

SEÑOR CASTILLO

ANTONIO CANOVAS DEL CASTILLO, Spanish royalist statesman, premier, and man of letters, was born at Málaga, Spain, Feb. 8, 1826, and assassinated at Santa Agueda, near Vittoria, Aug. 8, 1897. He first made a reputation as a poet, but his historical work won him eminence. His achievements in this and other literary fields gained him an election to the Spanish Academy. At the age of twenty-five he became editor of the Conservative newspaper, "La Patria," and in 1854, when only twenty-seven, he was elected to the Cortés, when his political activity was first manifested that ended only with his tragic death shortly before the culmination of the trouble with the United States. In 1858-59, he was business representative of the Spanish government at Rome. From 1860 to 1864, he was repeatedly a member of the ministry under the Liberal Union. In 1864, he received a cabinet position as minister of the interior, and in 1865 was minister of finance, at which period he drew up the edict for the abolition of slavery. He had been nominally a Liberal for a number of years, but in 1868 became the leader of the Liberal-Conservatives. In the revolutionary period of 1868, he steadfastly maintained the principle of constitutional monarchy in the Constituent Assembly and refused to recognize the republic. On the abdication of Queen Isabella II in 1870, he headed the party that desired to call Prince Alfonso of Asturias to the throne. When in 1874 this aim became successful, the king (Alfonso XII) nominated Cánovas president of the ministry. On June 30, 1876, Cánovas brought about the adoption of the new constitution, which, in a degree, satisfied the clergy without being false to Liberal principles. His efforts to restore peace and order to the long disturbed country were successful. From that time on till his decease he was head and front of the Conservative element in the Cortés and chief minister whenever his party was in power. His first retirement from that post was due to the desire of the king not to estrange the Liberals, and his second retirement came from his refusal to make the king's daughter the Princess of Asturias. On the death of the king, in 1885, public affairs seemed so critical that Cánovas resigned and helped Sagasta to form a Liberal ministry, deeming that statesman better qualified to unite the elements of order against the intrigues of the Carlists. At the close of the year 1888, during the reign of the present king, (Alfonso XIII), he again returned to power, and in 1890, with characteristic courage, brought about the adoption into the Conservative programme of a demand for universal manhood suffrage. From this reform he looked for a strengthening of the Conservative and clerical elements. Returning to power as prime minister in July (1890), he carried this programme into effect and also adopted a protective tariff system. His own party, however, became increasingly discordant, breaking up into various groups, and in December, 1892, he resigned and was succeeded for the third time by Sagasta. Returning once more to power in March, 1895, he was confronted by the second great revolt in Cuba. Continued discords in his party caused him to dissolve the Cortés in February, 1896, and in the following year he was assassinated by an Italian anarchist.

Chief among the writings of Cánovas are: "Estudios Literarios" (1868); "Historia del dominio austriaco en España" (1869); a biography of his uncle the poet

(450)

Serafino Estébanez Calderon (1883); "Problemas Contemporaneos" (1884); and "Estudios del Reinado de Felipe IV" (1888-90). His poetical works appeared in 1887.

It is noteworthy that Cánovas and Castelar were lifelong personal friends. The conservatism of Cánovas had a fundamentally liberal quality, as indicated by the accompanying example from one of his addresses in which he lays stress on the inevitable tendency of society toward democracy. Juan Rico y Amat has this to say of him:

"Cánovas is the fervent believer of a school, but neither its representative nor its apostle; he is a notable parliamentary orator, but not one of the foremost. His talent, his special merit, consists in having comprehended better than others the true temper of representative government, the policy of which may not ever be radical, absolute, and fixed, but must vary in its application according to the circumstances that give it life, adaptable and accommodating in its form as the interest and convenience of the nation may demand. This policy of circumstance, sole and indispensable base of representative government, the just medium between radical parties, and the symbol of the Liberal Union which was created as a moderate party between those that stand extreme—has always been Cánovas del Castillo's policy."

ON CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

PERORATION OF AN ADDRESS DELIVERED APRIL 11, 1864

BUT, gentlemen, is it not true, passing to a plane a little more elevated and even repeating certain ideas of Señor Barzanallana (for I say frankly that what has most surprised me in the speech of the gentleman is that side by side with conclusions which in my judgment are inexact, dialectically false, it was accented and filled throughout with genuine estimations of politics, of economy, and of history), is it not true, gentlemen, that if we review history at any one of its grand moments,—be it in the Middle Ages, in the epoch of feudalism and of the birth of municipalities or town councils; be it later, at the period of the exaggeration of Catholic influence and the beginning of heretical resistance; be it when absolutism was predominant and aristocracy humiliated; be it in the epoch of the French Revolution, at the instant when all the combustible deadwood of the centuries took fire—is it not true that in all the institutions of

Europe we encounter a singular, an intimate, an indisputable analogy?

