

CHAPTER III

JOSÉ ENRIQUE RODÓ

(1872-1917)

IN many respects the life and labors of José Enrique Rodó, the noted Uruguayan philosopher and litterateur, present a marked contrast to those of Rubén Darío. The Nicaraguan poet was himself a human lyre upon which the passing winds and events played their own subtle songs; he responded in remarkable degree to the varying influences of his time, presenting, in that response, an organic, mental and spiritual growth. Rodó, no less responsive, was of a more Olympian nature; indeed, if we are to use a phraseology that Nietzsche made popular, Darío is the Dionysian spirit, Rodó the Apollonian. Yet they are both men of their age; both represent, in varying degree and in most diverse manifestation, the self-expansion that characterizes the times.

Despite his static life (which was altered only toward the end by a voyage to Europe during which he died, at Palermo), and his classical serenity, Rodó was one of the most dynamic spirits of his day. More than any other he realized the fluidity of modern thought, the resurgent self that lay at the bottom of the modernist movement and the general overturn in the world of ideas. In his famous study of Darío's *Prosas Profanas* he proclaimed, as we saw,

his own modernism, not in the sense of the word that connotes a prurient curiosity for the new, but in that larger significance which aligns a man with the spirit of the advancing age. Rodó's entire philosophy of unending self-renewal is, indeed, one of the most striking aspects of the search for self which, in latter days, has often assumed such ludicrous forms. He is the philosopher not only of modernism, but of eternal youth in the realm of thought. His work reveals how complex is that inner self which once seemed so simple to fathom; complex not only in its modernity, but in the heritage of the past and the previsions of the future which lie dormant in every personality, however humble and seemingly sterile. And here we approach Rodó's great service not only to the youth of Spanish America, but to the youth of the world. He realized in most intense degree, as we shall see from a study of his chief works, the infinite possibilities of the human species; while others were, properly and laudably enough, seeking self-expansion from within outward, he delved from without inward and revealed the immense store of riches there. In such a sense his philosophy (and I dislike to use a word that seems too static for Rodó's dynamic method), is centripetal. "Know thyself," he said, with Socrates; but what a revelation of our inner selves he afforded us! And he was himself the best example of his method. Not until the close of his life did this man, who had preached the necessity of travel as one of the methods of self-renewal, stir from his beloved Montevideo; yet his life was infinitely richer than that of many a globe-trotter. It was a continuous expansion in both directions; it was, both in its daily manifestations and in the thoughts that grew out of

it, a splendid example of what I have called creative eclecticism,—a harmonious structure of the present built upon solid foundations of the past,—perhaps the only method possible in these days of growing complexity. The only method, because it is in reality no method, but a flexible view that permits of personal variations and continuous change in accordance with new knowledge. There is nothing essentially novel in Rodó's protean philosophy; novelty long ceased to bask in the solar rays. What is refreshing, vitalizing and stimulating in the thoughts of the great Uruguayan, whose intellectual ancestry dates from Plato and in our own day from Taine, Renan and Bergson, is the emphasis upon the necessity of constant self-renewal. "O rinnovarsi ó morire," d'Annunzio had written,—Self-renewal or Death—and the flaming line was taken up by the modern spirits in all the Spanish nations. Characteristically enough, however, Rodó, whose thoughts are upon life rather than death, recasts the phrase and transforms it into "Reformarse es vivir"—Self-renewal is Life." That is the idea at the bottom of everything Rodó wrote; that is his great contribution to the Spanish-American renaissance of the previous century in its later phases. That is the spirit which informs his essays upon representative Spanish Americans, his criticism of Hispano-American writers, his writings upon a fuller and broader life. Rodó was among the great essayists of his generation; he was, speaking for Hispanic America, the philosopher par excellence of his time, called into being (as are most great men) by the necessity of the epoch. And although his specific ideas may be altered, subtracted from and added to, the basic element of his philosophy, from the

very nature of its call for continuous readjustment to a changing environment, will itself long remain unchanged. He erected, not a system that attempted to include all psychological phenomena within the bounds of a rigid dogma—and dogma is all the more distasteful and harmful for being philosophic or scientific—but a strangely adaptable structure that from the very pliability of its nature may better resist those social changes that spell the downfall of more rigid systems.

I

Modern Uruguay presents, in its intellectual development, a spectacle far out of proportion to the diminutive size of the republic. Out of years of strife has emerged a nation which, in the last half of the nineteenth century, produced such a galaxy of important figures as Samuel Blixen and Victor Pérez Petit (representative of the naturalistic theatre), Carlos Reyles (influential in the field of the naturalistic novel) and Julio Herrera y Reissig, a modernist poet with an involved style quite his own. Rodó is of their generation,—a generation as rich in intellectual struggles as the previous years of the nation had been in the bloodier contest of the battlefield. Everywhere wages hot discussion of literature, politics and philosophy. In the very year of Rodó's birth was founded the University Club, later called the *Ateneo* (Atheneum) of Uruguay, in which the spirit of free investigation waged combat against cramping mental restrictions.

Rodó was born in Montevideo of an old and well-established house. It is significant that he received his edu-

cation in the first lay school that was established in the country. At home, however, he was brought up in that Catholic faith which is the common emotional and religious background of all Spanish-American youth. It was, as Rodó's friend Barbagelata points out,¹ an undogmatic, non-clerical Catholicism that young Rodó imbibed from his mother.

The future philosopher, however, early abandoned his visits to the church. His college days were so well spent in serious study that he was accounted a prodigy at the age of twenty-one, and unlike prodigies at that age, an unpedantic one.

Like most of us, he consumed not a few of his youthful hours in the composition of verse. One of the sonnets of these early days gives us a hint as to his early readings, and as to something more which, strangely enough, his numerous commentators seem to have overlooked. Let us first read the sonnet:

De la dichosa edad en los albores
Amó a Perrault mi ingénua fantasía,
Mago que en torno de mi sien tendía
Gasas de luz y flecos de colores.

Del sol de adolescencia en los ardores
Fué Lamartine mi cariñoso guía
Jocelyn propició, bajo la umbría
Fronda vernal, mis ocios soñadores.

Luego el bronce hugoiano arma y escuda
Al corazón, que austeridad entraña.
Cuando avanzaba en mi heredad el frío,

¹ *Prologo to Cinco Ensayos*, by José Enrique Rodó. Madrid.

Amé a Cervantes—sensación mas ruda
 Busqué luego en Balzac . . . y hoy, cosa extraña!
 Vuelvo a Perrault, me reconcentro y río! . . .

There are several noteworthy things about the sonnet,—not as a piece of poetry, but as a bit of self-revelation. Notice that most of the authors named by Rodó are French. Notice, too, the implication of the literary circle that brings him back to Perrault. Charles Perrault, it will be recalled, besides having been the match that ignited the famous quarrel between the Moderns and the Ancients in seventeenth-century France, was the author of charming fairy-tale adaptations that have been the delight of childhood for many generations. Is not this return of Rodó to the author of childhood days symbolic of Rodó's own eternal youth? And may he not have received something of the fairy character that informs his beautiful parables from the delight of his early days and his later ones?

Rodó, in the sonnet quoted above, speaks of laughing. His friend Barbegelata is thereby led to remark that the philosopher rarely laughed, and when he did, it was a soft, almost noiseless phenomenon. "Those who were his students at the time he gave his most absorbing lectures in literature at the University of Montevideo, never saw him laugh in the professorial chair, and all admired the gravity, untainted by petulancy, of that twenty-six-year-old master. . . ."

In 1901 Rodó abandoned teaching for politics. It was for the *Revista Nacional de Literatura y Ciencias Sociales* (founded in collaboration with the brothers Martinez Vigil and Victor Pérez Petit), that he wrote much of his work, which is reproduced in his collection, *El Mirador de*

Próspero. It is with this review that Rodó's fame began to grow, and his home on la calle Cerrito in the old section of Montevideo soon became a literary shrine whither journeyed countless publications and letters from all parts of the continent.

"The correspondence of the creator of *Ariel*," wrote Barbegelata shortly before Rodó's death, "is numerous, and he attends to it personally, without a secretary, leaving no interesting letter unanswered, no printed matter without its due attention, no manuscript without its place in his files. . . ."

Rodó, like Darío, had a powerful effect upon Spanish prose. Indeed, Andrés González-Blanco, one of the few Spanish critics who has made a serious and thorough study of Spanish-American letters, and who is apt to wax most enthusiastic over his literary predilections, publicly places him upon the loftiest pedestal he can erect in the gallery of masters of style. "I have called him," says González-Blanco,"² and I will repeat it once more, "the magician of Spanish prose, the publicist who writes the best Spanish in all the globe, he who has best known to play the instrument of our language in all its mastery, surpassing Valera in flexibility, Pérez Galdós in elegance, Pardo Bazán in modernity, Valle-Inclán in erudition, Azorín in critical spirit. . . . He lacks certain qualities and subtleties of one and the other: Galdós's creative art, Valera's bland, aristocratic skepticism, Pardo Bazán's spirit of observation, Valle-Inclán's dazzling poetry, Azorín's assiduous application . . . but who could have imagined that beyond the sea

² Andrés González-Blanco: *Escritores Representativos de America*. Madrid. Page 3.

there was to flourish, at the very end of the nineteenth century, the greatest prose writer of the Castilian language? . . .”

As with Vargas Vila's glorification of Darío as the Unique, so we need not accept this fulsome praise of Rodó in its entirety. But it is, like all such laudation, significant, and here doubly so since it comes from Old Spain, which has even now much to forget of prejudice against Spanish-American letters, and much to learn of their excellencies. More important than the superlativity of the praise is the fact that Rodó's contribution to the renovation of Spanish prose was, on his part, a conscious program which, in his own words, tried to return to Castilian prose color, relief and melody, to infuse it with new blood, give it stronger muscles. For such a purpose he felt that syntactic and lexical changes were necessary, and it may be said that his final result was superior to that of Darío himself.

It is not, then, surprising, that the fetters of journalism should have chafed him. But that same necessity which forced so many other gifted Spanish Americans into the arms of literature's sister Cinderella, constrained him, too. And there was another feeling,—one similar to that which brought him from naturally contemplative life for a while into the arena of politics. “To be a writer, and not to have been, if only accidentally, a journalist in a country like ours,” he said, “would confer, more than a title of superiority or selection, a patent of egotism; it would mean that one had never felt within him that imperious voice with which the popular conscience calls those who wield the pen to the defense of common interests and common

rights in hours of tumult and agitation." This passage alone should, together with essays like *Jacobinismo y Liberalismo* and *Trabajo Obrero en el Uruguay*, show that the writer was no mere tower philosopher (for philosophers, too, have their ivory towers), but a man who realized that life is not only thought, but lived. When all is said and done, however, his gifts were those that are born of meditation. The man who rarely laughed, who (as far as is known) never loved, delighted little in idle talk and was fond chiefly of reading. From intimate acquaintances, however, we learn that like Martí he was a fascinating conversationalist. His writing seems to have required little polishing; it sprang mature from a mind that had done all the editing within.

