

Perhaps in the beginning a misunderstanding of this position caused the Mexican delegates to be looked upon with distrust by some of their colleagues, who feared that they might be disposed to interfere in the South American questions, or be too partial to the United States; but the impartial and friendly conduct of those delegates in regard to the sister-Republics of South America ought to have satisfied them that Mexico, far from having any feeling against, or design upon, any South American nation, or any wish to interfere in their policies, had, on the contrary, the most sincere wishes for the preservation of their peace and the promotion of their common welfare.

The Argentine delegates seemed to be under the impression that the Mexican delegates had formed a compact with their Chilean colleagues to act together in the Conference. Such impression, if it ever existed, was entirely unfounded. There was no compact, understanding, or agreement of any kind whatsoever, expressed or implied, between the Mexican and the Chilean delegates to act together, in all or in any question before the Conference, and much less in antagonism to any of the other States, and when their votes happened to be in accord, it was due only to similarity of views or instructions from their respective Governments, and never to any compact among them.

Preliminary Meeting of the Conference.—The President of the United States fixed the 2d of October, 1889, as the date for the meeting of the Conference. Two days previous to this date, the delegates, excepting those of Ecuador, Paraguay, and Hayti, who had not arrived, assembled in Washington, and held a preliminary meeting to agree upon their organization. The first question which was presented to them was the election of a president.

Election of Mr. Blaine as President.—It is an act of courtesy, sanctioned by the example of diplomatic congresses and conferences which have met hitherto, that a representative of the inviting Government, on whose territory the conference meets, shall be elected President; and therefore all the delegates agreed that the President should be a member of the United States delegation. The Latin-American delegates were not in accord as to the gentleman whom they desired to elect President; some thought that Mr. Henderson, being the Chairman of the United States delegation, ought to be chosen; others were disposed to vote for Mr. Trescot, because he had had great experience in diplomatic affairs, and was supposed to be better fitted for the position. Mr. Blaine was suggested for President by Mr. Curtis because of the supposed antagonism between Mr. Henderson and Mr. Trescot. This suggestion was originally made to Mr. Blaine, who was pleased with the prospect of participating in the Conference. He sent Mr. Curtis to President Harrison to submit the proposition and the reasons. President Harrison approved, and requested Mr. Bliss and Mr. Davis to

express his wish to the United States delegates and to the Conference if necessary. A technical objection at once presented itself—whether a functionary of this Government who was not a member of the Conference, not being a delegate, could be made President; but this objection, which was only one of form, was happily solved, since the Secretary of State represented his country in a truer sense than the ten United States delegates together. Hence if the election was to be made with the purpose of fulfilling a duty of courtesy towards the inviting Government, that duty could be most satisfactorily performed by choosing the Secretary of State, even though he were not a delegate. On the other hand, the high position of this functionary made his election as President an act befitting the dignity of the Conference. Although several delegates objected at first to his election, all were satisfied with the foregoing explanation, excepting the Argentine representatives, who stated that they could not vote for him because he was not a member of the Conference. To avoid casting a negative vote, they decided not to be present at the first meeting of the Conference, when the President was elected; but both of them attended the official banquet which Mr. Blaine gave on that day to the delegates. The judgment of the Argentine delegates was certainly entitled to great weight, but it is not likely that they alone were right in this matter; and if this incident involved a question of the dignity and independence of the delegates, it is not probable that only the delegates of one among the fourteen States represented in the Conference would have entertained such an opinion. If this objection had been a valid one, those presenting it would not have attended the subsequent meetings of the Conference, as they were presided over by a gentleman who, in their opinion, was not qualified to be its President.

I think that the Argentine delegates were misled by a memorandum prepared under Mr. Trescot's direction by Mr. Warner P. Sutton, who was at the time Chief Clerk of the Conference, mentioning all the precedents of the European diplomatic conferences which unanimously establish the practice to be that the Secretary of State of the inviting Government, being a member of the Conference, should be elected President.

This memorandum was intended for the exclusive use of Secretary Blaine and the American delegates, but by some means knowledge of its contents reached Señor Quintana, and as Mr. Blaine was not a member of the United States delegation, Señor Quintana naturally thought that Mr. Blaine was not eligible for President. Señor Quintana afterwards made a very handsome explanation and apology to Mr. Blaine, and the Sutton memorandum was frequently the subject of jest between them. There was another important memorandum to the effect that this Conference was the first one ever held in the United States,

and ought to be held under such conditions as would justify the making of precedents, and not follow exactly those hitherto made in Europe.