Is it by chance that all serious historians have been surprised to find how the organization of the municipality in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in the heart of the Middle Ages, was identical among all the peoples of Europe? Is it by chance that the terrible unity of the Gothic cathedrals is written upon pages of stone? Have you not remarked how here and there the same ideas are realized, how identical institutions arise and pass from one country to another?

It is because the spirit of humanity is one, and all that opposes this unity must fall irremediably to destruction, whatever its strength, whatever its potency?

Such is the truth. And vainly we oppose the operation of the universal spirit; even though a nation by exceptional circumstances may have separated from the general current of civilization as Spain had the misfortune of doing in the sixteenth century, as had England the fortune of doing in that very same epoch; there comes a day when at last it must join it again.

Therefore we ourselves, since the days of theocratic despotism, are incontestably going the road to liberty, and let Señor Barzanallana not doubt it. And England, by another path, in a different manner, is marching to merge herself in continental democracy. No, it cannot be impeded; it is vain to attempt it, for could it be impeded it would give the lie to the unity of the human spirit. The way leads toward democracy, toward a certain democracy in all parts of the world, toward the fall of social inequalities; the way leads toward a common right in all parts of the world, the same in England as in all other nations; a little sooner, a little later, the way will be trod; there is no doubt of it whatever.

Considered in this aspect, not political but social, democracy is inevitable.

Do you believe that perhaps England may with its aristocratic spirit oppose with better resistance the modern spirit, the universal spirit of human kind, than did ancient Spain, the Spain of Philip II, with her inquisition, with her convents, with her little primogenitures, with all her antiquated organization? And you that tremble because that society with those conditions and with that form must be lost, how can you claim that it is a phenomenon peculiar to this country of ours; that it is not an inevitable condition of the march of humanity; that what has already occurred in Spain is not to be reckoned with at last, and in its own time, in England, though in a contrary sense; that what must occur must occur everywhere.

Therefore, gentlemen, because this is true, because it is the certain lesson of history, I defend, I proclaim with intimate and profound conviction, the politics of circumstances and of transactions. Yes; because circumstances are reality itself, circumstances are life itself; to fly from them is to travel toward the impossible, toward the absurd. If you study all the periods of decadence, that same decadence of which Señor Barzanallana has spoken to us this very day, the grand decadence of the Spanish monarchy—in my opinion the greatest that history has to register—you will find at the bottom as its original and fundamental cause not the natural exaggeration of all things proper to the Spaniards,—for this, as I regard it, would be a trivial cause,—but institutions, social conditions battling against inexorably opposing circumstances.

Does Señor Barzanallana know wherein lies the secret of the decadence of Spain from the Emperor Carlos V to King

Cárlos II? It is because the spirit, the institutions, the politics, the diplomacy, the military pretensions of the time of Cárlos II were the same, identically the same, as those of the time of Cárlos V; were the same without the occasion, without the circumstances, without the force that the circumstances gave of themselves; and because of this there was a descent from tragedy to farce, from the heroic epic to the burlesque. What was grand when it might have been done, when it had to be done, at the time of Cárlos V, was petty, was even a subject for ridicule at the time of Cárlos II. This is the inexorable judgment of history, which is not poesy, which is not pure idealism, but which above all is reason, reality, human.

And in respect to transactions, there is in all societies, in all parties, in all governments, something in which change is not permissible, in regard to which any transaction would be a crime. These are the minority. There are other things, and these are the majority, in which change according to circumstance may take place, must take place, and where it is legitimate. The conservative schools may not, the conservative schools must not, attempt to change any of the fundamental principles of the society in which they live, the society which they are called to conserve. But when they encounter, for example, in our present conditions an artificial institution like the hereditary senatorship; when they encounter an idea its own authors would not venture to put into practice, as in the same instant when they presented hereditary senatorship they proposed also a system of entails; when they encounter a reform in a method of regulations which may in two senses be diametrically opposed, interpreted by two ministers of the same cabinet—it is clear that we treat of matters in relation to which changes may be, must be, ad-

mitted; in relation to which, in my judgment, a crime would be committed if at times and with discretion they might not be changed.

I shall be told, perhaps: It is a concession to radical parties, to revolutionary parties; that those revolutionary parties are thirsty and insatiable, and the more is conceded to them the more they will demand, and in the end they will demand that which cannot be given to them, and then you cannot avoid that which you would avoid through the concessions that you are making. Very well; I say to the Congress with profound conviction: I shall see with more or less feeling, certainly with much feeling, the radical tendencies that certain parties in Spain may take; I shall deplore them and shall ever deplore them; but however I deplore such tendencies the more they are exaggerated, the more they depart from the path of constitutional legality, the more inexorable will be shown my will and my spirit toward them.

No, not with parties, whatever they may be (I will not characterize them or even mention them at this moment), may we transcend the legal limitations of what may legitimately be subject to change, and to whom it is legitimate to give this manner of satisfaction.

But Señor Aparisi told us the other day: "Effect the reunion of the conservative elements, for a great and uncommon battle is in prospect in which it will be necessary for all the defenders of these ideas more or less advanced, more or less liberal, to be at their posts and under their common flags."