The great war came to tear Rodó from his beloved city and sent him to Europe as the representative of the well-known Buenos Aires magazine, *Caras y Caretas*. He went directly to Spain, remaining there almost incognito for but a few hours. Thence he proceeded to Italy, where he was overtaken by death on May 1, 1917, at Palermo. He had intended, while abroad, to issue a complete edition of his works, and did not to the very last lose the same optimism that characterized him and leaped from him into the bosoms of all with whom he came into intellectual contact through word or book. Rising above the débris of the conflagration he could behold new literary ideals, new artistic forms, and a new Spanish America at last achieving a definite intellectual and economic personality.

II

The man Rodó is clearly visible in his literary labors, as is eminently fitting in an apostle of the fullest expansion of personality. A thorough examination of the few but precious volumes he left will yield not only a fuller understanding of him, but of ourselves. Is not that one of the great tests of an artist? Let us consider, chiefly, *Ariel*, the clarion call to Hispano-American youth which contains the germ of the master's greatest work, *Motives de Proteo*; after a study of that treasure-house of counsel and suggestion, we will turn to the *Mirador de Próspero*, wherein are gathered much of the author's journalistic labors. Nor shall we pass over the great essays upon Darío, Bolívar, and Montalvo, which teem with ardent apostrophes to that freedom, tolerance and expansion to which Rodó consecrated his career.³

In one of his first writings,—*El Que Vendrá* (He Who Will Come)—Rodó, in whom the literary apostle was born very early, reveals a deep sense of optimism for the future. "When the impress of ideas or of present affairs inclines my soul to abomination," he declares to the new prophet whom his lines invoke, "you appear before my eyes in the guise of a sublime, wrathful avenger. In your right hand will shine the Archangel's sword. The purifying flame will descend from your mind. The symbol of your soul will be contained in the cloud, which at the same time

³ The essays on Bolívar and Montalvo belong originally in *El Mirador de Próspero*; they are more easily accessible now, together with *Ariel*, *Darío*, and *Jacobinismo y Liberalismo*, in the *Cinco Ensayos* published in Madrid by the Editorial-America, of which the directing head is the author Rufino Blanco-Fombona.

weeps and fulminates. The iamb that flays and the elegy composed of a constellation of tears will find in your thought the somber bed of their union.

"At times I imagine you as a sweet, affectionate apostle. In your evangelical accent there will resound the note of love, the note of hope. Upon your brow will glitter the colors of the rainbow. Guided by the Bethlehem star of your word, we shall be present at the new dawn, at the rebirth of the Ideal—of the lost Ideal that we goalless travelers seek in the depths of the glacial night, through which we are journeying,—the Ideal that will reappear through you, to summon souls today chilled and scattered, to a life of love, peace, harmony. And at your feet the waves of our tempests will be hushed, as if a divine oil were cast upon the waters. And your word will resound in our spirits like the tolling of the Easter bell in the ear of the doctor bent over his draught of poison.⁴

"I behold only a hazy, mysterious vision of you, such as the soul intent upon rending the starry veil of mystery may picture to itself, in its ecstasies, the glory of the Divine Being. But I know that you will come. . . ."

Was it not natural for many Spanish Americans to behold in Rodó the selfsame literary Messiah of which he spoke in this youthful invocation? For he, too, brought a renaissance of the Ideal; his word, too, rose like a star of Bethlehem upon a new dawn.

Between *El Que Vendrá* and *Ariel* intervened but three years; yet in *Ariel* we almost feel that "he who will come" has already arrived.

⁴ An allusion to *Faust*.

1. Ariel

The purpose of the classic essay *Ariel* is at once apparent from its symbolistic title. It is a manifesto of Ariel against Caliban, of beauty against ugliness, of the spirit against a myopic utilitarianism. I have said manifesto, yet the word should be purged of its propagandistic, partisan flavor. Rodó is deeply, though not dogmatically or denominationally religious. Like so many of his continental brethren, he broke away from the intellectual fetters of the epoch, but most unlike them, he acquired a serenity, a tranquillity, a spiritual harmony, that rescued him from the excesses and the morbidity of so many modernist poets. He reveals himself in *Ariel* that which he asks his youthful audience to become,—a glowing idealist, mindful of the utilitarian element in life, yet considering it only the basis of a higher expansion. *Ariel* has been called the intellectual breviary of Spanish-American youth. That is a beautiful phrase, indicative of the unobtrusively religious element in the master's injunctions; and if the youth of Spanish America, which is more or less naturally given to an aversion for the purely material considerations of life, is in need of the counsel, what shall we say of our own, to whom *Ariel*, with little change, might become no less an intellectual breviary?

The thought of the United States, indeed, occurs powerfully to Rodó in the present essay as elsewhere, and he comments upon our country in a manner that reveals him as a keen student of modern civilization. He recognizes our power of carrying through all projects of a practical nature, in which the will is the dominant force. He recog-

nizes, too, our lack, as a nation, of spiritual cultivation and refinement. "The will is the chisel that has sculptured this people out of solid rock. Its salient characteristics are two manifestations of the power of the will: originality and audacity. Its entire history is the manifestation of a virile activity. Its representative personage is named *I will*, like the superman of Nietzsche. If anything rescues it collectively from vulgarity, it is that extraordinary exemplification of energy which carries it everywhere and with which it imprints a certain character of epic grandeur even upon the struggle of interests and material life. . . . And this supreme energy . . . is discoverable even in those individuals who present themselves to us as exceptional in and divergent from that civilization. None will deny that Edgar Poe is an anomalous and rebellious individuality within his people. His select soul represents an inassimilable particle of the national soul, which not without reason stirred among the others with the sensation of an infinite solitude. And nevertheless, as Baudelaire has deeply revealed, the fundamental note in the character of Poe's heroes is the superhuman temper, the indomitable resistance of the will. When he conceived Ligeia, the most mysterious and adorable of his creations, Poe symbolized in the inextinguishable light of her eyes the Will's hymn of triumph over Death."

Yet for all his admiration of our characteristics, Rodó feels a certain singular impression of insufficiency and emptiness about our life. Do not mistake his attitude for the carping and harsh, if, doubtless genuine, dislike of a Blanco-Fombona. Rodó holds up our life in general as an example of a people without any deep traditions to orientate

it,—a people that has not been able to substitute for the inspired idealism of the past a disinterested conception of the future. “It lives for the immediate reality, and through it subordinates all its activity to the egotism of personal and collective well-being.—Of the sum of the elements of its riches and its powers, one might say what the author of *Mensonges* said of the intelligence of the Marquis de Nobert, who figures in one of his books: it is a heap of wood which it has been impossible to ignite.” The spark has been missing. To him we lack the poetic instinct; even the North American religion becomes nothing more than “an auxiliary force of penal legislation which would abandon its past on the day when it would be possible to give to utilitarian morals that religious power which Stuart Mill was so desirous of endowing it with.”⁵

From what we have read it is easy to see that it is not the United States that Rodó will point to as the inspiration of Spanish-American youth. He frankly considers us, for all our enormous development, as yet the embodiment of a will and a utility that, he hopes, will some day become intelligence, feeling, idealism as well. The reproach is a common one, often levelled at this country through a sense of envy, if not from more practical motives not entirely dissociated from propaganda in its worst diplomatic meaning, but is there not some truth,—however much or little,—at the bottom? Is there not something about rapid material progress and the sense of power it confers which produces the illusion of intellectual superiority? I am no believer in chauvinism or narrow nationalism, yet I cannot share

⁵ Rodó's acquaintance with the currents of our national thought is so intimate that he quotes with disapproval the utilitarian moral of the once popular *Pushing to the Front*, by Orison Swett Marden.

Rodó's thoughts as to our future. We are a young nation, a nation which, to make use of a paraphrase, is living its Odyssey before writing it, yet which contains every possibility of a vast continental culture, to which it will eventually attain, either despite, or because of, its proud materialism. Rodó himself would be the first to recognize that it is after all an unhealthy, anæmic spiritualism that does not rest upon a material foundation. However much mistaken he may have been in his views as to our immediate future, his objection to this country as a model for Spanish-American youth had firmer foundations. There is, first of all, the racial difference, which naturally accounts for a good deal of the South-American preference for France as an intellectual leader; with that racial difference is bound up the cultural one which blossoms from it. Without agreeing then, to Rodó's details, we may lend a most respectful ear to his general proposition, and yet not slight our own nation. As Darío and Chocano have realized, Spanish and English America may, as a union of complementary forces, accomplish great things.

Just as readily may we assent to his views upon democracy without thereby slighting the so-called common people. Rodó is no believer in the quantitative democracy of the politicians. He desires that genuine democracy which is inspired by a true appreciation of human superiorities,—a democracy in which intelligence and virtue receive their authority from prestige and liberty. And with the syncretistic method that is so characteristic of his eclecticism, he roots that democracy in both Christian and Pagan characteristics. "From the spirit of Christianity is born, in effect, the feeling of equality, vitiated by a certain as-

cetic scorn for spiritual selection and culture. From the heritage of the classic civilizations is born the feeling for order, for hierarchy, and religious respect for genius, vitiated by a certain aristocratic disdain for the humble and the weak." It is these two elements, shorn of their vitiating factors, that will be harmonized by the future civilization.

It is that future civilization which concerns Rodó in *Ariel*. It is because he beholds the future in the youth before him that he counsels them, in words that have reechoed over the continent, to consecrate part of their lives to the non-material. "There were, in antiquity, altars for the 'unknown gods.' Consecrate part of your soul to the unknown future. In proportion as societies advance, the thought of the future enters in greater measure as one of the factors of its evolution and one of the inspirations of its labors. . . ."

