

You think that the long residence of Mr. Bolet Peraza and myself in this country renders us unable "to shake off entirely the influence exercised upon us by our long residence in this country," and you imagine that on that account we have not been "zealous defenders of the autonomy and sacred rights of Latin-America," and by interpreting our minds you attribute to us the opinion that we believe that "the fraternal feelings of this great Republic are above suspicion" and that "no fear should be entertained that under the cloak of union the stronger might dominate the weaker, and *quia dominor leo*, become the arbiter of their destinies, the judge of their controversies, in fine be their lord and master."

I am very sure that if you were better informed regarding what took place at the Conference, you would not have written those phrases, which are not only unjust, but that have no foundation to stand upon.

13. M. ROMERO'S ANSWER TO SEÑOR PIERRA'S ATTACKS.

(From *Las Novedades*, New York, July 7, 1890.)¹

In a letter signed by Mr. Fidel G. Pierra, dated at Washington, on March 10, 1890, addressed to the editor of *La Nacion*, of Buenos Ayres, published on the 4th of May following, several assertions are made, some incorrect and some slanderous, regarding incidents which occurred in the International American Conference, and more especially respecting some of its Delegates. Had he referred to a matter of less importance, I would not condescend to notice the utterances of a man so blinded by his self-esteem that, not satisfied with the censure that he brought upon himself and with having placed some Delegates in an unpleasant position, now wishes to avenge his supposed grievances on others, although I am sure that his utterances cannot reach the gentlemen he attempts to offend; but as this incident refers to serious and grave matters, in which the cordial relations and good understanding of all the American nations are involved, I think it advisable, as an eye-witness of the events connected with the Conference, to make some corrections of the letter already mentioned.

No wonder, then, that *La Nacion*, of Buenos Ayres, upon inserting that letter in its columns, "leaves the responsibility of the article to its author," and that it does not confine itself to this, but states that the time for fully judging the Conference is not yet at hand, since, even supposing that it had not attained any material results, a thing which cannot yet be known, it believes, and rightly, too, that the Conference must produce moral results which must be, perforce, favorable.

Señor Pierra's Personality.—I shall begin with the personality of Mr. Pierra. This gentleman, who, owing to the fact that he had a commission house in New York, and therefore something to lose, it would seem should act with some caution and circumspection, has descended to a level upon which probably no person having a mercantile or social position would like to place himself, for not only does he show that he is as little loyal to a government he has served and from whom he has received a salary, by revealing matters of which he probably had knowledge by virtue of his office, but he attacks, without reason, the very persons who appointed him to perform its duties.

¹ As Señor Pierra wrote and published his letter in Spanish, my answer to him was also written in Spanish, and the one inserted here is a translation from the original publication. My letter appeared in *Las Novedades* without any headings; but as it is somewhat lengthy and embraces several subjects, I thought it better, for the convenience of the reader, to add to it some side headings. Extracts of my letter were published by several papers of the United States.

In the capacity of Secretary of the Spanish-American Union of New York, he accompanied the Delegates on the excursion to which the Government of the United States invited them, having received ample remuneration for this service. During this excursion he was in touch with the greater number of the Delegates, and having the advantage of knowing this country and of speaking Spanish and English, he tried to render them services which would make them grateful to him, and which paved the way to his election as Secretary.

His Appointment as Spanish Secretary of the Conference.—The Conference resolved upon the appointment of two Secretaries, both versed in the English and Spanish languages, one to take charge of the Spanish, and the other of the English work. By request of the Department of State I proposed for English Secretary, on the 25th of November last, Mr. Remsen Whitehouse, whose appointment was unanimously agreed to. But before making this nomination, I took care to personally speak to all the Delegates, or at least to one member from each Delegation, explaining the motives which led me to suggest the nomination, and to know if a unanimous agreement could be reached thereon. What, then, was my surprise, when, without extending to me the courtesy shown by me to my colleagues, immediately after the election of Mr. Whitehouse, one of the Spanish-American Delegates nominated Mr. Pierra for Spanish Secretary! This circumstance, or rather the desire to show that I resented what I considered an uncalled-for slight on the part of a colleague, made me give my vote against the election of Mr. Pierra; although, not to offend his susceptibility, I stated clearly that my vote did not imply any want of confidence in the ability or integrity of the candidate, and I explained the reasons that impelled me to vote as I did. This vote, however, severely wounded the self-esteem of Mr. Pierra, who considered it as a mortal offence, and this is the only explanation I can find for his utterances regarding me.