Subsequent events, and especially those which occurred during the last meetings of the Conference, showed clearly how wise was the election of Mr. Blaine, because he was invested with full powers to negotiate with the Latin-American delegates—powers which were really broader than those of the United States delegation—and because, on the other hand, possessing exquisite tact and a strong desire to prevent the failure of a high purpose in an assembly of which he was the originator, he went farther in order to come to an agreement with the Latin-American delegates than in all probability the United States delegation would have deemed themselves authorized to go.

Question of Precedence.—The question of the precedence of the nations represented in the Conference was next brought up. Some thought that the alphabetical order should be adopted, and others that this matter should be decided by lot. The latter view prevailed, and in the third meeting of the Conference all the nations represented were placed in ballot, and thus the precedence given to their delegates was decided.

Formal Opening of the Conference.—After the preliminary meetings in which the Conference elected its President, it was formally organized on October 2, 1889. Mr. Blaine delivered on that occasion a very remarkable address which was one of his happiest compositions, and then he took the delegates to the White House to present them to President Harrison. In the evening he gave a banquet to the delegates which was attended by them all, and early the next morning the delegates left Washington for New York and West Point on their excursion through the principal cities of the United States.

The Excursion of the Delegates.—The Conference, immediately after its formal opening, adjourned to enter upon the railway excursion which lasted from October 3 to November 13, 1889. That excursion covered more than nine thousand miles of travel, and included visits to all of the large cities east of the Missouri and north of the Ohio River. It was suggested by Mr. William E. Curtis, whose connection with the Conference will presently appear, and heartily favored by President Harrison and Secretary Blaine, and it had several objects in view: First, to give the delegates an opportunity to become acquainted with each other, and to establish friendly personal relations among themselves before entering upon the serious business of the Conference; second, to impress them with the magnitude, the wealth, the prosperity, and the commercial advantages of the United States; third, to soften, and if possible to remove the prejudices and distrust that have been alluded to, by hospitality and social intercourse; and, finally, to awaken among

the people of the United States an interest in the proceedings of the Conference and an appreciation of its importance.

However, after the excursion took place, I thought it did not produce the results expected, as many of the delegates knew this country well, and those who did not, could hardly form an adequate idea of it in such a rapid trip. Some of those who took an active part in the proceedings of the Conference, among them the Argentine delegates, did not join it, but about three-fourths of the delegates and almost all the attachés made the entire journey, it being the particular desire of Mr. Blaine that all the young men should go, because, as he said, they would learn more than the older men and would make better use of their information. The only delegate who did not accompany the excursion at all was Señor Saenz Peña, who excused himself because his wife and child were absolute strangers in Washington, unable to speak the language, and dissatisfied with hotel life, and he felt that he must remain and get them settled in a private dwelling as soon as possible. Señor Quintana accompanied the excursion only a few days; he joined the delegates at Chicago, but left the next day and was not present at the banquet given there to the delegates, and where he had been invited to speak; he excused his return by saying that he had been unexpectedly appointed a delegate, and felt that he should make use of the interval to prepare himself for his labors.

I only accompanied the excursion to West Point and then returned to Washington. When the delegates reached Chicago I went there, at the special request of Mr. Blaine, and accompanied the excursion to Council Bluffs and Omaha, returning from there to Washington. When the excursion reached Pittsburg, I, with most of the delegates who had not joined it, went to that place and we all came together to Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore.

If any favorable result grew out of the excursion, it was most likely among the inhabitants of the cities visited by the delegates, on account of the good impression which may have been produced by personal intercourse with them, although this was, of course, very slight. This, too, may have dispelled some wrong views that had been entertained. Those who most enjoyed the excursion were the young men, attachés of delegations and others who joined it.

On the return of the delegates after their excursion, just mentioned, the organization of the Conference was perfected by approving the rules of the same, electing Vice-Presidents, committees, etc., on which subjects I shall presently speak.