To Rodó's optimistic vision there is ever present the sight of an immortal Ariel triumphing over the temporary victories of Caliban. Ariel is eternal youth, which, as a nation, is symbolized by Greece. Yet is there not a subtler symbolism in Rodó's address,—something he himself may not have caught? He imagines himself as Prospero in this speech, even as his collected journalistic articles have been sponsored by that same spirit of Shakespeare's *Tempest*. The title of the famous address is likewise Shakesperian. In the same breath with which he expresses distrust of one Anglo-Saxon people he extols the greatest genius who has written in their language! This is, of course, indicative of many things,—his broad culture, his high idealism; but it indicates far more. The race that produced a

Shakespeare has a worthy tradition; the people out of whose midst grew the creator of Prospero and Ariel to furnish Rodó with a personality and a symbol, may look with confidence toward the future. If these digressions serve to suggest anything, it should be that no nation, no people, has a monopoly upon idealism, the manifestations of which are various and the results no less so.

We have said that *Ariel* contained in germ the distinguishing characteristics of Rodó's personality. What are these? A deep sense of life's uninterrupted continuity with the flame of its enthusiasm and its vigor. It is this sense that lies at the bottom of Rodó's eclecticism and enables him to attempt a harmonization of Pagan and Christian virtues,—for pagans have their virtues as Christians their vices. Out of this sense, indeed, may grow all those other qualities we discern in the man,—his fine tolerance, his aristodemocracy, his cosmopolitan culture, his anxiety to effect a constant readjustment of the inner self with the outer world. Here there appear, too, the chief elements of that style which has so enchanted two continents,—a flowing, glowing prose that verges upon the poetic without dissolving into sentimentality, illumined by similes and metaphors organically related to the text. What a beautiful, placid close is that of *Ariel* in which the master, taking leave of his audience, hears the youngest of his disciples exclaim, as he points to the stirrings of the human multitude and then to the radiant beauty of the night:

“While the crowd passes, I observe that, although it does not gaze at the sky, the sky gazes down upon it. And into its obscure, indifferent bulk, like the furrows of the

land, something falls from high. The vibration of the stars seems like the movement of a sower's hands."

Such a sower, in *Ariel* and in his other labors, Rodó sought to be. Is it a deeper trust of the human flock and its instinctive impulse to justice and truth, that makes me see in Rodó's manner, if not in some of his actual admonitions, a residue of that aristocratic blood which he inherited from his pure Spanish ancestry? Is there not a world of truth in the perspicacious statement of the discerning poet-critic, Max Henríquez Ureña, that "if in America the ignorant mass needs instruction, the directing class needs ideals"?⁶ And although by America the author meant only Spanish America, I for one am willing to add the northern continent and make the statement unanimous.

There is more in *Ariel*: that consciousness of Spanish America's vast potentialities which informed everything that sprang from Rodó's pen. For Rodó, remember, was a partisan of the Magna Patria, the continental dream of Bolívar. That vision inspired some of his noblest pages, even as it led him to interpret its spiritual parent. It is that spirit, too, which must have been present when he said that Darío was not the poet of America. One of the very last things, indeed, that Rodó wrote, in the city of Rome, was an article entitled *The Spiritual Union of America*, in which he called for the formation of the Hispano-American spirit, to sow in the consciousness of the peoples that idea of "our America as a common force, as an indivisible power, as a sole fatherland (*patria única*). The entire future lies virtually in that work."

⁶ *Rodó y Rubén Darío*. Page 43.

We have already noted the literary aspect of this Americanism. Let us for the present see how its broader implications shine out of a series of notable essays in which Rodó, interpreting the great spirits of Spanish America that appealed to him, interpreted himself as well,—his opinions upon tolerance, democracy, liberty and justice.

Pick up the essay on *Montalvo* or *Bolívar* and you realize almost at once that you have made a literary discovery. This writer, you tell yourself, has well merited comparison with Emerson, Macaulay or Carlyle. In his essay upon the beloved Liberator, as in that upon the great Ecuadorian, there glows Rodó's own ardent belief in the destinies of a Spanish America joined by the bonds of an enlightened solidarity. In revealing the nobility of Bolívar he reveals his own as a firm priest of the higher democracy in which (as he explicitly states in *Ariel*), the people will rise above the mere fascination of their own numbers.

Professor J. D. M. Ford of Harvard University, whose influence has been as potent as it has been silent and unostentatious in cultivating the study of Spanish and Spanish-American letters in this country, has, in his *Main Currents of Spanish Literature*,⁷ registered an interesting contrast between the literary fates of Bolívar and Washington. "Fate has shown herself far more kind to Bolívar than to Washington," he writes, . . . "for she raised up for the southern military genius a poet worthy to chronicle the success of his arms, while Washington, though first in the hearts of his countrymen, has yet to be commemorated in song, in a manner befitting his proportions." Rodó's essay upon Bolívar, whom many believe greater than Washing-

⁷ New York, 1919. Page 256.

ton, and who was certainly more versatile, is one of Fate's kindnesses to the great Spanish American. It reveals him as "great in thought, great in action, great in glory, great in misfortune, . . . great because he endures, in abandonment and in death, the tragic expiation of greatness. There are many human lives that are characterized by a more perfect harmony, a purer moral or æsthetic order; few offer so constant a character of greatness or power; few subject the sympathies of the heroic imagination to so dominating a rule." Is not that a superbly, yet simply, orchestrated introduction to a study that amplifies upon the opening theme with illuminating virtuosity of thought and language? "The tragic expiation of greatness." Is not that a memorable phrase, and does it not sum up the isolation of superiority? For Bolívar's life, multiple as it was, reveals at the close the tragedy of greatness and the irony of it. To the great Liberator, indeed, might have been inscribed the haunting lines that Darío wrote to another Liberator who built better than he knew:

Cristóforo Colombo, pobre Almirante,
ruega á Diós por el mundo que descubriste!

"When ten centuries have passed," concludes this remarkable essay, "when the patina of a legendary antiquity extends from the Anahuac to the Plata, there where today Nature glows or civilization sinks its roots; when one hundred human generations will have mingled, in the mass of earth the dust of their bones with the dust of the forests that will have been a thousand times bereft of their leaves, and of the cities that will have been twenty times reconstructed, and cause to reverberate in the memory of men

who would frighten us with their strangeness if we could imagine what they will look like, myriads of glorious names in virtue of deeds and victories of which we can form no conception; even then, if the collective sentiment of a free and united America has not lost its essential power, these men . . . will behold that in the extension of their records of glory there is none greater than Bolívar."

No less sympathetic and laudatory is the essay on Montalvo, in whom Rodó sees the representative writer of his continent, a combination of Sarmiento's inspiration and Bello's art. With a skill all the more surprising because he had never visited the scene, Rodó reconstructs the complete environment into which the author of the *Siete Tratados* was born and reveals himself eminently fair to historical characters embodying principles repugnant to him. García Moreno is thus not merely a tyrant to be declaimed against, but a religious fanatic in whom obsession is to blame for his tyranny, rather than any innate perversity or distortion of human attributes. And when, in the midst of a most perspicacious criticism of Montalvo's literary productions we come upon the following paragraph, we are quite ready to transcribe Rodó's estimate of Montalvo and use it as our own of Rodó:

"Another essential feature of his literature, because it was also one of his person and his life, is the tone of nobility and superiority. This perennial agitator against false and petty authorities, had a deep feeling for the great and the true. He was liberal in the noble sense of the word; demagogue or plebeian, never. In quality of ideas, as in temper of spirit, as in taste of style, a caballero from head to foot. He loved liberty with the love of a

heart that turned to justice and of intelligence subjected to order; never with the livid, loathsome passion of him who suffers hunger for that which nature or fortune conceded to others."

And in one of the finest passages in all of Rodó's works, which illustrates his gift for producing comparisons doubly beautiful for their intrinsic linguistic skill and their aptness of thought, the great Uruguayan suggests that it was the sight of Cotopaxi that first induced in Montalvo his love of order and beauty.

The essay on Rubén Darío is no less revelatory of Rodó's remarkable gift of reaching the heart of his subject and casting upon it, from every angle, the light of a deep learning and a sympathy no less deep. Be not led astray by the paragraph I have quoted from the essay on Bolívar. Rodó is not given to superlatives. If anything, there is most of the time about his work a certain classic repose, an unruffled equanimity, that makes one long for an occasional outburst of passion.

It was Rodó, as we have seen, that once and for all stamped the attribute of grace upon Darío's poetry. His analysis, limited to the *Prosas Profanas*, does not reveal the whole poet (nor, to my own way of thinking, the essential poet), but within the limits of the single collection which it treats it has already become a classic and has, as we have remarked, literally rendered further analysis of *Prosas Profanas* superfluous.

It is in *Liberalismo y Jacobinismo* that Rodó's fine tolerance displays itself most fully. An order from the Comisión de Caridad y Beneficencia Pública of Montevideo had decreed that all the crucifixes of the city hospital be

cast out. Whereupon a controversy ensued in which our author took up the cudgels for the crucifix against one Emilio Bossi. It is by no means impossible (adopting a mite of Rodó's own syncretism), to assent to the general theses of both men. A liberation from the dogmas of all religions is by no means incompatible with a recognition of the need felt by many for religion's healing and soothing power. There is a fanaticism of atheism as well as of religion, and fanaticism, wherever encountered, is to be deplored. In arguing for the retention of the crucifixes Rodó revealed his deeply human understanding and his overflowing sympathy. For all his equanimity he was a man of feeling, who realized that none has a monopoly of truth; he had no use for a liberalism that could itself become sectarian and intolerant. What is gained by a swapping of one intolerance for another? And what is gained by the imposition of an idea?

The Rodó of *Ariel* and of the essays is a perspicacious, patient thinker, moderate in judgment, moderate in counsel, tolerant in attitude, glowing with a constant, rather than a volcanic, passion for justice and freedom. His style is eminently matched to his subject. Nowhere better than in such contrary temperaments as Rodó and Blanco-Fombona, united only by the same aspiration for a glorious continental future, is illustrated the oft-repeated yet little understood dictum that the style is the man. Rodó's rare laughter might have been discerned from his prose, in which that element of humor which so brightens the pages of Gutiérrez Nájera is absent. His deeply meditative nature blossoms in a thousand metaphors that illumine his meaning and not, as in so much fine writing, befog it. He is

not, like Blanco-Fombona, a volcano; not, like Darío, a flame; not, like Chocano, a trumpet; he is a glow,—an intense, radiant, many-colored glow in the heart of things. He is no more of the crowd than Darío, yet he loves it more despite his stern interpretation of democracy; he is a disciple, let us say, of nature's nobility, a leader of leaders. His influence will perhaps penetrate not directly, but through its effect upon Hispano-American thinkers who will in turn communicate that influence, slowly but surely, to the thinking crowd.

