HENRY MARIE BRACKENRIDGE began at an early age to acquire knowledge of, and to understand foreign peoples. He was, accordingly, in an advantageous position when his services were needed. Few men have been so well prepared for a diplomatic position. It must be admitted in all candor and sincerity that we have not been adequately prepared, either as a people or a government, to understand the larger significance of properly trained diplomats. Few of our diplomats have been career men. This has been more especially true of our diplomats to the countries of Latin America. Most of them have been given their appointments because of services rendered a political party or a political boss. Some of our choicest diplomatic appointments have come as a plum for such services and have come to men utterly unprepared for such services.

Brackenridge began to study foreign peoples while still a young boy. At the early age of five an elderly, distant relative taught him German. This pleased his distinguished father greatly, for he believed that “a man doubles himself by learning another language.” At the age of seven he was sent to Sainte Geneviève to learn the French language. He was placed with the family of Beauvais. His intellectual faculties were intelligently nurtured in this idyllic French village. And what a likable family the Beauvais must have been! Painted by him many years later, in his *Recollections of Persons and Places in the West*, these people stand out in pleasing outlines. The good Madame Beauvais was
truly a motherly soul. Deeply pious, her tender conscience was wrung by the thought of taking into the bosom of her family this young heretic from Pittsburgh. But the qualms of soul were not for long. The beneficent village priest, Père St. Pierre, saw to that. He changed the heretic into a son of the Church by the gentle process of baptism, the Beauvais acting as sponsors. *Henri*, as he was called, was henceforth treated as a full-fledged member of the family. He responded to the ministrations of these people with alacrity. He took to French so easily that at the end of six months he had almost completely forgotten his native tongue. When he emerged, nearly three years later, into the phlegmatic Anglo-American world, he had great difficulty with the English language. In the village school he had done so well in French that he carried off the prize for the best reading in French. As for progress in religion, he was chosen by Père St. Pierre as an altar boy, no mean honor that for an erstwhile Pittsburgh heretic. In short, *Henri* learned much of the way of life from these gentle Arcadian folk of Sainte Geneviève: those amenities of life for which the Latins are so justly famous. *Henri* was a very apt fledgling, easily moulded by the great and powerful Roman Catholic Church and by an even greater and more powerful national tradition.¹

Some years later *Henri* was to learn the ways of another great Latin people, the Spanish. On his way back to Pittsburgh he met the inscrutable James Wilkinson. He was greatly impressed with Wilkinson and his great lady. A few years later he met Aaron Burr and the Blennerhassettis, and still later, the charming Madame Jerome Bonaparte, the former Miss Elizabeth Patterson, the belle of Baltimore, and the founder of the celebrated Bonaparte family of the United States. These several personalities, so active in

³Henry Marie Brackenridge, *Recollections of Persons and Places in the West* (Pittsburgh, 1868). Few men have been more grateful for the care given him by the Beauvais family, declaring “more affectionate, careful, and anxious parents I could not have had. . . . Madame Beauvais caused me every night to kneel by her side, and to say my *pater noster* and *credo*, and then whispered those gentle admonitions which sink deep into the heart. . . . I owed them much for the care they had taken of my person, and still more for the pains with which they preserved the health and purity of my mind. . . . I was taught to reverence my parents, to respect the aged, to be polite to my equals, and to speak the truth to every one. I was taught to restrain my temper, to practice self-denial, to be compassionate to man and beast, to receive without murmur or complaint what was provided for me, and to be thankful to God for every blessing.” *Ibid.,* p. 24.
certain phases of Spanish-American frontier life, had a powerful influence upon young Brackenridge. He did not become vitally interested in the Spaniards, however, until his return to Louisiana in 1811. He learned to know the Spanish mentality, the Spanish language, Spanish literature, law, and government, and Spanish manners and customs, from Señores López and Lisa. He became greatly impressed with Spanish institutions as well as the Spanish people themselves. He admits that he, in common with his countrymen, had acquired much prejudice against everything Spanish, and that he had to change his views of them upon a more intelligent acquaintance.