It is true that Mr. Pierra was not appointed Secretary to the Conference by the Government of the United States, but by the vote of the Delegates; but, besides having the vote of the Delegates from this country in his favor in the election, and that for this reason he should consider himself as much under obligations to them as to all the others who voted for him, there is the circumstance that Section V. of the law pursuant to which the Conference was called together, provided that the Secretary of State of the United States should designate the employees, and that Mr. Blaine, through deference to the Latin-American Delegates, consented that the appointment of Secretaries should be made by the Conference itself; but these employees, being paid by the United States Government, contracted obligations regarding it, which, I think, have been completely ignored by Mr. Pierra.

Although aware of his abilities, it was natural that in a new, arduous, and complicated matter, he should at first make mistakes, although of little consequence, and for the purpose of showing him that I was not actuated by any personal feeling against him, I refrained on many occasions from criticising at the meetings of the Conference the inaccuracies or errors that I discovered in the minutes prepared by him, and in order to avoid wounding his sensitiveness, called his attention to them in a personal and private way.

Mr. Pierra's Resignations.—Mr. Pierra, who probably imagined that, because he had the position of Secretary to the Conference, he was entitled to the same privileges as the Delegates, commenced to experience some disappointments, as when he discovered that he could not consult directly with Mr. Blaine upon what he might have to propose regarding the business of the Secretary's office, but had to do it through the official whom the Secretary of State had appointed to serve as intermediary in matters of routine, that is, through Mr. William E. Curtis, and this circumstance wounded his pride to such an extent that he repeatedly, verbally as well as in writing, presented his

resignation to the Executive Committee, of which, unfortunately, in so far as this incident is concerned, I was a member. He set forth the reasons he had for resigning, which were principally two: first, because he thought he was not treated with due consideration, but was rather annoyed, and that he was not provided with competent employees; and second, because he believed he did not receive sufficient pecuniary remuneration.

As a member of the Executive Committee, I did all I could to induce Mr. Pierra not to insist in his resignation and to remove the difficulties which had prompted him to present it, excepting the one regarding the salary which had been assigned him by the Department of State,—of ten dollars a day, or three hundred a month,—because this was the highest salary paid any of the employees, (for salaries are as a rule low in this country, and that of three hundred dollars was equal to or greater than those paid to the second and third Assistant Secretaries of State), and above all because as the Latin-American nations did not pay the salaries it would have been improper for their representatives to ask for an increase of the same. On the 29th of January, 1890, Mr. Pierra was paid his salary up to the 31st of that month, and on the following day he returned the money, stating in writing that the Executive Committee knew the reasons for his non-acceptance of it. On the 14th of February he presented his formal resignation, and at the meeting held by the Executive Committee to consider it, I advised that it should not be accepted, and I even made up my mind to speak with the Secretary of State upon the subject, with the view of overcoming the reasons advanced by Mr. Pierra. I can state without divulging any secret or agreement, that I was the only member of the Executive Committee who did not favor the immediate acceptance of his resignation, as the only means to avoid the difficulties he had created for himself and for the Delegates who were his personal friends. Mr. Blaine expressed the desire that the resignation be not accepted, and offered to do all he could to retain Mr. Pierra as Secretary, although he suggested the impossibility of paying him a larger salary for the reasons already stated, and because he believed that a higher salary might cause serious inconveniences, as the auditing officers of the Treasury Department might find it too high, and thereby subject the Secretary of State to criticism and open censure.

It would take too long to relate all the other incidents which occurred in this connection, and I shall simply say that some of the Latin-American Delegates, believing that Mr. Pierra might be the victim of supposed intrigues on the part of Mr. Curtis, took up his defence with great earnestness in the matter of the resignation; they addressed him a letter asking that he should not resign his position of Secretary and made other efforts to retain him in that office. Deceived by these manifestations of good will he thought, probably, that he could treat the United States Government, whose employee he was, with contempt, and he determined to withdraw his resignation, upon the condition that he be allowed to serve without pay. As this condition was incompatible with the dignity of the Conference, the Executive Committee decided that it could not be accepted, but without saying anything regarding the resignation proper, and upon being informed of the decision Mr. Pierra wrote another communication in which he withdrew the objectionable part of the preceding one, and thereupon received the salary which he had before declined.