2. *Motivos de Proteo*

It is in the *Motivos de Proteo* that Rodó's philosophy is developed to the point of a dynamic system. I do not know how deeply Rodó was acquainted with the methods of psycho-analysis, but his plumbing of our undreamed-of potentialities is not a little related, in both premises and conclusions, to the methods, if not the aims, of Freudian psychologists. He deals, of course, with the normal mind (which, like the normal eyesight of which Bernard Shaw speaks in one of his logorrheic prefaces, is so rare), but his realization of the possibilities of the average man and of the paramount importance of the unconscious in everyday life ranges him with the foremost contemporary psychologists. He gives us a new realization of self; he discovers, even to the most introspective natures among us, a veritable universe of new worlds within. He exhibits us to ourselves not as a single being, but as the sum total of our entire past, worked upon by influences we know not of, yet in a measure able to direct those forces. Self-knowl-

edge, self-adaptation in the light of that knowledge, continuous re-adjustment in the light of newer knowledge,—self-renewal is Life.

And why Proteus as the symbolic speaker? Here again, as in *Ariel*, in a single symbol the author concentrates his entire philosophy. *Ariel* is eternal youth; *Proteus* is eternal change guided by the essential unity of a dominant personality. For was it not Proteus who could at will assume new forms? “A form of the sea, a spirit of the sea, from whose restless bosom antiquity drew a fecund generation of myths, Proteus was he who guarded Poseidon’s flocks of seals. In the *Odyssey* and in the *Georgics* is sung his venerable ancientness, his passage over the waves in the swift marine coach. Like all the divinities of the waters he possessed the prophetic gift and complete knowledge, fled all consultation, and in order to elude human curiosity resorted to his marvellous faculty of transforming himself into a thousand divers forms. It was this faculty by which he was characterized in mythology, and it determines . . . his ideal significance.

“When the Homeric Menelaus desires to learn through him what course his vessels shall follow; when the Aristæus of Vergil goes to ask him the secret of the evil which consumes his bees, Proteus has recourse to that mysterious virtue with which he disorientated those who surprised him. Now he would change into a wild lion, now into a wriggling, scaly serpent; now, converted into fire, he would rise like a tremulous flame; now he was the tree that lifted its crest to the vicinity of the heavens, now the brook that rippled rapidly along. Ever elusive, ever new, he ran through the infinity of appearances without fixing his most subtle es-

sence in any of them. And because of this infinite plasticity, being a divinity of the sea, he personified one of the aspects of the sea: he was the multifarious wave, intractable, incapable of concretion or repose; the wave, which now rebels and now caresses; which at times lulls to rest, and at others thunders; which possesses all the volubilities of impulse, all the nuances of color, all the modulations of sound; which never rises or falls in the same way, and which, taking from and returning to the ocean the liquid which it gathers, impresses upon inert equality form, movement and change."

Such is the invocatory foreword to the *Motivos*. By a masterful choice of a single word, as it were, Rodó symbolizes to us the Protean personality that we conceal within,—that personality of which most of us learn to know only a single form, and which is yet as latently multiform as the Greek divinity of the waters himself.

Max Henríquez Ureña, in his excellent study of the inspiring Uruguayan, has rather ingeniously (yet following a similar cue in such an essay as Rodó's own masterly one upon Montalvo) suggested that it was the ocean itself that helped to originate Rodó's philosophy of eternal change. For, ever before the scholar's sight, facing the city through which the noted figure (tall and recalling to many the swooping condor of the Andes) was wont to stroll, was the restless, ever-changing yet eternal ocean.

"How often the immense sea changes color!" Rodó has written. "Who spoke of the monotony of the sea? The firm earth varies only in space; the sea changes and transforms itself in time. . . . This immensity is a perpetual *becoming* [Rodó here employs the French word *devenir*]. . . .

What scale like the scale of its sounds? What palette like that which supplies its hues? What imagination richer in forms than the wave, never resembling itself?"

Once again I may recall the pregnant saying of La Rochefoucauld, which surely deserves to stand as one of the epigraphs of the *Motivos*: "We differ mostly from ourselves." A most *protean* saying in the light of Rodó's inner delvings, and one most rich in suggestions to the man who seeks self-knowledge. For, from the very fact that we are ourselves, we are all men. Must not such a notion have underlain Rodó's exemplary tolerance?

To return for a moment to Henríquez Ureña's suggestion. "After knowing this page," he writes⁸ (he has just quoted the passage from which I translated the above excerpts), "would it be rash to affirm that the constant vision of the sea served as inspiration and guide to Rodó's philosophic thought, by the sole process of transmuting the material observation into a spiritual conception?" Such was Rodó's habit, as he himself has told us: "My imagination is of such cast that every material appearance tends to translate itself into an idea. Nature always speaks to me the language of the spirit." Surely enough, as we have seen, it is a divinity of the sea that Rodó invokes at the beginning of his masterwork. And was not Ariel himself somewhat of a sea sprite?

Let us now follow, in outline, the rich content of the work in which the Uruguayan scholar entraps the elusive spirit of Proteus and compels him to yield a tithe of his fascinating lore.

The great motto, as we have seen, is *Reformarse es vivir*,

⁸ *Op. cit.* Page 15.

—Self-renewal is Life. None more than Rodó realizes the compelling need for continual change; none more than he feels that life is not a definite, inalterable result, but a *becoming*. Is not this the negation of all that is static and reactionary? Does not this principle, so easy to accept in theory and so difficult to countenance in practice, underly all progress? To Rodó, time is the greatest innovator, and by that same token the ally of all change, which, whether we will or not, is ever going on within us. We may not heed ourselves, one might phrase it, but our selves heed us. Each one of us is, successively, not *one*, but *many*. And these successive personalities, which emerge one from the other, offer themselves the rarest and most astonishing contrasts. And within us, nothing happens without a result; everything leaves its trace. Our personalities are, then, in this constant flux, a “death whose sum is death; resurrections whose persistency is life. . . . We are the wake of the vessel whose material entity does not remain the same for two successive moments, because incessantly it dies and is reborn amid the waves; the wake, which is, not a persisting reality, but a progressive form, a succession of rhythmic impulses which act upon a constantly renewed object.”

We are, as it were, a vortex of incessant inner changes in an ocean of outer ones. And “he who lives rationally is he who, aware of the incessant activity of change, tries each day to obtain a clear notion of his internal state and of the transformations that have occurred in the objects that surround him, and in accordance with this knowledge . . . directs his thoughts and his acts.” And here, at the very outset, the author comes upon a most important applica-

tion of his fecund principle to modern education, pointing out that one of our worst errors is the view that existence is divided into two consecutive and naturally separated parts,—that in which we learn and that in which we use the results of the accumulated knowledge. If life is a perpetual *becoming*, it follows that knowledge is a constant acquiring. “As long as we live, our personality is upon the anvil. . . . We must try, in the intellectual field, never to diminish or lose completely our interest, the child’s curiosity,—that alertness of fresh ingenuous attention and the stimulus which is born of knowing oneself ignorant since we are always that. . . .” That eternal youth which Rodó preached, and which he so well exemplified, is attained by the constant self-renewal without which life becomes worse than vegetative, sinking to the level of the mineral kingdom.

Renovation, transformation, reintegration. “Is not this all the philosophy of action and life? Is this not life itself, if by life we are to understand in the human sphere something other than the somnambulism of the animal and the vegetation of the plant?”

Rodó is an optimist, though not of the type represented by Dr. Pangloss and his great-great-granddaughter Pollyanna. He sees, from the very multiplicity of our inner selves, the possibility of changing apparent failure or misfortune into a new orientation of our lives, the chance to obtain good out of evil. Nor is he content with cold counsel; patiently and with a readiness that attests his vast reading and retentive memory, he adduces example after example to sustain his point, not to speak of secular parables that have passed into the anthologies for their illuminative beauty. There are so many latent powers within us, there

is such a wealth of spiritual reserves, that the frustration of any one power is compensated for by the discovery of another. Men cheated of a life of action (like Vauvenargues) turn to fruitful contemplation; spirits opposed in their desire for diplomatic preferment (like Ronsard) develop poetic powers; a Prescott forced by illness to abandon the Forum becomes a glorious historian. Our *self* is an inexhaustible fund of potentialities. "Man of little faith, what do you know of that which dwells within you? . . ." Herein lies the fascination of our self-discovery,—the enchantment of becoming our own Columbus. "Is there anything that interests you more than the discovery of what is within you and nowhere else: a land that was created for you alone; an America whose only possible discoverer is you yourself, without the need of fearing, in your gigantic design, either rivals to dispute your glory or conquerors to usurp your gain?" By this, however, Rodó does not mean sterile, morbid introspection, but fruitful contemplation,—he prefers Marcus Aurelius to Amiel. Thus we are aided to realize how many of our supposed personal beliefs are but the imposition of society; we are to strive, however, for the assertion of our true selves, without forgetting that originality, so-called, is but a returning of ideas to society, rather than a gift. The point is well worth dwelling upon. We call that liberty, that originality, *genius*, when it reaches a certain degree. But how often is "the contribution with which individual thought seems to bring new elements to the common horde in reality a restitution of ideas that have been slowly and silently absorbed! Even as one would be apt to judge, from outward appearances, that it is the rivers which supply the ocean with water, since they pour into it,

while it is the sea whence comes the water in which the rivers rise." A beautiful comparison and a true, which should make our "leaders" more humble and the flock more confident.

In this philosophy of ego-culture there is little egotism; it is self, not selfishness, that Rodó is concerned with. The realization of our internal cosmos confronts him at every turn. "By a general law, a human soul may give of itself more than its consciousness believes and perceives, and much more than its will transforms into deed." In *Peer Gynt* the philosopher beholds the highest expression of the remorse that overtakes the spendthrift of personality. "Peer Gynt! Peer Gynt! You are a legion of legions!"

The fluidity of self must form the basic principle of education, declares Rodó. "Any philosophy of the human spirit; any investigation into the history of man and peoples, any judgment upon a character, an attitude or a morality; any proposal for education or reform, which does not take into account . . . this complexity of the moral person, may not flatter itself with the hope of truth or certainty." Hence our contradictory natures (so well depicted, says Rodó, in Shakespeare's characters); hence Rodó's own splendid tolerance in the vast, human sense of the word.

Rodó realizes deeply that the soul of each of us is the sum of the souls of all our predecessors, back to countless generations. "All those who have passed from the reality of the world persist in you. . . . What is the mysterious mandate of the instinct that works in you without the intervention of your will and your consciousness, but a voice which . . . rises from the depths of an immemorial past

and compels you to perform an act preordained by the customs of your ancestors?" It is out of these elements that we construct our personality; the changes are often forecasted by signs that we little heed or recognize at the time they first occur. No psychiatrist was ever more aware of the importance of the apparently least significant mental phenomena; our impulsiveness (so-called) possesses deep roots. No real understanding of our conscious selves is thus possible without some acquaintance with the submerged element. To Rodó there is no such thing as events great and small; all are potentially great. Did not the flight of birds (and what more poetically innocent than this?) determine the discovery of the North American continent? And every act of ours, every thought, may be just such a flight. . . .

