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THE NAME of José Toribio Medina will long be cherished as a result of his tireless energy, incredible erudition, and astounding intellectual versatility. He was literary critic, translator, naturalist, bibliographer, geographer, and entomologist, as well as paleographer, numismatist, biographer, ethnologist, lexicographer, and archaeologist—all blended into a cordial and democratic personality. He was one of the New World's most eminent historians, a peerless book analyst and cataloguer, and in addition a superb publisher. He was, even more than all this, a profound humanist, whose interest lay in all things American. A native of Chile, he loved its soil and people with all the ardor of his romantic soul.

When this remarkable Latin American's life ended in 1930, his loss was mourned the world over by scholars in the field of Hispanic American letters, yet hardly a journal in the United States mentioned his passing. The editor of one of the nation's greatest dailies devoted only three lines to his obituary. The prevailing ignorance concerning this great figure, even among cultured people, is in itself a commentary upon our knowledge of the twenty republics to the south of us and of the distinguished characters they have given the world.

Medina was born in Santiago, October 21, 1852, descending from Spanish pioneers who took root in colonial Chile during the middle of the eighteenth century. His father, an ambitious lawyer and judge, became incapacitated by paralysis at the early age of thirty-three. Although of a literary bent himself, the elder Medina prevailed upon his only son to study law and forsake his earlier scientific and cultural interests. After a period of training in the progressive English School of Valparaiso, the boy was sent to the National Institute in Santiago, from which so many of the country's leading statesmen and intellects had hailed, to complete his secondary education. At the age of seventeen, in 1869, the serious-minded student enrolled in the University of Chile's law school, which then

had one of the superior faculties of its kind in South America. Tutoring Latin and natural science to eke out his meager allowance, he successfully completed the five-year course in three years, and reluctantly hung out his shingle in 1873.

Fate, however, had other plans in store for the young attorney. Unable to refrain from literary pursuits, he began to contribute articles to the capital's magazines, producing at the early age of twenty-two his first volume, a translation of Longfellow's *Evangeline*. Shortly thereafter, through the influence of his father, Medina was appointed first secretary of the Chilean legation in Lima. There in the "City of the Kings," as the chief center of political and social life during the three centuries of Spanish domination was often called, the absence of material for the pursuit of his favorite subjects, natural science and anthropology, led him to turn his attention to history, which he regarded at this time as an auxiliary study. He wrote his father while in Lima:

I have found myself obliged to discontinue in this city my studies of the natural sciences and of anthropology; therefore, to kill time, I have devoted myself to going through the archives and libraries in the hope that I might find some useful material for Chile, and also because I believe that I may be able to find in them antecedents which may aid my understanding of the first inhabitants of the country.

The youthful Chilean's impressionable mind was stirred by the presence of thousands of dusty but priceless folios, parchments, and books which lay neglected and unread. His keen eyes were thus opened to the limitless possibilities for research and publication in the field of colonial history. He seized this opportunity to unravel the mysteries of the important era that preceded independence. His two years in Peru intoxicated Medina with the aroma of past centuries, and he decided to devote his career to a detailed study of the early development of the Americas. Before his life's work ended, Don José Toribio had amply fulfilled his wish. To an amazed world he presented more than three hundred memorable works, incorporating the fruits of his own labors and discoveries as well as copiously documented translations, compilations, and republications.

These interests inspired the Chilean to give up the post he held and to travel with the purpose of broadening his cultural background.

Using the money he had been able to save, he sailed for North America, to visit the Centennial Exposition held in Philadelphia in 1876. The budding democracy proved a source of refreshment and inspiration to the eager South American visitor. Through the rest of his life he related anecdotes of his travels over a large part of the United States. Almost forty-five years later he was able to recall, while entertaining the late historian Charles Edward Chapman, the most minute details of his experiences. For example, he jovially told how close he was himself to becoming a citizen when, during his stay in a boarding house, he became enraptured with a young lady, but was unable to muster the courage to propose marriage. Instead, he soon embarked on a tour of study and research in the archives of England and western Europe, particularly those of Spain, seeking material for a history of colonial literature in Chile. The result of his effort was a three-volume publication, which won him the award then being offered for such a study by the University of Chile.