At this stage of the incident the Executive Committee met again and directed me to draft a report containing a statement of what had taken place, and reporting in favor of accepting the resignation of Mr. Pierra. I wrote such report setting forth exactly what had transpired; but instead of recommending the acceptance of his resignation, I recommended that it be not accepted. This part was changed by the majority of the Committee who thought it advisable, in view of the stage the subject had reached, not to make any recommendation as to the acceptance of the resignation, but rather to leave the whole matter to the decision of the Conference, and the committee made other

amendments in the last paragraph of my draft of the report, which, carefully examined, are less favorable to Mr. Pierra than the phrases I had written.

The amendments introduced in my report appear in the original text of that document, and are well known to the other members of the Committee. For greater clearness I here insert both texts. Mine reads thus:

"But as from letters which some Honorable Delegates have addressed to this gentleman, and from resolutions introduced in the Conference, it appears that there are several Honorable Delegates who earnestly desire that Mr. Pierra return to perform the duties of Secretary, and who believe that, if returning, he will permanently remain, the Committee does not desire to oppose the wishes of these Honorable Delegates and consequently it proposes that Mr. Pierra be allowed to withdraw his resignation and return, to perform the duties of Spanish-American Secretary of the Conference."

This was modified by the majority of the Committee, so as to read as follows:

"But it appears from resolutions introduced in this Conference, and other documents, that some of the Delegates earnestly desire, because they think the business of the Conference would be facilitated thereby, that Mr. Pierra should return to his duties as Secretary, believing, also, that his return would be permanent. The Committee, therefore, not wishing to oppose the desires of the said Delegates, refers the matter to the decision of the Conference without recommendation."

The other statements in the report written by me were perfectly correct, for, had it been otherwise, the report would not have been signed by the other Spanish-American members of the Committee, who were earnest friends of Mr. Pierra, and one of whom had signed the letter to which I have alluded, in which he was requested that he should not leave his office as Secretary.

The Conference terminated this incident by authorizing the Executive Committee, upon motion of a Delegate from the United States, to decide what they might think best regarding Mr. Pierra's resignation. Such resignation was accepted by the Committee, without any action or interference whatever on my part, and thus Mr. Pierra ceased to be Secretary.

My efforts to retain Mr. Pierra as Secretary.—From his letter to *La Nacion*, of Buenos Ayres, I infer that he considers me as the instigator of his withdrawal, and that he qualifies my efforts to retain him as Secretary as refined intrigues; whereas if I had any hand at all in his leaving the office, it was that of delaying it for some time, and to obtain that his withdrawal should take place in a less disagreeable way for him than it otherwise might have been. If his separation had been due to my intrigues, as he indicates, this would be a very serious charge against the intelligence, not only of all the members of the Conference, but more especially of the three Latin-Americans who were members of the Executive Committee, two at least of whom, as I have already stated, were personal friends of Mr. Pierra, who would have become the instruments of my supposed intrigues, or against their loyalty had they made themselves my accomplices. Besides the Delegates signing the report, Mr. Mendonça, a Delegate from Brazil, was a member of the Committee, whose signature does not appear on that document because he was not present at the meeting on that day; but as is well known to the other members of the Committee, he expressed from the very first the most decided opinions in favor of the acceptance of the resignation.

Mr. Pierra's Imputations.—I shall say very little regarding the personal imputations which Mr. Pierra hurls against me. He attributes to me the desire to be elected President of the Conference, whereas, as he himself acknowledges, the President had to be a Delegate from the United States. And this could not have been otherwise without committing an act of serious discourtesy towards the inviting Government. Since I was not an United States Delegate, how could the idea of being elected President of the Congress ever have been entertained by me? Had I entertained the desire to

preside over the Conference, I could have attained it by failing to ask my colleague to refrain from voting for me in the election for Vice-President, which was a tie, and thus the vote of Mexico would have decided it in my favor.

Mr. Pierra asserts that for the purpose of obtaining that position I interpreted erroneously the remarks made by the United States Delegates. This assertion implies not only a slander on me, but an insult to all the other delegates who were present, whom it would be necessary to consider as childishly inexperienced or ignorant, to have been the victims of such a gross deception. Many of the Latin-Americans spoke English better than I—for I am the first to recognize that I do not know it perfectly, as Mr. Pierra states, and I should add that I have never boasted of being a linguist, and, on the contrary, have always been aware that I do not possess the gift of eloquence nor that of languages—and all the other Delegates who did not speak English, spoke French. Among the American Delegates there was one, Mr. Flint, who spoke Spanish correctly, and at least one more, Mr. Trescot, who understood it sufficiently well, and two or three more, like Mr. Coolidge and Mr. Carnegie, who spoke French correctly. All the Delegates were in intimate and constant communication with each other, and under these circumstances it was not possible that what was said to me by the United States Delegates could be intentionally misinterpreted by me, for if I were capable of such an abuse, I would have been corrected and reproved on the spot.

