

## PAN-AMERICAN COMMERCIAL CONFERENCE.

On February 13-17, 1911, an important conference was held in the Pan-American Building at Washington to consider, "first, the actual, practical, business conditions surrounding the exchange of commerce and development of trade between the United States and the other American countries; and, second, the non-political business opportunities and advantages which will be opened to Pan-American commerce by the Panama Canal, and the steps which should now be taken by the business interests of the Americas to get ready for the canal and enable them to gain direct benefits following its opening." It was very widely attended by exporters and importers, and specialists in Latin-American trade and industry. Many addresses, based upon experience, were made, and numerous suggestions advanced by which the products of the Americas might be exchanged more easily and at reduced cost, the exports and imports increased, and each country, by its industry and commerce, made to serve a more useful purpose to each.

The Pan-American Union is in itself an evidence of the close and intimate relations which may exist between independent countries without a political federation, for it is an international organization and office maintained by the twenty-one American Republics, and devoted to the development and maintenance of commerce, friendly intercourse, and good understanding among them. It is administered by a Director-General, Mr. John Barrett, well-known for his zeal and his sympathy for Latin-America, and efficient Assistant Director, Mr. Francisco J. Yánes. These officers are elected by and responsible to a governing board, composed of the Secretary of State of the United States and the diplomatic representatives in Washington of the other American Governments. The executive officers are aided by a staff of international experts, statisticians, commercial specialists, editors, translators, compilers, librarians, and clerks, and the Union publishes a monthly bulletin which is an admirable record of Pan-American progress.

It is impossible to describe the proceedings of the conference in detail, because they are voluminous and technical, but they have been gathered together and published in a handy volume of over 300 pages, which will be of very great service to merchants of all the countries represented as well as to believers in Pan-American unity.

The Secretary of State is the chairman of the governing board of the Union and his address, printed in full, states not merely the purposes of the four Pan-American conferences which have been held, of the

Union which has been established at Washington, but the benefits of closer commercial intercourse, to foster which the commercial conference was called. Mr. Knox said, on opening the conference:

GENTLEMEN: You have met at an important stage in the evolution of the industrial and commercial relations of the Republics of the Western Hemisphere. The significance of this Congress can hardly be overestimated. It meets for the discussion of practical subjects, for the dissemination of information, for the interchange of ideas in regard to the exchange of trade.

It is fitting that the Pan American Conferences, which are now held at regular intervals, should be followed by commercial Pan American Congresses such as this one, which supplements the broad general work of those gatherings in establishing closer relations and promoting the principles of peace among the different countries. It conserves and fructifies the resolutions and recommendations of those Conferences, and it opens the channels for putting into effect the principles they lay down. The approach of the Americas was the aspiration voiced by that illustrious statesman and publicist, the late Joaquin Nabuco, who, as Ambassador of the Brazilian Republic, participated in so many movements for the improvement of the relations of all the countries of this hemisphere. His services to mutual peace and good will, and to that closer commercial intercourse which is at once the harbinger and the advocate of such good will, will long be remembered. Speaking from his position as the representative of a great southern Republic, he once told us of the good that Latin America would derive from closer intercourse with the United States. He also told us that the benefit which we of the United States would derive from that intercourse at first would be only the good that comes from making friends. We were satisfied with that good, but already we see how it also leads to and embraces the sphere of trade interests.

The educational value of gatherings such as this, where commercial expansion may be discussed in all its aspects, is very great. Let me candidly confess that in the past we have been too ignorant of our southern neighbors, their vast undeveloped resources, and the measures they have been taking to open themselves to the world.

Happily that ignorance is disappearing. The mists began to clear away when in 1889 JAMES G. BLAINE seriously initiated a Pan American commercial policy. They were further dissipated when my distinguished predecessor made his memorable trip around South America. The cordiality of the welcome given him by our neighbors to the south is yet fresh in our memories. This journey, supplemented by subsequent visits on his part to other Latin American countries, promoted a better understanding on their part of our commercial aims and expectations. It had even a greater influence on the people of the United States in educating them in regard to Latin America, its institutions, the policies of its statesmen, and the opportunities for the investment of capital and the promotion of general trade.

The moral forces of commerce, the pacific influence of trade, should be the foundation of the commercial policy of the representatives of the Western Hemisphere. The energies of production and consumption can not better be conserved

than on such a basis. The diplomacy of commerce can not better be employed than in fertilizing and making productive the aspirations that within the last quarter of a century have germinated. From our own viewpoint, here on the northern continent, surveying the whole field of Latin American commerce, we are struck with an economic fact which must govern our mutual relations. The trade currents which flow between the United States and its Latin American neighbors should be north and south. The historic trade routes are along lines of latitude rather than longitude. There is profit for all of us in following the natural lines of least geographic resistance. In the trend of trade on this hemisphere the temperate and the tropical regions are mutually dependent each on the other. We have abundance of raw material fabricated into finished products which our southern neighbors want. They have certain products which are essential elements in our food consumption. Some surplus food products we also have for them. This is a good basis for mutual exchange.

If I were to note the most marked development in our own commercial policy within the last few years as relates to our Latin American neighbors, I should place first, not the general commercial exchange of commodities, though that is of great importance, but the awakening of our own people to the opportunities for the investment of capital. We have reached the stage in our own national development where our capital, never timorous when the opportunities are commensurate with the effort, looks to the south. What we did for the development of the mines and the railway system of Mexico, with abundantly satisfactory returns to ourselves and with equal advantage to our neighbors across the Rio Grande, we may further do in other countries not quite so near. The movement is perhaps a little slow, but it has set in, and with the exercise of that patience which is one of the temperamental characteristics of our Latin American friends, we may look for a much greater share in their development by capital from the United States than in the past.

We are interested in bettering the steamship communication. We believe that, while its material advantages are great, by the better and quicker facilities for mail and freight which such improvement will afford, there is an even greater advantage in the closer intercourse among the different peoples which it makes possible. We believe in the era of railroad construction which has set in and which is bearing such abundant fruits, and especially in that great intercontinental project with its enormous possibilities of good, the Pan American Railway. We believe, of course, in the Panama Canal, both as a commercial factor and as a moral force. We believe in the future development of those vast treasure beds of the Andes, the mines, and we hope to see much more of it done by our own capital. We believe in an international bank which will keep the commercial currents flowing in their proper direction. We believe in all these projects, and we believe that the countries which have these resources to develop should be aided by capital from the United States and the United States should reap the legitimate fruits of such enterprise.