Election of Vice-Presidents.—If Mr. Blaine had been a man of fewer engagements than fall to the lot of a Secretary of State, and able to attend all the meetings of the Conference and remain as long as they lasted, his election would very likely have proved satisfactory during the

remaining sessions of the Conference; but, this not being the case, it was soon found that the change of the presiding officer every day created many difficulties, because there was no uniformity in the decisions of the chair; and this caused delay and inconvenience in the workings of the Conference. For this reason, Señor Alfonso, a Chilian delegate, reported on behalf of the Committee of Rules on December 4, 1889, a resolution to the effect that two Vice-Presidents should be elected, who should be called to the chair by turns in the absence of the President, the chair to be filled in their absence by the other delegates in regular order adopted by the Conference. That resolution was approved on the following day.

The United States delegates, viewing the election of Mr. Blaine as an act of deference and courtesy to themselves, decided to reciprocate it by offering their support in carrying out any plan the Latin-American delegates might suggest for the appointment of one or more Vice-Presidents. With the best intention of pleasing their colleagues, and following the parliamentary practices which prevail in this country, the United States delegates made a suggestion, which did not find favor, to the effect that, there being three different sections of America represented in the Conference, a Vice-President should be elected for each of them—to wit, one from the delegates of Central America, two from the delegates of South America (one representing the eastern side, or the nations bordering on the Atlantic, and the other the western side, or the nations bordering on the Pacific), and a fourth to represent the Latin portion of North America.

Although I do not believe that any of the delegates desired to be elected Vice-President on personal grounds, the matter was regarded with a great deal of interest by all of them, on account of the political bearing which it might have on the relations between their respective countries. The above suggestion was not accepted, owing to the difficulty of coming to an agreement about the appointment of one or more Vice-Presidents; and it was first decided that none should be elected, but that in the absence of the President his place should be filled by each delegate in turn as designated by lot. Later, however, it was decided to elect two Vice-Presidents.

The jealousies prevailing in some of the South American Republics, to which I have already alluded, increased by the ill feeling caused by the war which had taken place a few years before between Chili on one side and Bolivia and Peru on the other, had created such a condition of things that it was very difficult for the South American delegates to agree upon a Vice-President of the Conference, and that threatened to be a bone of contention between them. Señor Lafayette Rodriguez Pereira, a Brazilian delegate and a man of very clear judgment and great experience, who out of regard for the personal feelings of the

Emperor vacated his office as soon as he heard that the Emperor had been dethroned, thought that one of the Mexican delegates was the only possible candidate which could have the support of the South American delegates, because, while Mexico is inhabited by the same race and having the same conditions as the South American Republics, she was by the great distance from her sisters and the scanty means of communication between them, entirely neutral to their differences and friendly to all; but the nucleus formed around the Argentine delegates would not be satisfied with a neutral Vice-President, and they desired one who was willing to act in accord with their views on the subject of arbitration and conquest. So when the time came to elect a Vice-President, the Argentine delegates, together with their friends, had as their candidate the Peruvian delegate, who was very well fitted for the position, as he had been partially educated in the United States, spoke English very well, had lived many years in this country, and was perfectly familiar with the same, besides being a man of great ability and remarkably good sense; while some of the other delegates, like the Chilian, Brazilian, and others, who opposed the preponderance of the Argentines, and could not see with indifference that they should have control of the Conference, tried to have a neutral delegate as Vice-President, and their choice was in favor of one of the Mexican representatives.

The election of the first Vice-President took place on December 6, 1889, and on the first ballot Señor Zegarra, the Peruvian representative, received six votes, a Mexican representative five, Señor Hurtado three votes, Señor Quintana and Señor Cruz one vote each, and nobody having obtained a majority, the question was presented whether some of the absent delegates had a right to vote, but finally it was decided to take another ballot the following day. At this ballot, which took place on December 7, 1889, Señor Zegarra and myself received eight votes each, and Señor Aragon, a delegate from Costa Rica, proposed that chance should decide which of the two should be first and second Vice-Presidents respectively.

A recess was taken and two ballots deposited in a box, one bearing the name of Señor Zegarra and the other mine. A ballot was drawn, bearing the name of Señor Zegarra, and he was thereupon declared first Vice-President.¹

The Peruvian delegate, who knew well the programme of his friends, did not attend the Conference during the two days in which

¹ It may be interesting to know how the delegates voted on that occasion, and although the ballot was secret and I cannot be sure of the way in which each delegation voted, I think from what I knew and heard at the time that the most approximate version is the following: For Señor Zegarra, The Argentine Republic, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, Venezuela, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Honduras; for myself, the United States, Brazil, Chili, Colombia, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Salvador, and Hayti.

the ballots were taken, but as I did not consider myself a candidate, I attended both meetings, but was not in the hall of the Conference when the ballot was taken on the second day.

