

The Decline of Spain

“Thus the Cacique was burned, the God of The Christian dishonoured and His cross imbued in blood.”

—Abbé Raynal

Hispania, where are all the trophies now,
That thy once conquering heroes bled to gain?
Where is the wreath that bound thy Charles's brow,
Where is the fair spotless chivalry of Spain?

Where are the brilliants a Columbus gave,
To gem the sceptre of thy Ferdinand?
Those realms, the glory of the western wave,
Which made thy commerce vast, thy empire grand!

Where are thy navies, whose proud sails unfurled,
Bore thy adventurous sons o'er distant seas?
In every clime, around the sea girt world
Their pennons fluttered on the waving breeze.

Where are they all?—Lo, injured justice speaks!
Spain, cruel Spain, high heaven thy doom decreed,
When in the blood of Mexico's Caciques
Thou ruthless revelled: vengeance marked the deed.

When thou, beneath Peru's resplendent sky,
Up reared the Cross—a harbinger of death—
Offended heaven beheld the blasphemy,
Though yet its arrows slumbered in their sheath.

Nor were they launched till the last Carib died,
Lust, of a race, by Spanish treachery slain;
His ebbing blood to heaven for vengeance cried,
Nor to a God of vengeance cried in vain.

For though no thunderbolt did cleave the sky,
Charged with a message of consuming fire;
Through rolling years, the hand of God on high
Still executes the purpose of His ire.

Where now is all the pomp, the material fame,
That the proud zenith of thy power displayed.
Wrung from thy grasp! A feeble nations name,
Lo thine alone, whom continents obeyed.

Torn by intestine wars, thy crumbling state,
Thy wasted commerce tells the moral true,
And thou whom once the nations called the great
Meetest at length the retribution due.

Yet fallen Spain, the curse of blood and gold
May be removed, and thou may'est be restored
If like repentant Nineveh of old
Thou seekest pardon from the offended Lord.

Thou hast high names emblazoned on thy shield;
Heroes and statesmen thou caus't truly boast;
Martyrs for God, thy vintage too did yield;
Poets and patriots—lo a goodly host!

Why should the gloom of superstitions night
And grim intolerance thy land enthrall,
Early illumined by pure gospel light
And hallowed by the footprints of Saint Paul*,

Then to thy work while yet the day remains;
Weep for the crimes which stained thy morn of power;
Up! boldly up! and cast away thy chains,
Ere a yet darker night around thee lower.

Throw by thy crosier and the monkish coral,
Break, break the knots which superstition ties!
Expunge thy deeds of guilt so dark and foul,
And like a giant with new strength arise.

Open that book, which priestly hands have sealed,
Read to thy listening land with solemn fear;
The high, the stern instructions there revealed
And bid thy nation do—as well as hear.

So shall thy flag which drooping long hath hung,
Washed from its strains, upon thy ramparts fly!
So shall thy fame by martial minstrels sung
Revive the theme of purer minstrelsy!

* *Vide* Romans XV, 25