A considerable part of the first half is devoted to the absorbing subject of human vocation, which the Uruguayan philosopher terms "the consciousness of a determined aptitude." Human aptitude is indeed an unfathomable well, as is shown by the Titans of the Renaissance. Yet if we may not all be Leonardos, how little of our garden do we cultivate! And in the matter of human potentialities Rodó is glowingly optimistic; we are all, so to speak, latent supermen,—not quite in the sense commonly attributed to Nietzsche's blond beast, but in the significance of a broadly developed, many-faceted personality.

Rodó's lengthy argument on vocation should be studied not only by our so-styled vocational trainers (who, too often in practice, serve to stifle non-utilitarian gifts in favor of materialistic development) but by all teachers and parents. What a mine of suggestion there is in his anecdote about

Pestalozzi, whose instructor could make no progress with him, "not suspecting surely that the bad pupil was destined to invent new and better" methods. Hence the need for fostering natural inclinations.

It is difficult to believe the assertion of his friends that Rodó never loved; for section LIV of the *Motivos* is devoted to an admirable exposition of Love as the motive power of art. "Love is the pole and the quintessence of sensibility, and the artist is sensibility incarnate." And further on: "He who loves is, in the intimate recesses of his imagination, a poet and artist, although he may lack the gift of forming into a real and palpable work the divine spirit that possesses him."

We have seen that Rodó has an intense and abiding faith in human capabilities,—that he does not tire of studying the methods of their cultivation and the reasons for their aberration; he has, too, a deep realization of how much talent, and even genius, is stifled by the harsh conditions of modern life. "How many forces capable of a lofty dynamism remain unknown, and are lost forever in the obscure depths of human society!" he exclaims, in lines that recall, at once, the imperishable beauty in which our own Gray has framed the same idea. "Is there a thought more worthy than this of deep, serious attention? . . ." And in the chaotic, opaque mass of the common people's spirit he thus sees, potentially, an excellent literature and a high art, a science impregnated with clarity, and thousands of heroic battles, in such a manner that, according to the superb image of Tyndall, even the dramas of Shakespeare existed, like all things else, potentially in the nebulous haze of the world's beginnings. Is it not significant that every age

summons forth the heroes that it needs? Not that they arrive in steady numbers, for "many more are the seeds that the earth allows to go to waste than those it receives." And then this notable excerpt in which the philosopher is at once humanist, scientist, commoner and inspirer: "In the eternal conflict which determines which shall be the *chosen* from the number that are *called*, since there is not room for all, the greater fitness or power prevails; superiority triumphs and imposes its will; but this alone does not satisfy justice, for we still have to reckon with those who are among neither the *chosen* nor the *called*; those who may not even arrive at the arena of the contest, since they live in such conditions that they are unaware of their own selves or it is forbidden them to bring forth the gold from their own mine. And among these, ah! who knows whether there are not the first and the best?" . . .

Consider the deep human sympathy this memorable passage connotes. See how Rodó applies his philosophy of self-culture not alone to individuals but to society. Just as human personality is vibrant with countless potentialities, so is the social personality aquiver with innumerable latent gifts that never come to light. Much of this loss is inevitable; much, however, is a direct effect of social and economic maladjustment.

The cogent thinker carries his ideas into the realm of letters, with the result that he perceives the folly of writers and personalities grouping themselves solely by "schools" and thus achieving a false uniformity. Not for him the preceptive attitude of the taskmaster critic who seeks to teach the creative artist what to think and how to express it; he recognizes most explicitly the psychological root of such

“isms” as bristle in our forest of classification so densely that we cannot see the authors for the terminology. Provided that the realism or the idealism, the subjectivity or impersonality of the author is a sincere, unforced, spontaneous product, he would foster it most sympathetically. The mere imitator he with justice deplures, for such imitation is the very negation of personality. Such imitation should not be confused, however, with the natural attraction of kindred spirits to one another.

It is surprising how, as Rodó develops his great theme, he manages to extract new meanings, new aspects, new orientations, from a simple statement that, when uttered, seems to demand little further elucidation. The fecundity of his central thought that self-reformation is life, thus mirrors the very fecundity of that self whose cultivation he preaches,—not the superficial self-culture of rapid correspondence courses, but a daily discovery of a new world within us. In the beauty of his diction and thought is a reflection of the author’s own beauty; his was a life that discovered riches where others had seen only monotony. He was himself the best example of that “perfect and typical exemplar of progressive life” which he mentions in section LXXXII, for “his philosophy is like the light of each dawn, a new thing, because it is born, not of a logical formalism, but from the living, seething bosom of a soul.” Rodó was rightly the enemy of “schools” and “systems”; his dynamic philosophy is inconsistent with anything that attempts to place a seal upon human knowledge and activity, saying “Thus only is it, and this is all of truth”; he was that *protean* mentality of which he became the great expo-

nent. Nor is his method an abstract one, dealing in *a priori*. The *Motivos* are in a very vital sense a history of human personality,—of the world's representative men. It is from the knowledge (and an intimate knowledge) of many lives in all ages that he evolved these notable thoughts. His *Proteism*, as the expression of man's unboundedly wealthy inner life, is nothing new; indeed, I am not certain that it is possible to place a finger on any specific passage in the *Motivos* and say "This is new." Is it even desirable? What is fresh, however, in Rodó, is the constant, patient delving into the personality, his examination of it from a hundred different angles, his renovation of ancient example, his transformation of the material into a self-revelation.

His anxiety for self-renewal led him to consider the importance of travel. If self-reformation is life, travel is self-reformation. It serves to break us away from the roots that we naturally sink into our environment (and how the protean master fears the immobility connoted in roots!) and to enrich our views. "The expatriation of voyages is therefore the supreme antidote for routine thought, for fanatic passion, for all manner of rigidity and blindness." Travelling, like solitude, is a method of withdrawal, which is so necessary for a summary of our inner state. Travel, too, (and this I consider a most important element in the protean philosophy of Rodó) leads to intellectual internationalism. Nations, like individuals, must know themselves to know each other; man is, at bottom, as Rodó asserts, "a citizen of the world." Is not the study of foreign literatures, too, a sort of mental travelling? The author is rich in examples of men whose travels have

wrought profound influence not only upon themselves but upon their generation,—Goethe, Gautier, Cervantes, Gibbon, Irving. . . .

Is it surprising, then, that Rodó should possess a *protean* conception of Truth? For truth itself, like life, is not a concrete entity, but a *becoming*; not a static measure but a dynamic force. Significantly enough, it was not truth, but love of truth, that Rodó sought to bring to his fellow man. In asserting the utility of a conviction or a belief as the guide of our will and our thought, he is characteristically careful to recall that such convictions or beliefs are not always present in some personalities, whereupon he adds, in italics, *or a diligent and disinterested desire for truth that may guide our mind upon the road to acquiring them* (i. e., conviction or belief.) There have been creative artists who have asserted that their very aimlessness is their goal; I am not sure that the paradox is an altogether futile one, but in all probability the Uruguayan would call such an “aim” the “sterile fatigue of a purposeless motion.”

Just as our ideas and acquisitions tend to crystallize about a certain conviction or belief (which should be the resultant and not the dictator of those ideas), so human aptitudes, though multiform within the same personality, are usually subordinated to a dominant gift. Alfonso the Learned, Dante, Raymond Lully and Leonardo da Vinci were all very versatile men, but it was the legislator who predominated in the first, the poet in the second, the philosopher in the third, and the painter in the last. Often one vocation suggests another; even hostile personal forces may be harmonized within the same individual or race; Rodó points out that primitive Christianity was thus born of a

race in which the most fervent religious spirit was united to the finest economic tact. As usual, Rodó, whose interest is centered with untiring steadiness upon human beings and not upon abstract principles, is plentiful in examples. There is Wagner, in whom the literary faculty aided the musical; there is Boito, poet and musician in one; there are Beethoven and Mozart, skilled alike as creators and interpreters; Plautus, Shakespeare, Molière, who could act as well as create. And Rodó is quite right when he flies in the face of not only popular, but "intellectual" opinion, with the assertion that "it is a common error to imagine that the gift and energy of practice . . . inhibit or take away power from the aptitude for theory." Here again he is rich in personal example of men gifted with both the creative and the critical powers.

Does not all creation imply a form of criticism,—if not unconscious self-criticism? And is not criticism a form of creation? Indeed, do not many of our unsuspected powers go to waste, or rather, never rise to consciousness because circumstances have never summoned them? I believe the Spanish people on both sides of the Atlantic furnish a striking proof of versatility called into being by necessity. How relatively often do we encounter, in one man, the poet, the statesman, the playwright, the journalist! May not this be due, in part, to the great percentage of illiteracy, and to the resulting fact that the various functions of the intellectual life must be performed by the same few who have received the advantages of an education? There are such things as special gifts, of course; but there are infinitely more gifts, special and general, that are submerged beneath the waters of social and economic maladjustment.

Rodó insists upon the potent influence of the unconscious, even when it never rises to the surface of the individual's consciousness. And returning to his theme of the directing idea,—even, indeed, when that direction is vague,—he asks, in almost Tennysonian phraseology, whether, as a directive power in life, the absence of love is of more value than love devoted to one who is unworthy of inspiring it.⁹ “Let me gaze into the depths of your soul and see in what direction your love points, and I will tell you . . . whither you are going over life's paths, and what is to be expected of you in your thoughts and your works.” He recognizes, too, the great releasing power of love as a liberator of ideas and acts, and that frequently it “triumphs over the inferiority of the object.” Such a lover, then, is really in love with an ideal rather than with the real object, and it is the ideal that is his compass.

The philosopher insists, then, upon the crystallization of thoughts around a central idea, whether that be love, a conviction, or a belief. “How many a fecund thought, how many a happy invention, how many a new truth or new beauty, a victory for good, an amelioration in the condition of man has not Humanity lost in this manner!” (i. e. through lack of adhesion to a central thought-power). Even bootless search may prove fruitful in by-products, so to speak, so long as the guiding impulse is there.