The revolutionary movements, which began in Charcas, now Sucre, Bolivia, on May 25, 1809, in favor of emancipation from the rule of Spain, had spread throughout most of Spanish America. The movement took more than fifteen years to materialize fully, but by 1817, when our narrative really begins, the movement had been fairly successful in Argentina, Chile, Venezuela, Colombia, Uruguay, and Paraguay. Only a small number of people, outside of government circles, took any interest in it. Our government was busy keeping old Spain from shutting us off completely from the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico. Our government was, in fact, negotiating for the purchase of the Floridas. For this reason we thought it necessary to pursue a policy of the strictest neutrality. We continued this policy until the Floridas were acquired, or up until 1821. There were men in and out of the United States Congress, however, who were interested in these revolutionary movements. One of the ablest of these was, of course, Henry Clay of Kentucky. His efforts in behalf of this movement are too well known to need explanation here; but it should be held in mind that the efforts of Clay to bring about a recognition of the independence of those countries in Spanish America which already established de facto governments caused

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8 Hugh Henry Brackenridge and Henry Marie Brackenridge found in Burr something more than companionship, but there is no proof that they were interested in treasonable acts; they were greatly interested in the emancipation of New Spain from Old Spain. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
C. Colton, *Works of Henry Clay*, VI (New York, 1904), 137-178. Clay made one of the greatest speeches he ever made in Congress on March 28, 1818, in favor of recognizing the independence of these countries.
the Monroe Administration to make an effort to secure more adequate information about the true condition in these countries. Monroe decided to send a special mission to South America to get such information. In July 1817 he appointed Caesar A. Rodney and John Graham, and in November Theodorick Bland, as commissioners for this task. In the opinion of the President the man best fitted to be secretary of the mission was Henry Marie Brackenridge. Richard Rush, Secretary of State ad interim, formally notified Brackenridge of his appointment to the post on July 17, 1817. On July 28, 1817, he accepted the appointment and explained that he did so with the more satisfaction because he had given the whole subject of the revolutionary movements a great deal of study for the last several years.\(^5\)

Rush drew up the instructions for the mission on July 18, 1817. The mission was expected to be gone from the United States for seven or eight months. The three commissioners were to receive a salary of $6,000.00 each and their expenses. The secretary was to receive a salary of $2,000.00 and expenses. But none of them had diplomatic rank. They were to secure information about the new governments, the extent and organization of the military forces of both groups of belligerents, the names and character of the leaders of both groups, the principal articles of commerce, the principal ports and harbors, the prospect of success for the Patriot cause, and on conditions in Spanish northern South America.\(^6\) John Quincy Adams, Secretary of State, wrote to “Caesar A. Rodney, John Graham, and Theodorick Bland, Special Commissioners of the United States to South America” on November 21, 1817, explaining the purpose of the mission.\(^7\) The mission, however, did not leave the United States until early in December 1817. Brackenridge used the interval to very good advantage. He issued a pamphlet of more than fifty-two pages. It was in the form of a letter, phrased in this form: South America: A Letter on the Present State of that Country, to James Monroe, President of

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\(^6\) W. R. Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence, etc., I, 47-49. Also The Weekly Register (H. Niles, Editor), XIV, 99.

\(^7\) The Weekly Register (H. Niles, Editor), XIV, 99. J. Q. Adams to the Speaker of the House of Representatives on March 2, 1818.
the United States. By an American. He displayed an intimate acquaintance with his subject that has been delight of all friends of these countries. Eighteen million other Americans were struggling to be free. And they were justified in so doing because they were merely trying to regain an opportunity of demonstrating to the world the genius of the Spanish people. Liberty and democracy were not dead among these people—not even in old Spain. But they were the slaves of a tyranny that had deprived them of their heritage, almost of themselves. These Spanish Americans had been occupying a vast empire that possessed much of the wealth of the world. When they had emancipated themselves they would be able to take their rightful place among the free and great nations of the world. But he found more in them than that. He found that they had "a common American continental interest, in opposition to the European interest." The United States of America should, accordingly, help them achieve that independence in order that this common continental interest might make the Americas the leader of the world. In other words, the interest of the United States lay in cooperating with these new states. There are not wanting those who claim that Henry Marie Brackenridge was the originator of the Monroe Doctrine. We need not go that far, but we should have in mind the fact that Brackenridge did help to crystallize the ideas of that famous pronouncement of six years later.

The mission traveled to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil via the Canary Islands, and arrived there early in January, 1818. A little more than a week was spent in the city, and the mission proceeded on to Montevideo. A like period of time was spent in that city, after which the mission crossed over to Buenos Aires. Before leaving the latter place, Judge Bland decided to go to Chile, in accordance with the instructions of Adams and Monroe. The other members of the mission returned to the United States, spending some little time at Caracas, Venezuela, and its immediate surroundings, making investigations on the conditions in that region. The mission had been absent from the United States about eight months. Much of the time had been spent on the water, affording but little time for investigational work for which

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the mission had been created. But no doubt much of value was accomplished. For one thing, the members of the mission came to the conclusion, from what they saw and heard, that Spain could not, single handed and alone, reduce the colonies to their formal relations to her. The members of the mission, however, were not convinced that the newly created governments contained the necessary elements for continued success. They were inexperienced in the art of self-government and could hardly be expected to maintain a stable government. The three commissioners each made a separate written report to the President. The secretary did not make a report, as far as this writer has been able to discover. A report from him was perhaps not necessary. There is no space for a digest of these several reports, nor is one necessary. The article is concerned with the activities of Brackenridge primarily, and not with the activities of the commissioners except in so far as they concern him.