My efforts to avoid misunderstandings among the Delegates.—The fact of my having resided in this country for a longer time than any other of the Latin-American Delegates, and of being personally acquainted with most of the United States Delegates long before the meeting of the Conference, and perhaps also because I was the member of the Latin-American Diplomatic Corps who had resided longest in Washington, they applied to me in the beginning of the session in order to make known their desires and wishes to the other Delegates. This state of things, which I by no means sought, and which I only considered as a service to the Latin-American Delegates who did not speak English, which I could not refuse, is the foundation for Mr. Pierra to assert that I made distorted interpretations and that I interfered in matters with which he thinks I had nothing to do.

The difficulty of understanding each other, owing to the lack of good interpreters, especially during the first sessions of the Conference, was the cause of misunderstandings, which might have even assumed a disagreeable character, among the Latin-American Delegates and their colleagues of the United States. As I could readily see the cause of such misunderstandings—owing to the limited knowledge I have of both languages, which, although imperfect, as averred by Mr. Pierra, enables me to understand sufficiently all that is said in English, and to make myself understood, although imperfectly, in that language—I essayed to prevent it, making the necessary explanations, sometimes to the United States Delegates when the misunderstandings were on their side, and sometimes to the Latin-Americans. I thought that I rendered in this way a service to my colleagues, assuming a task somewhat disagreeable, which I was really not called upon to perform, and which probably I should not have accepted had I been guided by selfish motives. These efforts on my part to prevent misunderstandings and to render services to some of my colleagues, which, had I been in their place, I would have greatly appreciated, serve also as a foundation for Mr. Pierra's imputation that I desired to become a righter of wrongs, redresser of injuries, etc., etc. When the Delegates knew and understood each other better, when the interpreters improved, and when I saw that there was no necessity for explanations nor interference on my part, I ceased completely to assume the task or render the services which I had undertaken at the beginning of the sessions of the Conference. I believe that all the Delegates can bear witness that, instead of trying to divide them, as Mr. Pierra asserts, my purpose was to unite them and prevent misunderstandings among them, which

principally arose from the lack of knowledge of the respective languages and the customs of the countries represented.

Alleged subsidy of New York Papers.—Mr. Pierra asserts that I pay newspapers in New York to eulogize me. I will merely refute that other slander by saying that I never purchased a single eulogy nor have I ever paid a Spanish or Anglo-American paper issued at New York, or at any other place, a single cent beyond the subscription price when I was a subscriber.

I think the praise which Mr. Pierra extends to the Latin-American Delegates is well merited, and that even in some cases it falls short. But it seems strange that only two out of the twenty-three Latin-Americans who met in the Conference failed to deserve his praise, and that those two should be the only Delegates who denied him their votes for Secretary; respecting one of them, Mr. Mexia, my colleague, he does not see fit to say one word for or against, but regarding me, he unbosoms himself to his full satisfaction.

*Mr. Sutton's Memorandum.*¹—I had no knowledge of the private instructions which Mr. Pierra asserts were addressed by the Department of State to the United States Delegates regarding the election of President. I had been assured by well-informed persons that the document, which Mr. Pierra obtained probably in his capacity as Secretary, and whose publication with the object he gives should be considered, at the very least, as an act of discourtesy, was not written in the Department of State, and much less bore the character of private instructions, but that it was prepared by an employee to whom the Secretary of State gave in charge the work preliminary to the meeting of the Conference. When carefully examined we find, on the other hand, that it contains nothing new, nothing irregular, nor anything which might be considered as offensive to the rights and interests of the Latin-American nations represented in the Conference, for the reason that it only states that the office of President of the Conference belonged, as an act of courtesy, usual among civilized nations, to a representative of the United States.

Conclusion.—I think it unnecessary to consider the other statements contained in Mr. Pierra's letter which do not refer to me personally, although I expect later to have the opportunity to make some explanations regarding the proceedings of the Conference, which will show, although indirectly, the biased and untenable character of Mr. Pierra's assertions.

¹ The document, to which Señor Pierra gave such great importance, was the Sutton Memorandum, to which I refer on page 639 of this book. I had not heard anything at all about that paper, until after Señor Pierra's letter reached Washington, and then on inquiry I found out what appears both in my answer to Señor Pierra, and in the preceding paper.