American mind. Through its language the Latin Americans familiarize themselves with the course of events in the literary, scientific and artistic world. Through it, also, they endeavor to give their own thought a wider publicity. French literature furnishes them a norm of correctness. Its ideas and diction, its content and style, impart refinement and elegance in taste, phraseology and expression.

No European nation has done so much, officially and privately, as France to strengthen its intellectual power in Latin America. The man of letters from any of the republics finds there a heartiness of welcome, an eagerness to meet his wishes, a desire to facilitate his work, which make an irresistible appeal. In this propaganda a group of Latin-American writers resident in Paris is taking an active and important share.

To form a just conception of what the

literature of the twenty republics is, and of what it seeks to realize, a number of other circumstances molding its development must be taken into account. Political disturbances or exigencies, and a somewhat excessive amount of foreign influence, have not been the only obstacles in the way of a full and free assertion of native genius. The intellectual isolation, in which Latin-American authors have stood toward one another, has prevented many of them from appreciating the abundance of material for treatment afforded by the history and present conditions of the various lands and peoples. Communication of minds among them, on the whole, is weaker even than commercial and political connection.

The Latin-American men of letters may know their own particular country or Europe, but they are often unable, or unwilling, to interest themselves in the mental achievements of their neighbors of like or similar origin. Coöperation of an effective sort is thus impeded, and an impulse given, either to make literature provincial, rather than American, in spirit, or else to copy what Europe offers, without due consideration of its adaptability to national needs.

Then, too, a species of intellectual cult, handed down from colonial times, is still fairly prevalent. An exaggerated respect

is shown to the utterances or publications of an "authority," whose statements and opinions are held to be unquestionable in their soundness and veracity. Hence, if any given matter is not mentioned, or is condemned, by such an "authority," it does not exist, is valueless or is dangerous to believe, as the case may be.

Instead of enjoying a system of education widely diffused, an enlightened public opinion that recognizes and stimulates literary genius, an abundance of readers, a multiplicity of publishers, and numerous and easily available libraries, the Latin-American countries are distinctly lacking in these incentives to authorship. Outside of a few of the largest cities, the circle of readers is probably smaller than that of a single street in London, New York or Berlin. If the advanced states of the world put forth the better sort of books cheaply, in order to reach the mass of the people, the reverse is commonly true in Latin America. There the cost of publication is heavy, and the best works are addressed to a very small class, issued in limited editions, and usually brought out at the expense of the author.

Laboring in an atmosphere from which, as they complain, literary taste and appreciation are largely missing, the men who possess the ability to write books and the

means to publish them are almost forced to give them away. On the other hand, the conjunction of the two endowments is not always a benefit to the author and his group of readers. As the one is tempted to write and publish lavishly, so the other is impelled to estimate literary importance in terms of quantity rather than of quality.

Of the lighter literature of Latin America, a large part has had to appear in periodicals, with the effect of fostering an inclination to continue producing it in that form. Many of the works of eminent writers exist only in fugitive publications, difficult of access. Recently, however, efforts have been made to collect and republish, in so-called "bibliotecas," or "libraries," much of the valuable material that may be drawn from those and other sources.

Because of the fact that the sales of almost any book of merit are so limited, the expense of printing treatises of general interest or permanent worth is frequently borne, in whole or in part, by the governments. Nor is it rare to find official encouragement offered to literary enterprise, through the award of prizes or the grant of stipends, to enable writers of promise to study abroad.

In most of the countries, the novelists and dramatists suffer from the disadvantage of having no adequate protection against

European, and notably French, competition. Publishers and managers, it would seem, find it easier, and certainly cheaper, to secure translations than to interest themselves in native works. Although many of the republics have a clause in the national constitution, guaranteeing the right of an author to ownership in the creations of his mind, suitable provision is seldom made to enforce it.

This policy of denying the utility of the copyright system, so far as local circumstances are concerned, has not a few defenders in Latin America. They argue, in all seriousness, that the free reproduction of works originally issued in Europe or the United States promotes the growth of home talent by force of example, and hence conduces to the formation of a national literature. Indeed they venture to assert that it is the duty of authors in the more advanced countries of the world to allow their books or plays to be translated gratuitously for the benefit of their less fortunate fellows. The larger publicity thus received and a happy knowledge of the good thus accomplished, ought to be regarded, they think, as sufficient compensation.