The friends of Brackenridge urged him to write a detailed account of the voyage. This was one of the results of the severe criticism which was made against the mission and its failure in this enterprise. Clay was one of the severest critics. He declared, in a letter to Brackenridge, August 4, 1818, that he had not expected much from a mission which had conducted itself as the mission was known to have conducted itself. There had been keen personal rivalries with the baneful results of such rivalries, and Brackenridge had not had a very pleasant time from that angle. Hence Clay urged him to write such an account, declaring: "My opinion has constantly been that we were to look to you for any interesting collection of facts that might be made. . . ."

The result was the two-volumed work *Voyage to South America*, published in 1819. This work and the Letter to Monroe, referred to above, were enthusiastically received by the liberals of Europe as well as in the Americas, and gave the author a coveted place among the liberal writers of the age. It was not strange that this

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10 A photostat of the original is in the possession of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania in the Brackenridge Papers.
honor came to him. The work is very well done; and has been far too little known among his own countrymen. He knew his subject, and he gave to the narrative that style, in the form of a flowery, oratorical form, with the distinct Latin flavor throughout, that secured the attention of liberals everywhere. In addition, it was couched in the thought and phraseology of the times. The *Voyage to South America* presents a large body of facts about the whole of South America. While less information is given about Brazil, the information concerning that country is also of much value. Rio de Janeiro was still the seat of the capital of the Portuguese dominions, and there was no real evidence of a break between Portugal and Brazil, as far as Brackenridge was aware.

Brackenridge gave a great deal of detailed information about Spanish America and Spain. He gave information and drew conclusions which are, judged by the canons of present-day historical scholarship, unusually sound. His *exposé* of the principles underlying the revolutionary movement is in keeping with the opinions of our own times. The main one was that the leaders were working on the assumption that they were acting within their constitutional rights, holding to the view that the Spanish Americans were no longer subject to old Spain, but were full-fledged members of the Spanish monarchy in their own rights, and that when the monarch ceased to rule Spain he also ceased to rule them. They had thus become possessed of full sovereign powers with the right to establish such governments as they themselves should determine, and even without consulting the wishes of the mother country. In this connection, Brackenridge very wisely called attention to the salient features of the Spanish political institutions, the great democratic tradition of the Spanish people, the rôle of the municipalities as nurseries of this democratic spirit, the training of the leaders in political theory, the attention paid to the modernization of industry and commerce, the desire to modernize the educational system, and the subordination of the Church to the State in keeping with the ideas of the nineteenth century on that head. He was too well-versed in the history of the Spanish people, however, to ignore the great failing of the Spaniards, in the new world as well as in the old, in matters of political govern-

The second edition was dedicated to Sir James Mackintosh and published in London in 1820. The appearance of this edition, with its appropriate dedication, enhanced the author's reputation as a scholar.
ment, namely, their love of personalism rather than their love for law, peace, and order. He found, of course, that the leaders of Spanish America were well aware of this weakness, this defect in their character, and that they were determined to place a constitutional check on this rampant personalismo, this raw, crude caudillaje, which promised to wreck the best of political institutions. It was to be expected that Brackenridge should be severely criticized for his views on a subject of such controversial nature. He was accused of a want of veracity, of partisanship, and of drunkenness. But these accusations were those that one might expect in the heat of a political controversy, and did not do Brackenridge much damage.

Henry Marie Brackenridge, *Voyage to South America*, I, 17. The two volumes are so packed with information that it is difficult to select anything from them to illustrate Brackenridge's grasp of his subject. Besides there is no space for them in this paper. These may give an idea of the manner in which he treats his subject:

"No nation was ever possessed of an empire so vast as that of Spain in America. South America alone is probably equal in importance to the rest of the inhabitable globe...."

"The European Spaniards, though comparatively small in numbers, were a thousand times more important than the English in the United States, previous to our revolutionary war. They held all the principal colonial offices, ecclesiastical, military, and civil. Nearly all the active capital of the country was in their hands, as they carried on its trade and commerce. It was the policy of the Spanish government, to distribute in the different governments of America, a class of people distinct in feeling, interest and character from the native inhabitants, and besides attached to old Spain. Spain had nearly three hundred thousand men distributed throughout her possessions in America, devoted to her cause, having experience, activity and intelligence, possessing the reins of power. Great Britain had no such auxiliary like this to support her, in her conflict with the United States...."