We must subject our ideas to a continual test in the light of our new knowledge; if they do not survive that test they

⁹ Far be it from me to intrude psycho-analysis into these studies. But, since Rodó's friends have noted that he never had a love affair, may not some of his lines, as here summarized, indicate that he had suffered a disappointment, whence he had sought to draw consolation? For one who has never loved, Rodó ascribes far too much potency to the passion.

must disappear. Unwillingness to change is, in reality, alienation of personality. Nor does Rodó fear the cry of "Apostate! Traitor!" For well he knows that "there is no human creed that has not originated in an inconsistency, an infidelity. The dogma that is today a sacred tradition was at its birth a heretic piece of daring. In abandoning it to attain to *your* truth, you do but follow the example of the master who, in order to found it, broke the authority of the idea which in his day was dogma. . . ." Here we have not only one of the noblest passages from a writer rich in such nobility, but one of the pivotal principles of his entire philosophy. Is not this eternal heterodoxy (which, none the less, may not be termed extremism because of its deep sense of evolution) the fruit of Rodó's intense belief in the necessity of self-renewal? Is it not a natural corollary of his conception of truth, no less than life, as a *becoming*? From his beautiful parable of *La Despedida de Gorgas* (Gorgas's Farewell; section CXXVII of the *Motivos de Proteo*) we may transcribe that master's words and make them Rodó's own: "I was to you a master of love; I have tried to impart to you the love of truth; not truth, which is infinite." Like the psychologist he was, Rodó knew that beliefs may be abandoned, yet they leave something of themselves behind. We are what we were, as well as what we are. And when we are assailed by doubt—if we are strong—that doubt is neither "epicurean idleness nor affliction or dejection,—it is the forerunner of a reintegration"—the germ of a new truth.

But the new truth must proceed farther than sterile cerebration; it must be translated into action. "It is not the truth or the error that convinces you which reforms your

soul; it is the truth and the error that impassion you." And more succinctly: "Reality is not a cold tablet upon which are inscribed sentences, but a live, palpitant engendering of feeling and action."

Rodó's philosophy, of course, implies the utter negation of a false consistency, which many mistake for firmness of character. He would see no knighthood in the knight of whom it was written that "faith unfaithful kept him falsely true." He knows, too, the frequent intervention of accident in what we call virtue and vice. Paraphrasing a noted figure in English theology, he might well have said upon beholding a criminal led to the scaffold, "There, but for the grace of God, goes José Enrique Rodó."

For this reason Rodó has no sympathy with the "uplift" nature of so much social education; herein, too, lies the inspirational character of his teachings,—or rather his suggestions. If Hope is his compass, Will (with the renewed consciousness of our manifold possibilities) is the vessel that carries us to the goal, and the first object upon which this will is applied is our own personality. Our wills, as our aptitude, may be dormant.

Self-renewal unceasingly,—self-renewal of personality and of that group of personalities called a nation; therein lies the essence of the Uruguayan's philosophy, which, when carried to its logical conclusion (conclusion is too definite a word for so dynamic a conception) must inevitably lead to that international mind which corresponds to a full development of personality. Rodó hinted at such a mind, but did not develop the thought.

The Uruguayan philosopher has been compared to Emerson. Is not Rodó's masterpiece in a sense a vast amplifi-

cation of the essay upon Self-Reliance? Is not the great New Englander equally jealous of the seal of personality? "It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude." Have we not here the essence of purpose that actuated Rodó's words about solitude and travel and the harmony of their teachings in the man of true originality? Is there not in Self-Reliance that same scorn of a false consistency? Has not Emerson in six words written what might well serve as the motto of the *Motivos*? "Live ever in a new day." Does he not likewise declaim against the worship of the past? "The centuries are conspirators against the sanity and majesty of the soul." And nearer still to the essence of Rodó's entire system, long before that Bergson from whom Rodó is said to have received his suggestion: "This one fact the world hates, that the soul *becomes* (the italics are Emerson's); for that forever degrades the past, turns all riches to poverty; all reputation to a shame; confounds the saint with the rogue; shoves Jesus and Judas equally aside." Allowing for differences of style and Rodó's lack of the Emersonian vehemency, the resemblance is, to say the least, most striking. "Every new mind is a new classification."
. . . "Insist on yourself; never imitate."

Of course such resemblance by no means implies identity of thought or purpose. The resemblance may even be merely verbal. Yet Rodó's implications are far-reaching. He gives us, in that masterwork, not so much a fund of thought as a well of inspiration; not so much a goal as a direction; not so much a body as a spirit. This he achieves

not by preaching but by furnishing abundant example; he fertilizes our personalities, so to speak, with the rich soil of others. The *Motivos de Proteo* should be known in every language and should form part of every educational system.

3. *El Mirador De Próspero*

The collection of articles that goes under the title *Through Prospero's Window* is valuable as casting light upon Rodó's application of his personality to the matters of the intellectual as well as to the political world. There has been some word of censure, I believe, about Rodó's having inserted a political essay in the collection; such political activity, which arose from the master's sense of duty to his nation, was in conformity with his own call for something more than pure thinking,—for the translation of action into thought. There are so many retrogressive or stagnant spirits in contemporary life who can tolerate or even applaud the dynamic conceptions which a man expresses in his poetry or his other creative literature, but who, when they find him intent upon bringing them about in reality, are seized with concern or dismay. Rodó was not what we could call a conservative; on the other hand, he was by no means an extremist; it was not in his nature to be extreme. His political views, aptly stated in a notable essay upon labor conditions in Uruguay, show his tendency to be a progressive one,—not so much socialistic (like Chocano's poetic internationalism and Blanco-Fombona's active socialism) as patient reform. Yet, as we shall soon note from an examination of the speech—which forms, in *El Mirador de Próspero*, an illuminative excep-

tion amid the more purely literary discussions—it is as much a matter of patience, or time, as anything else, that separates Rodó from his confrères. Besides, he was thinking in terms of Uruguay. For the rest, we have noted in him a continental aspiration that is a logical step toward the international spirit. Had he lived to complete his *New Motives of Proteus*,¹⁰ who knows what changes he would have brought back from his trip to Europe at a time when an old world and an old economic system were crumbling in the fires of a vast crucible?

The sights that Prospero beholds through his window comprise a varied yet unified panorama. The advantage of such a collection (organic only in the sense that it is composed of views as seen by a singularly composed and ordered spirit) is that the window may be closed at will, and our looking resumed whenever we please. Or, to quote the epigraph, from Taine: “J’aime, je l’avoue, ces sortes de livres. D’abord on peut jeter le volume au bout de vingt pages, commencer par la fin, ou au milieu; vous n’y êtes pas serviteur, mais maître; vous pouvez le traiter comme journal; en effet, c’est le journal d’un esprit.”

And in fact, these selections from Rodó’s journalistic labors are in the best sense a “journal of a spirit.” There are such sterling essays as that on Bolívar, on Juan Carlos Gómez, on Juan María Gutiérrez and his epoch (an account that is indispensable to all who would understand the origins of “literary Americanism” as well as the native contribution of Spanish America to Castilian letters,) on Samuel

¹⁰ Incomplete, and not yet published. A collection of articles written in Europe, under the title *El Camino de Paros*, was published in 1918 in Valencia, by the *Editorial Valencia*.

Blixen, and other important literary figures of the continent; there are inimitable cameos expressive of his attitude toward art,—its inspiration and its problems; there are reviews of novels and dramas that embody valuable statements; there are impressionistic gems, sheer poetry of thought, such as the piece on the sea which was quoted at the beginning. And wafting through every paragraph is the spirit of an Ariel, a Proteus, a Prospero. It is not only the beauty of language and thought that attracts one to Rodó, it is the beauty of his attitude; as much as what he says, as much as how he says it, is his outlook upon the world of thought and action, so truly symbolized in the ever-changing yet constant sea.

It is not necessary to analyze the book in detail. I shall choose just enough to complete an adequate knowledge of the harmonious personality,—his political views, his attitude toward the continental dream of Bolívar (a more than political question, implying all the spiritual outgrowths of an economic substructure), his beautiful cameos that seem the embodiment of a lyric intellect.

Rodo's *Del Trabajo Obrero en el Uruguay* reveals him as a deep student of practical, world-wide problems. He is too well versed in economics to accept the shallow notion, promulgated by many politicians for purposes best known to themselves, that the struggle between capital and labor is a product of this age; he sees that our age intensified rather than originated that antagonism. He is also sufficiently cognizant of environmental influences to shun fiat legislation in favor of laws that take into account specified national conditions as well as general revolutionary aims. Speaking for Uruguay, in which the acute problems of

capitalism and the proletariat had not yet appeared, he favored a social prophylaxis,—measures destined to anticipate future contingencies. Although his view of capital is, to many contemporary thinkers, conservative, none was more aware that the interests of society are deeply bound up with justice to the laborer,—a justice that has all too often been largely verbal or promissory. Students of our labor problems, especially of the length of the working day, will find excellent data in Rodó's speech, from which they may draw conclusions not entirely in consonance with those of the speaker.

Rodó scores a good point when he indicates that terms like individualism and socialism, rather than antagonistic, are harmonious and complementary, just like authority and liberty, right and duty. He is very sensitive to the harm being worked by the exploitation of the toiler,—and insists that his moral as well as physical interests must be rigorously guarded. He is alive to the fallacy of the so-called "freedom of contract"—a fallacy into which many of our own workingmen have been led by some of our highest officials, themselves deceived or deceiving. "The oppressed laborer to whom is granted the right to liberate himself (i. e., from his work) is not a slave; but if that flight or liberation which is conceded to him as a right is to him equivalent to hunger and death, what difference is there between his condition and that of a slave, unless it be the emptiness of a name?" And it might have been expected from the author of *Ariel* that his views upon child labor would be more enlightening than those which characterize our own ostensibly civilized mill-owners. Nor is Rodó's argument a "sentimental" one (have we really done with

sentimentality?); he regards the matter in the light of the nation's vital energies. Is not, after all, every victory for the ideal a practical victory as well, when viewed in the broad light of universal welfare? Rodó wastes no time, similarly, with "woman's place is the home,"—a slogan that sounds with such ill grace from the lips of so many of our own employers who, because of cheaper labor, have done their share to draw woman from that hypothetical hearth of domestic felicity. He knows that woman is in industry and that, like the child, she is being exploited physically, mentally, economically; with his ever-present sense of the future, he realizes the dangers to the race arising from maltreatment of woman in industry; he pleads (to think that it should be necessary in the twentieth century!) for the official recognition of maternity among industrial workers, with compensatory privileges of adequate rest.

Finally, as one would have foreseen from a study of *Motivos de Proteo*, he reminds us—and how often we need the reminder, who enact laws that enslave us in their perpetuity, though they are but the creatures of our own very fallible selves—that "laws are rectifiable," and that they may be changed in the light of new knowledge.