Practically all of the states possess national libraries, some of which, like those of Brazil, Mexico, Chile and the Argentine

Republic, are of considerable importance. Most of the collections, however, are unsuitably housed, and the facilities vouchsafed to readers are often quite inadequate. Except in the capital cities, public libraries are rare. The result is, that the difficulties attendant upon transportation make the national collections well-nigh useless to persons who live at a considerable distance.

Given these drawbacks, the Latin-American writers who have persevered in spite of them deserve all the more credit for what they have accomplished. Even if they have not brought forth as yet any individual work that has wielded a powerful influence on the literature of the world, they have composed many of a high type of excellence. Were Spanish and Portuguese international languages in the sense that English, French and German are, the productions of the Latin-American mind would be more fully appreciated.

There is a saying in the tropics that "life without literature and quinine is not worth living." Whatever the potency of the drug, the activity of the Latin-American intellect, both within and without the tropics, certainly would seem to make the adage true. The material backwardness, furthermore, of any particular republic is no evidence of poverty of mind. Some of

the least advanced states have been the birthplaces of eminent men of letters. While every one of the Latin-American countries can point with pride to a considerable number of gifted writers on many themes, eight out of the twenty nations may be singled out, perhaps, as literary centers, alike for the amount and for the excellence of the works produced. These are the Argentine Republic, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.

Latin Americans are especially prolific in the composition of poetry, to which the liquid qualities of the Spanish and Portuguese languages easily lend themselves. Literary criticism, also, is an art cultivated by them with marked success. Prose fiction, and the writing of short stories in particular, they have taken up only in recent years; hence the number of authors representing it is still quite small. Among the more serious branches of literature, history, biography, ethnology, politics, jurisprudence, economics, sociology and psychology are often treated at great length and with much skill. In the cultivation of some of these phases of productive thought, the Argentine Republic may be said to excel in politics and social science, Brazil in romance, Chile in history and Colombia in poetry.

Literature, to the Latin American, is

a form of recreation rather than a stated profession. His mental drift being toward introspection, he is readily disposed to put his soliloquies on paper. He tries, therefore, to reproduce his own thoughts, instead of seeking to reach the mind of others.

Public men in the various countries, moreover, are apt to be able writers. Political life and literary vigor seem to be mutually stimulating. Versatility is another marked feature of the Latin-American intellect. Its most gifted exponents, familiar with many branches of learning, and endowed with brilliant imaginative faculties, write almost, if not quite, equally as well on one subject as they do on another. Accordingly it is difficult at times to determine which particular type of thought a given author represents.

Latin-American literature is characterized by an ingenious and agile style, an ease and elasticity of form, a freedom of expression and a singularly rich and varied vocabulary. While not violating the essential principles of grammar, it does not permit itself to be dominated by them. On the other hand it retains, in some measure, the florid, bombastic and redundant elements included in the heritage from the mother countries. Trending toward exaggerated modes of setting forth ideas, it frequently lacks terseness and directness.

Many of the best writers of Latin America, however, are striving to model their works on the masterpieces of prose and poetry of all time, and not simply on the literary standards of Spain, Portugal or France. They are no less earnest, also, in their effort to choose their themes from national life and from life in the New World at large. In this attitude they are being upheld by a reaction among the members of the reading public in behalf of native authors, which may enable them to enjoy an ampler field for the display of their genius.

## CHAPTER XXI

### FINE ARTS

VIEWING the twenty republics as a whole, native drama, music, architecture, sculpture and painting appear to stand on a much lower level of achievement than native literature. Though keenly appreciative of all forms of beauty, the Latin American, so far as his own creative instinct is concerned prefers to give them expression in the written word. Other manifestations of the intellect and the imagination, which yield æsthetic pleasure, he is more content to draw from Europe, or to have the government furnish them the needful encouragement.