

THE MONROE DOCTRINE

If Mexico should default the interest on her bonds, would it be the duty of the United States to determine the rights of foreign bond holders? Questions such as this make Mr. Bingham's discussion of the Monroe Doctrine especially timely. His little book is not a systematic treatise, but a readable, rather discursive argument for the abandonment of the Monroe Doctrine by the United States. John W. Burgess, while Roosevelt-Professor at Berlin in 1906, said that two doctrines in the United States were considered "almost sacred," Protection and the Monroe Doctrine. Of the latter he

said, "Our statesmen have no conception that this doctrine is obsolete, or that the changes in the constitutions and policies of the European States since it was formulated have made it meaningless." These statements aroused a storm of protest in the American press, and tended to make the doctrine all the more sacred. But a few publicists continued the unpopular argument; while foreign writers, notably John Bryce, have expressed the opinion that the doctrine is no longer tenable. Mr. Oppenheim, English authority on international law, says that as soon as some of the Latin American States become Great Powers themselves, "they will no longer submit to the political hegemony of the United States, and the Monroe Doctrine will have played its part."

One of Mr. Bingham's contentions is that at least three South American States are already great powers—Argentina, Brazil and Chile. He attempts to prove this by statistics of natural wealth, of exports and imports, and of armed strength. There is, however, no standard by which to measure great powers, and his argument would be inconclusive if it stopped here. His real appeal is to the selfish interests of the United States. The doctrine, he says, is based on two misconceptions; first that there is geographical proximity between the two Americas; and second, that there is a natural sympathy between the peoples of the two continents. South America is geographically nearer to Europe than to the United States, while the natural sympathy lies between South Americans and the Continentals, particularly the French people. With these two points in mind, he traces the development of the Monroe Doctrine, and finds it to be a continual source of irritation to the Latin Americans, arousing fear in the smaller states, and resentment in the larger states. He finds that attempts by various Presidents and Secretaries of State to bind North and South America in bonds of friendship are more than nullified by the official acts of the United States. The result is that as compared with Europe, the United States is losing ground in South America. Our commerce is not increasing as fast as Germany's, for instance, and this is due to the fact that the Latin Americans mistrust the United States, while they have nothing to fear from Germany.

Europeans see their advantage, and indirectly foster the feeling against the United States. They leave to the United States the self-assumed task of watching over the affairs of the smaller Latin American republics,

while themselves reaping the benefits of trade with the more stable governments. This, briefly, is Mr. Bingham's argument, which he supports by citation of facts, figures, and personal experiences.

If his argument is sound, what ought the United States to do, not only in its own interest, but in the interest of the Western Continent? The answer is: abandon the Monroe Doctrine; recognize the political and economic equality of the great Latin American States, enter into an alliance with the "A. B. C." Powers, Argentina, Brazil, Chile; in future, act not alone, but in conjunction with these Powers in dealing with the turbulent smaller states; strive by acts of friendship to dispel the belief that the United States contemplates a political suzerainty over the Western Hemisphere south of the Canadian border.

As a popular statement of the problems which the Monroe Doctrine raises, Mr. Bingham's book is commended especially to those who still believe that the doctrine is the foundation stone of our foreign policy.

The Monroe Doctrine: An Obsolete Shibboleth. New Haven: Yale University Press. \$1.15.