As Mexico had two delegates, one of them intended to vote for his colleague, not as an honor to him personally, but to their country, which course would have been perfectly proper; but he was induced by me to give up his intention and the election was decided by lot. I had no desire to act as presiding officer of the Conference, because that would have curtailed considerably my freedom of action on the floor. Señor Zegarra made a model presiding officer.¹

On that occasion an incident occurred, insignificant in itself, but which caused a misunderstanding that I do not think is yet fully dispelled. As the United States delegates were disposed to accept and support anything that their colleagues might determine upon in regard to the vice-presidency, as an act of courtesy towards them and in exchange for their having elected as President the Secretary of State, they thought that the Latin-American delegates would be more free to discuss and decide this point, which was a delicate one, being somewhat personal, if they consulted by themselves; and for this reason the United States delegates were not present in the room where their colleagues met. Their absence, however, was considered by some of the Latin-American delegates as an act of discourtesy, because they took as a want of consideration to them the fact of their not assembling in the same room with their colleagues, whereas the true reason was a desire to show consideration for their associates.

Right of Delegates to Express Personal Opinions.—Another incident which threatened to disturb the good understanding of the Conference was the view entertained by the Argentine delegation that the delegates should express only the official opinion of their Governments, and that personal views ought not to be taken into account, either in the Conference or in the committees. The law providing for the meeting of the Conference had authorized each nation to send as many delegates as it thought proper, but prescribed at the same time that each country should have only one vote; so that whatever might have been the opinions of the delegates from any State, in casting their vote only one opinion was expressed, which was the opinion of the majority, and therefore the official opinion of their Government.

It was natural to suppose and to expect that each delegate would express the opinion of his Government contained in his instructions when the case under consideration was embraced in such instructions, or an opinion as nearly as possible in accord with the wishes and interests

¹ In my answer to Señor Pierra, to which I have already alluded and which appears among the documents forming the Appendix to this paper, I give further details about the election of the Vice-Presidents.

of his country, as each one could form when he had not specific instructions on any particular question. In many cases the American Governments either did not give instructions to their delegates or gave them very broad ones, preferring that they should exercise their own personal judgment and discretion on such questions as might arise. To assert, therefore, that the delegates ought to express only the official opinion of their Governments was to interfere in a measure with the relations of the delegates with their respective Governments, and to limit their right to say what they thought proper. This opinion did not meet with favor in the Conference, since, while it arrived at no decision on this point, it never refused to hear any personal opinion, or contrary opinions from two or more members of the same delegation.

Appointment of Committees.—The appointment of the committees was a very important matter, since a great deal of the success of the Conference depended thereon, and, with a view to avoiding any unpleasantness among the delegates on this account, they agreed to request the President to appoint them. Mr. Blaine performed that duty without consulting any of the delegates, only exercising his own discretion on the subject. As I understand, Señor Quintana was the only man consulted as to his own wishes, believing that he would turn out to be a "punctilious gentleman," as Mr. Blaine expressed it. His preference was ascertained, and then he was placed on the Committee of General Welfare. I do not know that the appointment of the committees gave rise to any well-grounded complaint, or caused embarrassment in the transaction of the business which they had in charge. The only embarrassment I have heard of in the committees was caused by the discordant opinions of the delegates from one country who were members of the same committees, and by the fact that the United States delegates had no instructions from their Government, and could therefore express only their own personal views. In the Committee on Monetary Union there were two United States delegates who held opposite views in regard to the coining of silver, and this made it difficult for the other members of the committee to find out what was the view of the United States Government on this subject. I understand there was a similar difficulty, although in a less degree, in the Committee on Communications by Railways; but the most serious misunderstanding arose in the General Welfare Committee, which had the subject of arbitration in charge, because the United States member expressed personal views which were not shared by the other members of the committee.