And I ask Señor Aparisi and those who think with him: Where will you fix the point of reunion? Where will you have us make the convocation of the conservative forces? Have you ever seen an able general who awaits the enemy

on the extreme frontier in order to defend some ancient oak or some isolated hut? Have you ever seen him go to seek his adversary in the positions convenient to the latter? No; an able general retires to the point where he may summon all his forces, to the point where he may oppose the most vigorous resistance, to the strategic point where he may count upon the greatest support in the country that he is defending. This point which we have to seek is that of the constitution of 1845.

Gentlemen, that constitution which was accepted by so many illustrious persons of the old progressive party, that constitution which to-day is accepted by so many others of the same party, that constitution which at divers times has been accepted by all the conservative factions of the country, that constitution is the sole rallying point and centre for the conservative hosts.

If it is true, therefore, that the battle is coming, that the combat is at hand, you that most claim to be friends of order will not refuse your consent to the point of reunion where is to be found the honor, the interest, the banner, of all true conservatives. Rally there and defend it; and do not attempt more, whatever may be the conviction—which I respect most profoundly — of those who at another time have sought to defend in more advanced positions the conservative interests of the country; do not drag forward to those positions where you will be few and isolated, so many other sincere convictions as have been raised up here from the same bosom of the conservative party to protest against reforms projected or carried into effect. Do not seek to do that, for you will never be able to do it, and even if you were you would do a fatal thing for the very same interests that you claim to defend.

I have nearly finished, gentlemen, and I will conclude with

a few words regarding the melancholy divinations and auguries of Señor Barzanallana in respect to the Spanish nationality.

The gentleman sat down pursuing his system — in my opinion a mistaken one — of picking out small and trifling causes for grand and notorious effects; attributing, I say, following out this system, to this and that French thing that we had introduced — not recollecting at the time that they were not French things but English things that we introduced — a great influence upon the moral decadence of Spanish society.

Señor Barzanallana declared that he could not be a materialist in politics, that he could not agree with the economic school that looked upon everything from the point of view of the interests concerned; that he belongs with those who, on the contrary, behold everything in the light of sentiment, and of those who prefer above all things the grandeur of their country.

I am with the gentleman in such sentiments; but I do not participate — and I am not so familiar with economic studies as the gentleman; they have never constituted my immediate profession — I do not participate, I say, in the error that the material development we are undergoing, that the augmentation of purely material prosperity that now distinguishes us, contributes either little or much to the moral decadence of Spanish society.

On the contrary it is my opinion — and an opinion confirmed in all the events and crises of history; an opinion that, confronted by the poetical exclamations of Señor Barzanallana I hesitate to expose to the consideration of the Chamber — that on the field of reality and in the corridor of history there is no glory whatever for the poverty-stricken nations.

No; individual heroism suffices not; a great self-consciousness in the individual suffices not; the peculiar genius of a nation for figuring grandly in history, and above all in modern history, suffices not. In all those nations where lack of work, industry, conditions of wealth, have brought great poverty upon them, as by a melancholy fatality, this has been followed by a genuine decadence of all their glories, literary and military alike.

You will not maintain, you cannot prove, that there was less moral spirit, less moral consciousness, in the Spanish of the times of *Cárlos II* than in those of his grand predecessors. You cannot prove that the victors of Rocroy were less valorous than the comrades of Gonzalo de Córdoba.

That would not be true. If you will examine the duel to the death, that lasted for twenty-seven years between the Spanish monarchy and the French monarchy for the first position in the world, you will see that great deeds divide themselves almost equally between the two nations; but after these valorous deeds, after these military actions, France was nevertheless left in the first place and Spain in the last. This was brought about by the diversity of social conditions in which we existed; and of them many examples might be cited, now just as in the old times. And why should we not be able to cite them if this is the inexorable law of history?

The truth must be told the country; it must be told that it is not the remembrance of Lepanto or the remembrance of San Quintin which they lack, but it is examples of patience, of industry, of progress, and of civil virtues that produce the development of public prosperity by means of which the Spanish people can attain the grandeur for which it hungers, and it still has too little thereof.

Such is the existence, such is the reality of history, and

neither Señor Barzanallana nor I, nor any poet greater than he and than I (and I mention myself here because I find myself a term of comparison with the gentleman) can vary even if he would the natural and inevitable course of things. Give us the agricultural prosperity, give us the industrial prosperity and the mercantile prosperity of England and I will have no fear that our navies shall be fugitive from theirs; I will not fear that their flag shall float in any part of our territory for any considerable time; I will fear nothing that may permanently wound the heart of a Spaniard who feels his worth.

For my part, therefore, when I see that the conditions of work, of labor, and of industry are developing in my country; when I see that the breeze from abroad—unfortunately the breeze from abroad, but that is whence it comes to us—is awakening among us all the germs of prosperity; when I see that we are progressing, I am tranquil and I do not fear the moral decadence with which we are menaced. Like the vanquished Roman, I do not despair of my country.

[Special translation by Sylvester Baxter.]