Rodó's speech is a thorough, sincere study of an all-important topic. He shows evidence of deep delving, and presents his opinions with a clarity and directness remarkable for a politico-economic essay. There are the same even style, broad humanity, fairness, tolerance that distinguish everything he wrote. Before such a master as this, economics ceases to be the "dismal science" that abysmal stylists have made it; it acquires, in fact, something of "la

gaie science" itself! One need by no means assent to Rodó's premises or to all of his conclusions to see that his method of approach and his attitude are eminently preferable to the insincere "radicalism" of the present day so frequently encountered in "labor leaders" and large employers alike. Wherever he went, Rodó shed a soft, warm glow. In life, in speech, in thought, his was the golden medium; and if, at times, he did not advance far enough to please some of us, we should recognize that his medium was none the less golden.

For evidence of his intense Hispano-Americanism one need but open the works of Rodó almost at random. *El Mirador de Prospero* teems with an ardent Spanish-Americanism,—there is now and then evident (see the paper on *La España Niña*) a certain Pan-Hispanism such as has been current in recent literature.

In a speech delivered in Chile on October 8, 1905, upon the occasion of the return to the country of Juan Carlós Gomez's remains, he concluded with the significant declaration that "the idea of the fatherland is a lofty one; but among the peoples of Latin America, amid this living harmony of nations bound by all the ties of tradition, race, institutions and language, such as were never presented by the history of the world in such union and comprising so vast an extent, we may well say that there is something loftier than the idea of nation, and that is, the idea of America; the idea of America conceived as a great and imperishable unity, as a glorious, vast fatherland, with its heroes, its educators, its tribunes; from the gulf of Mexico to the sempiternal ice of the South.

"Sarmiento, Bilbao, Martí, Bello and Montalvo are not

the writers of one or another part of America, but they are rather the citizens of (Spanish) American intellectuality."

Is this not a species of super-patriotism? Is this not, if not internationalism, at least internationism? And by a lofty and logical expansion of the patriotic conception, is it not possible to reach an allegiance that embraces the world of humanity?

To return, however, to Rodó: in *Magna Patria* he declares succinctly that "the fatherland of Spanish Americans is Spanish America. Within the feeling for one's nation resides the not less natural and indestructible sense of allegiance to one's province, region, district; and provinces, regions or districts of that great Patria of ours are the nations into which it is divided politically. For my part, I have always so understood it, or rather, I have always so felt it. The political unity which this moral unity consecrates and incarnates—Bolívar's dream—is still a dream the realization of which, perhaps, today's generations will not witness. What does that matter! Italy was not merely Metternich's 'geographical expression' before Garibaldi's sword and Mazzini's apostolate constituted it into a political expression. It was the idea, the *numen* of the fatherland, the fatherland itself consecrated by all the holy oil of tradition, justice and glory. United, personal Italy already existed; less corporeal, but not less real; less tangible, but not less vibrant and intense than when it assumed color and outline upon the map of the nations."

And in *La España Niña*: "I have never felt a doubt as to the future of this America born of Spain. I have ever believed that in (Spanish) America, the genius of Spain,

and the most subtle essence of its genius, which is its language, possesses the firm bridge over which it will cross the streams of the centuries. . . ." . . . "My American pride—which is pride of land, and is, moreover, pride of race—is satisfied with nothing less than the assurance that the distant house, whence comes the escutcheon chiselled out upon the door to my own, will remain ever standing, very firm, very beautiful and highly revered." . . . "I have thus habituated myself to effacing from my imagination the common image of an old, decrepit Spain, and to associate, with the idea of Spain, ideas of childhood, future, hope." Nor is Rodó's optimism strained. The current idea that old Spain is decrepit becomes ridiculous in the light of its unceasing intellectual foment. Economically,—that is another question; but Cervantes wrote *Don Quixote* in poverty. . . .

The short article upon *Ibero-América* is important not only for its hint of a Portuguese-American and Spanish-American entente (beautifully symbolized in the Amazon and the La Plata rivers) but also for its contribution to a question of terminology that has only lately caused discussion in Spain and in America. It will be noticed, in the excerpt quoted above from Rodó's speech on Juan Carlos Gómez, that he employed the term "Latin America"; the term, it seems, is a new one, and not at all to the liking of many Hispanophiles. The outlines of the arguments against the name "Latin America" and in favor of some such term as "Hispanic" or "Spanish" or even "Ibero-America" may be summed up as follows:

1. The adjective Latin as used in the objectionable term properly applies to the group of tongues and peoples de-

rived from ancient Latium. In such a sense the word embraces not only Spain and Portugal, who were chiefly responsible for the colonization, civilization and Christianization of South America and Central America, but also France, Italy and Rumania,—countries which had little or nothing to do with the republics that have sprung up from the Spanish and Portuguese roots in the Western hemisphere. The use of the adjective Latin, then, works an injustice upon the mother countries by implying credit to France and Italy as well, and sinking Spanish and Portuguese identity in the common term Latin. If it be argued that the linguistic basis surely is Latin, the opponents come back, quite properly, with the answer that proceeding on linguistic lines, the United States and Canada might be spoken of as Teutonic America—a term the falsity of which is at once evident.

2. The terms Spanish America and Spanish-American have been used for the past four centuries; historically they are correct; they have been sanctified by usage. Why substitute an intruder like Latin America which has come to life only during the past ten years, partly through the desire of certain Latin countries to receive credit where it is not due them?

3. If it be objected that Spanish America seems to leave out Brazil, where the language spoken is Portuguese, the proponents reply that the term Spanish or Hispanic has long been recognized as including both Spanish and Portuguese; that so notable a Portuguese as Almeida Garrett has argued in its favor, and that Rodó has shown that the word Spanish is a geographical name originally, not one of nationality or political import. Rodó, too, asserts, in

the same paragraphs upon *Ibero-América*, that Almeida Garrett, the great national poet of Portugal, believed that the Portuguese, without prejudice to their independent spirit, could call themselves Spaniards.

It will be seen, then, that Rodó suggested the corrective to his own use of the objectionable term. But has a really satisfactory term been reached? Does "Hispanic America" really fill the bill? Or "Spanish America?" Or even "Ibero-America"?

The proponents of the new terms (and we may agree at once that the old term is somewhat of a misnomer) must recognize that there is certain to be confusion; Professor Espinosa, the editor of *Hispania*, suggests that when Brazil is meant to be included the general term Hispanic America be used, while for the Spanish republics, Spanish America be employed. In support of his stand for "Hispanic" he points to the use of the word in its Spanish-Portuguese meaning as a name for historical reviews, school series, the Hispanic Society of America, and so on. It will be noted that all these cases are closely allied to scholarship rather than to popular usage.

It is at this point that Espinosa and those who side with him will encounter trouble, if not opposition. There is no doubt that a good case is made out against the use of the adjective Latin in the designation. The characterization is too broad, too inclusive; this holds true whether any nations are trying to belittle the part played by Spain and Portugal or not. But the very reason for the growing prominence of this inadequate, misleading and unjust adjective is also the reason why, in all probability, Espinosa's substitution or restitution of Hispanic or Spanish America,

will not find favor with the man in the street. And the man and woman in the street are to be considered if scholarship is to be anything more than a close intellectual corporation. After all, no scholar would be for a moment in doubt as to what Latin America stood for, any more than a silver expert would imagine that German silver was actually pure silver from Germany. The use of "Latin America" originated through a desire to distinguish between Brazil and the Spanish-speaking republics, and at the same time have a designation to cover them as a whole. "South America" is inadequate because inexact; it leaves out Central America. Spanish America will not do, except for the scholar, who does not need it in the first place. To the average man and woman, regardless of four centuries of usage and of the historical connotations imbedded in the word, Spanish will mean pertaining to Spain. The same, in less degree, holds true for Hispanic, which, though more clearly inclusive of both Spain and Portugal, and used so by scholars, signifies Spanish to the average person, if it is ever used by that average person. "Ibero-America" might do, even if it does seem at first "high-brow"; etymologically it is fully as good as Hispanic. And in regard to the term Spanish, as applied to both Brazil and the Spanish-speaking countries, it does not seem to have occurred to its defenders that, despite Almeida Garrett, to more than one Portuguese it might sound just as exclusive of Portuguese rights as the term Latin seems to the aforementioned defenders inappreciative of the efforts of Spain and Portugal together.

For our present purpose, however, it is of greater importance to point out that Rodó's admirable little essay is more than an argument about terminology; it is another

aspect of his continental thought,—thought becoming truly continental in its embracing of a sister language and a sister civilization.¹¹

Of Pan-Americanism, as we understand it, there is little or none in Rodó. He does not underestimate us, but he feels strongly that imitation of us would run counter to traditional inheritances. Indeed, he is the avowed enemy of imitation in every field, for as we may have divined from the lips of Proteus, mere imitation is the negation of personality, national as well as individual. A better mutual understanding there well could be,—an understanding in which imitation need play no part, and one of the results of which should be an advantageous cross-fertilization.

Of the charmingly beautiful literary cameos in which

¹¹ There is an easy way out of the matter. Why not be content to speak of Spanish America and Portuguese America? These designations mean exactly what they say; they are readily seized by the scholar and the average person alike; they require no knowledge of etymology, history, or national jealousies. They are ideal terminologies, because they explain at the same time as they name. And while we are waiting for an ideal term that shall include, at the same time, both the Spanish and the Portuguese elements of this hemisphere, will not someone arise and call to our attention the complacent use we of the North make of the word American? For the rest of the continent, as well as all of the land south of the Isthmus of Panama, is filled with Americans—of the South, to be sure, but Americans none the less. The same state of affairs, reversed, might be called to the attention of the other Americans, by whom the word "Americano" is rarely meant, of course, to include us.

Philology, too, it would seem, has its irredentists in the land of words. For that reason it may be worth while, in most friendly spirit, to call to the attention of Professor Espinosa that the quarterly which he edits—a fine magazine that deserves to grow rapidly—is called *Hispania: A Quarterly Journal Devoted to the Interests of Teachers of Spanish*, etc. Not teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, you will notice. Now, when intellectual journals use the word *Hispania* in their titles to denote something exclusively Spanish, how can one reasonably expect its Spanish-Portuguese meaning to become current among teachers, let alone the average man and woman?