Rules of the Conference.—The Conference, when organized, decided, very prudently, to frame a code of rules for its deliberations and decisions, and the committee appointed for that purpose took as a model the rules approved by the South American Congress that met at

Montevideo in 1888, which had the advantage of having been put in practice successfully at that congress. Señor Quintana, and a member of the Committee on Rules, who was also a member of that congress, was requested by the committee to prepare the rules and to support them in the discussion before the Conference.

The parliamentary practices of the Latin and the Anglo-Saxon nations being so widely different, the rules reported by the committee of seven, of whom six were Latin members and only one Anglo-Saxon member, met with great opposition on the part of the United States delegates. A long discussion of each article, which lasted for several weeks, ensued. This discussion, which was mainly sustained by the Argentine delegates, warmly supported by Señor Alfonso, the chairman of the committee, showed at once the firmness of character of both sets of delegates, and especially of the United States delegates, who were not quite disposed to accept the modifications suggested to them, even though these were not of much consequence. This was an indication of what was to happen later with more important subjects. The rules were finally approved substantially as they were presented by the committee.

Señor Quintana, conscious of his own merits, and influenced always by firm convictions, was never willing to yield even in such points as might be considered of a secondary nature, as in some cases it is quite desirable to do for the purpose of obtaining the cordial and spontaneous support of an assembly wherein, necessarily, different views exist. Tact, which in such a case consists in yielding on secondary points for the purpose of securing the principal ones,—although frequently there are differences of opinion as to which are the principal and which the secondary points,—possibly, after all, is a characteristic of weaker minds.

Mr. Henderson, the Chairman of the United States delegation, possessed somewhat similar strong convictions, and for this reason the discussions which had the liveliest character, and which sometimes went so far as to be personal, were those which took place between this gentleman and Señor Quintana. The Argentine delegates, inspired by the great progress of their country, and having no political relations and no business of any importance with the United States, showed an independence which in every case was very laudable, but they sometimes, perhaps on account of their personal characteristics, displayed an extraordinary and exquisite susceptibility. Whatever may have been disagreeable in the discussions of the Conference was disposed of, however, in a satisfactory manner by the following remark of Mr. Henderson in closing the session: "If in that freedom of speech a word of acrimony has been used, let us now consider it expunged from the record, and resolve to forget it forever."

Soon after the Conference met, some newspapers in this country, prompted by jealous politicians at Buenos Ayres, began to attack the Argentine delegates with extraordinary and unjustifiable rudeness, even going so far as to say that they were paid agents of England acting with the purpose of preventing the success of the Conference. Such uncalled-for and ungrounded attacks caused, as was only natural, a strong reaction, by which the merits of those gentlemen were made plain and the reflections cast upon them were disposed of in so successful a manner that such insinuations were never again referred to. Any unpleasant feeling which these aspersions may have caused the Argentine delegates was certainly abundantly compensated for by the satisfaction they must have felt when they were so triumphantly and successfully vindicated.

The attitude of the Argentine delegates, who, during the discussions of the Conference, had frequent encounters with the United States delegates, especially with Mr. Henderson, and spoke of their country as being on a parallel with the United States, was of course a source of great satisfaction to many more patriotic than discreet Spanish-Americans, who did not realize the objects of the Conference and the best means to accomplish these objects to the advantage of the Latin-American nations. Not only the Argentine papers, but the papers of other Spanish-American countries, praised very highly the attitude of the Argentine delegates, and those who like myself had followed a different course were severely censured by Mexican papers, and I was criticised even by a distinguished Mexican writer. I had, therefore, to enter into a discussion with a prominent literary man of Mexico, who regretted that I did not assume the more than independent attitude of the Argentine delegates, and that discussion was ended by the Mexican Government stating that I had acted under their instructions and in a manner entirely satisfactory to them. I append extracts from a letter written by me at the time to my critic explaining my course.

Mr. William E. Curtis.—Although I realize how disagreeable it is to descend to personal matters, I think it indispensable, with a view to a better understanding of what happened in the Conference, to make some explanation of certain incidents of this nature. Mr. William E. Curtis, who had acted as Secretary and finally as a member of the South American Commission sent by President Arthur, in 1884, for the purpose of promoting trade with South America, was appointed by Mr. Blaine to take charge of the work preparatory to the meeting of the Conference, and more especially to supervise the excursion which the Government of the United States arranged in honor of the delegates.

According to the original plan of the Conference Mr. Curtis was to be Chief Secretary, or Executive Officer, with three Under-Secretaries