Dr. William T. Reed, a fellow passenger with Brackenridge on the voyage to South America, wrote to him on March 17, 1820. He made light of all the charges. The charges of want of veracity and of partisanship could be dismissed, he thought, as part of a political controversy. On the charge of drunkenness he wrote: "I was for six months with you on shipboard; had you been a sot I must have known it; during that period I never saw you intoxicated. But I know the sole ground on which your adversaries rely in support of this charge. Sandy indeed is the foundation on which they have builded it. During the evening of that day, on which the dispatch, announcing the victory of Maipu, was received at Buenos Ayres, her most respectable citizens flocked to the house of the Commissioners to pay their respects. Group succeeded group until a late hour. All were received with the courtesy befitting the representatives of our government. Those visitors hailed us as brethren—embraced us—called upon us to join in toasting our country—constitution—San Martin the Washington of the South—Had any man attached to the mission declined a single toast proposed on that joyous occasion by these warm-hearted South Americans he would have proved himself not only a phlegmatic being but a sorry
The other diplomatic mission held by Brackenridge was that of commissioner on the Mexican Claims Commission. Tyler appointed him to that position on August 23, 1841, after Judge Cowan had resigned from that body. With his colleague Marcy, Brackenridge prepared and signed the final report of the commission on April 11, 1842. Again it may be observed that this appointment came to Brackenridge because of his peculiar fitness for the position. His long service as United States district judge in Louisiana, plus the other experiences which have been briefly dealt with in this article, made him the logical man for the place. The work of the Mexican Claims Commission calls for no further observations here, other than that although the duties of the position were of a rather trying character, and peculiarly judicial in nature, Brackenridge performed the work in a spirit of judicial impartiality for which he was so justly noted.

Brackenridge never held, technically speaking, any diplomatic post of the first rank. He was never ambassador, minister, counselor, chargé d'affaires, nor even a secretary of an embassy or a legation. He merely held a position of secretary to a mission and a commissionership in a commission. Yet, the writer considers Brackenridge a diplomat of the very first rank, a diplomat, if the reader pleases, of good will, a diplomat of understanding and appreciation. The peculiar need in the early days of the first quarter of the nineteenth century for friendly cooperation is only diplomat. You need not, surely, blush at having infringed on that evening one of the laws of temperance, which even ascetics would think, on such an occasion, more honored in the breach than in the observance." This was taken from a photostat copy of the original in the Brackenridge Papers in the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania. This collection, explained in a previous note, contains a number of very interesting letters to Brackenridge.

In a letter to a friend from Washington, Brackenridge wrote, December 15, 1841:

"I have been on the point of writing to you every day but one thing or another prevented me. In fact my whole time is taken up with the claims. We meet in the forenoon, sit for some hours and then go home to examine papers and write opinions until we meet again. The commission ends on the 26th of February, and it is very doubtful if it will be continued any longer. I must therefore make my arrangements to go home about the usual time, in April. Continued, or not, I will go home in the spring.

"We are all here together, and are quite comfortable in a good boarding house. Morgan goes to school, and we are all quite well. Our expenses take about half of my salary, which will enable me to save something. . . ."

Photostat of original in the Brackenridge Papers, as above noted.
matched by the dire need of the present time for a like apprecia-
tion and consideration and coöperation. This article may fittingly
close with the following excerpts from an address made by Brack-
enridge on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the signing
of the Declaration of the United States of America, July 4, 1826:

Eighteen millions of people, spread over the territory
of six great republics, each almost equal to ours in extent,
have declared and maintained their independence. . . .
Mexicans, Columbians, Peruvians, Chilians, United
Provinces of Rio de la Plata, we look to you with anxious
hope to see the triumphs of republican principles in the
new world. Let me conjure you to disappoint the pre-
diction of your enemies, who declare you to be unfit for
self-government, and who wish to see you broken up into
petty States, affording a hundred theaters for civil wars,
the nurseries for civil despots. Let us hope that, having
won your independence, you will achieve the still more
noble conquest of yourselves, through mutual conciliation
and concession, so that war may become the least hon-
orable road to honors and distinction. To my countrymen
I will say, indulge not in narrow feelings of jealousy or
unkindness toward the new-born republics of the south.
Neither Washington nor Franklin ever encouraged a
narrow, selfish policy. Their great and enlightened
minds, instead of viewing the neighboring American
States as foreign to us as the monarchies of Europe,
would have regarded them as our natural allies. They
would proclaim that the spell of European colonization
on the continent of America was broken, and that the
attempt to set a hostile foot on its shores would strike
a nerve that would vibrate from St. Croix to La Plata.18

18 Henry Marie Brackenridge, Recollections of Persons and Places in the
West, p. 321.