Rodó is so rich, I shall translate two in full. The first reveals Rodó as a lover of formal beauty; the second initiates us into one of the most peculiar qualities of his style,—a certain religious hush that comes over lonely landscapes at twilight. From the *Geste of Form* we may easily gather an adequate notion of Rodó's verbal punctiliousness that would seem to modify the statement of some of his friends that his writings leaped full-grown from the forehead of the great Uruguayan. Struggle there certainly was, though it may not have been visible in the scrawls and scratches of the agonizing sheets that make the author's labor such a joy—and such a torture.

THE GESTE OF FORM

“What a prodigious transformation is that undergone by words meek and inert in the flock of common style, when they are convoked and commanded by the genius of an artist. . . . From the very moment in which you desire to make an art,—a plastic and musical art—of expression, you sink into it a spur that arouses all its rebellious impulses. The word, a living, wilful being, looks at you then from the nib of the pen, which pricks it in an attempt to subject it; it disputes with you, compels you to meet it; it possesses a soul and a physiognomy. Revealing to you, in its rebellion, all its innermost content, it often obliges you to return to it the freedom of which you desired to deprive it, and to summon another, which comes, coyly and sullenly, to the yoke of steel. And there are times in which the battle of these diminutive monsters exalts and exhausts you like a desperate struggle for fortune and

honor. All the voluptuousness of heroism is contained in this unknown contest. You feel alternately the intoxication of the conqueror, the qualms of the timorous, the wrathful exaltation of the wounded. You understand, before the docility of a phrase that falls conquered at your feet, the savage cry of triumph. You learn, when the scarcely grasped form escapes you, how it is that the anguish of failure enters the heart. Your whole organism vibrates like the earth atremble with the crashing palpitation of battle. As upon the field where the struggle took place, there remain afterward the signs of the fire that has passed, in your imagination and in your nerves. Upon the blackened pages you leave something of your being and of your life.—What, besides this, is worth the complacent spontaneity of him who opposes no personal resistance to the affluence of the colorless, unexpressive phrase, no proud intractability to the rebellion of the word which refuses to give up its soul and its color? . . . For the struggle with style should not be confused with the cold pertinacity of rhetoric, which adjusts painstakingly, in the mosaic of its conventional correctness, words that have not been moistened by the warm breath of the soul. This would be to compare a game of chess with a combat in which blood flows and an empire is at stake. The struggle for style is an epic which has as its field of action our innermost nature, the deepest profundities of our being. The poems of war do not speak to you of strength more superb, of carnage more cruel, nor, in victory, of jubilation more lofty or divine. . . . Oh, formidable, beautiful Iliad! Iliad of the heart of artists, from whose unknown combats are born into the world joy, enthusiasm and light as from the heroism and

the blood of the true epics! You should some time have been written, so that, narrated by one of those who bore you within him, there would endure in you the testimony of one of the most moving human emotions. And your Homer might have been Gustave Flaubert."

Is that not a page which Flaubert himself would have enjoyed?

It was such external beauty (and is it really external when made, as in the case of Rodó, an organic part of thought?) that our author cast about the beauty of his ideas. By no means is this an idle dallying with style in its restricted sense. It is the worship of a silent prayer. And just as Rodó's verbal battles were a mute Iliad, so was his deep appreciation a speechless wonder. How eloquently has he expressed this silence in *Los Que Callan!*

THOSE WHO ARE SILENT

"One of the deepest feelings of respect I have ever experienced in the world, is that which is produced upon me by a certain lineage of spirits,—certainly very rare, and difficult to recognize without having been received into their most chosen intimacy; a certain lineage of spirits who unite to an infallible, perfect, aristocratic sense of beauty in matters of Art, the absolute disinterestedness with which they silently profess their cult, immune to all stimulus of vanity, all purposes of criticism or creation, all simoniac greed for fame. They understand the work of art in its most delicate shades, with that fulness of intelligence and sympathy which is a second creation; they are the ideal reader or spectator of which the artist has dreamed; they

offer up their entire soul in the religious sacrifice of the artistic emotion, in that absolute immolation of the personality whence the mysticism of Art takes its origin. They retain within them the perennial echo in which is prolonged the true, original accent of the poet and which the crowd perceives only in disturbed and incomplete fashion,—the crystal clear reflection in which is reproduced, with the matutinal freshness of creative inspiration, the image of the painting or the statue. They compensate for triumphant, noisy vulgarity; for inferior boasts; for abominable snobism. They cherish, in the calm and sheltered recess of their devoted memory, names and works which the injustice and the indolence of an epoch have condemned to common oblivion. For them the lie stamped upon the false coin of renown and glory has no currency. Within their secret disdain, animated by a serene and terrible certainty, they bear the hell whence those will not be able to escape who attain success by committing crimes against beauty, against taste, against noble pride. And they keep silent. . . . And they pass through the world with an indifferent, almost common appearance. And as in the chapel of a mysterious, proscribed cult, they conceal, within their deepest self, the tabernacle of this ideal love, which beautifies the mystery like the modesty of a sweetheart.

“Do you doubt that such souls exist? . . . I have come to know some, after having known only the opaque film that veiled them from my sight. And ever since I have discovered them their presence dominates me, subjects me with the sense of a superiority that I do not recognize, so imperious and of such high character is it, either in the creative artist whom I most admire or in the magisterial

wisdom that inspires me with most respect. For these souls of celestial silence are the only ones who have given me the complete intuition of how much there is that is vulgar and petty in all this struggle for notoriety, this sensualism of admiration and applause,—the coarse alloy that we of the literary comedy compound with the gold of our ideality of love and beauty. Only they know how to love you, Beauty, as you, oh Goddess, deserve to be loved! In the company of these souls I am overwhelmed by I do not know what noble shame of being an author, a professional writer. And when I return to this task, they comprise the unknown and unknowable public that most exalts and most tortures me. To this public I commend myself, with an austere and melancholy hope, as one who commends himself to the justice of a posterity that he will never behold, whenever I believe that a word of mine has not been understood in all its virtue and beauty; when a creature of my imagination has not found the loving bosom to receive it. And it is of this public that I think, filled with an innermost disquietude,—as if anguished with the impossible desire of learning the truth from the lips of a marble god,—when applause and praises wish to persuade me that something good and beautiful has blossomed from my soul.

“Ah, how many of these self-denying monks of beauty pass you by without your recognizing them; perhaps scorned by you. . . . Perhaps there is one of them in that indeterminate, colorless spectator who occupies his chair in the theatre, not far from yours, applauding as much as the rest, assenting with trivial remarks to his neighbor’s comments, being lost in the crowd as it leaves. Perhaps another is hidden behind the mask of that traveler who, with the

appearance of a merchant, reads, opposite your seat in the train, a book that may be a Baedeker guide as well as a poem by Wilde or a novel by d'Annunzio. Perhaps you will discover still another in that fellow whom popular opinion—cruel irony!—judges as an unsuccessful poet, feeling deep disdain for his impotence; for it does not know his premature renunciation was spontaneous and most lofty religiosity,¹² and that in his aversion toward speaking of art with those who were his rivals and friends there is only the delicacy of a transfigured sensibility and the consciousness of a stranger's solitude. . . . In one or another disguise, they pass in their irrevocable silence. And this silence is neither humility nor pride. It is simply the complete possession of a boon that carries its end and its recompense within itself, and for this reason contains itself within its own amplitude, without aspiring to break its bonds impetuously; like the wine which, when it has matured, forgets the restlessness and the seethings of fermentation, or like the splendor of the serene night which, ecstatic in the soft glory of its lights does not publish it with the flashes of the lightning or the music of the sun."

This is one of the fundamental passages in Rodó; it gives us to behold in him just such a silent potent figure as he speaks of,—just such a hushed worshipper of beauty as he describes. It is, in the original at least, an excellent example of a musical, suggestive, luminous prose that produced, in the words of one of his chief commentators,¹³ "pages of so radiant a serenity that they inspire the same melancholy as days that are too beautiful."

¹² May this contain a hint as to Rodó's own early renunciation of poetry?

¹³ Gonzalo Zaldumbide, in *Mercure de France*, July 16, 1917.

The ethical aspect of Rodó's work has been succinctly treated by Pedro Henríquez Ureña in a lecture given before the Ateneo de México on August 22, 1910, and since reprinted in several Spanish publications. Señor Henríquez Ureña considers that Rodó's great originality consists "in having joined the cosmological principle of creative evolution to the ideal of a standard of action for life." Much of Rodó is in Bergson, as it is in Goethe and many before him. This lay mystic is "of the family of Epicurus, and of Plutarch, of Seneca and Marcus Aurelius, Luis de León, Raimonde Sebonde, Emerson, Ruskin,—the family over which, sheltering it with one of his archangel's wings, the divine Plato presides."

The most searching critique of Rodó's achievement is from the pen of Gonzalo Zaldumbide, in the *Revue Hispanique*, (XLIII, 103, June, 1918, pp. 205-307). Señor Zaldumbide's discussion is a wholesome corrective for the excessive praise that has been heaped upon the great Uruguayan, although the critic's anxiety not to overestimate Rodó leads him, I believe, to underestimate such a capital work as the *Motivos de Proteo*. When he says that Rodó brought no new thoughts, and that his work will endure chiefly because of its language, he is on the whole right. But did Rodó aim to bring new *thoughts*? Was it not the *love of truth*, not *truth*, that Rodó aimed to instil? And is not Rodó's insistence upon continuous change new in its implications, and of necessity so? "The book (i.e., *Motivos de Proteo*) to which he desired to impart above all a dynamic virtue, a guiding impulse, becomes a static book, motionless in its perfection," writes Zaldumbide. But this is little more than a play on words. Rodó's book is dy-

namic, by virtue of the sense of necessity for continuous growth which it instils. Nor is there any greater value to the critic's objection that only those who do not need that sense in the first place, will be benefited by the dynamic view. For Rodó will penetrate to those who need his dynamic ethics through those others whose sense of the necessity for change has been quickened, if not inculcated, by the *Motivos*. Rodó was in a very true sense an inspirer, not a dogmatist. "If he proved the necessity and the poetry of an ideal, he imposed no ideal as the true one, to the exclusion of others," objects Zaldumbide. But this would have been opposed to Rodó's cardinal tenet of the self-determination of personality, so to speak. There is more force to Zaldumbide's objection that Rodó "limited the drama of our destiny to the immediate problem of vocation." Yet the *Motivos* contain the corrective to their own limitations, because of their indubitably dynamic effect. No one who wishes to know the complete Rodó may do without Zaldumbide's deeply penetrative study.

Radiance, serenity, an insight that is none the less clear for its depth, classic repose combined with a dynamic conception of modernity, eternal intellectual youth—these are the distinguishing attributes of a power whose influence should not be confined to the Spanish tongue.