Returning to his native country in 1877, Don José Toribio resumed his legal practice, but apparently with as casual an interest as before. When Chile's war against Peru and Bolivia broke out in 1879, he invented an improved method for the manufacture of cartridges. The following year he was named military judge of the conquered nitrate province of Tarapacá. The War of the Pacific (1879-1883), as this sanguinary struggle is called, had one very important influence in the historian's career: it entitled him in later years to a pension that assisted him to pursue his erudite but materially unrewarding labors. Even amid the grim work of war, his passionate interest in cultural matters did not abate. While in the northern province, he discovered the bones of a gigantic prehistoric megathere, which he carefully packed and sent to his old professor, Dr. Rudolfo Amando Philippi, the naturalist who directed the National Museum in Santiago. By a stroke of that good fortune which seems to have followed him throughout his career, he came upon what he considered an even more significant find, several volumes of extremely old and rare Spanish chronicles, which he later was to edit and republish.

Medina had long been interested in natural science. He had chased insects for years, and sent one hitherto unknown (named in

his honor) to the International Congress of Geographical Science at Paris in 1879. He decided in that same year to tour the southern territory of Arauca, where the Indians were still engaged in open warfare with the Chilean government, in order to collect archaeological and ethnological data concerning these indomitable tribes. The journey was thrilling and dangerous, but, in the end, Medina was able to compile a brilliant text, *Los aborígenes de Chile* (Santiago, 1882), still recognized as authoritative in its field.

The Minister of the Interior, José Manuel Balmaceda, then assigned to him the difficult task of indexing the archives of the entire colonial administration in Chile. Don José Toribio, always an indefatigable worker, accomplished this so thoroughly and rapidly that he was commissioned to copy documents pertinent to Chilean history in Spain's public archives, while officially serving as first secretary of the legation in Madrid. Cautiously and steadily he approached the work of deciphering and copying by hand the 365 volumes of approximately five hundred pages each of this important material. Scholars and employees in the great archival depositories in Seville and Simancas long afterward related anecdotes concerning this amazing Chilean scholar and the burning ardor with which he worked. In Madrid Don José Toribio came into contact with the literary men of that epoch, becoming close friends with Menéndez y Palayo, Núñez de Arce, Sancho Rayón, Zaragosa, Campoamor, the Marqués de la Fuensanta, and other writers, scholars, and Americanists. Before returning to his home in Santiago, Medina visited the great documentary collections in Paris, Vienna, Berlin, Rome, and London. Among his important discoveries during this trip were seven hundred bundles of hitherto unknown papers in one of the chambers of the Castle of Simancas and an unpublished manuscript by an old chronicler, Felipe Gómez de Viçaurre.

In 1886, a short while after returning to Chile, Medina married the cultured and widely traveled daughter of Adolfo Ibáñez, Chilean minister to Washington, Secretary of Foreign Affairs and, later Secretary of the Interior. Doña Mercedes Ibáñez de Medina was very proud of her husband, who was unceasingly devoted to her. No biography of the husband could overrate her contribution in making him the giant of letters he became. Señora Medina served as collaborator, proofreader, correspondent, and cataloguer, and in

a thousand other ways performed the intellectual drudgeries that accompany research and publication.

On the upper floor of their home Don José Toribio set up a printing shop which he operated himself with the help of two or occasionally three assistants. He called his press the "Ercilla" in honor of the author of the Chilean epic poem "La Araucana," whom he so greatly admired and about whose life and work he published in later years. From this printing shop and its successors Medina poured forth an incredible number of important books, the fruit of his many odysseys and his years of painstaking scholarship. Here he published in a clear typography, similar to that of the first volumes of the classical period in printing, the thousands of manuscripts and dozens of exceptionally rare works he was continually discovering and editing.

In the six years following his marriage Medina published no less than twenty-four volumes, among them his studies on the Spanish inquisition in Hispanic America, to which the United States historian Henry Charles Lea was greatly indebted. At this time appeared the first publications of his *Imprenta* series, a chain of artistically printed bibliographical lists, which presented in a critical fashion the historical and intellectual output of the printing presses established in thirty-five Hispanic American cities (including New Orleans) during the colonial era. Although the literary merit of these volumes is limited by their very nature, he succeeded in breathing into them something of the lives of the authors whose works he described, as well as of the period itself. Indeed, these publications have become prime instruments of research on early Central and South American history and culture.

Utilizing the enormous quantity of material he had collected abroad, Medina commenced the publication of his two great historical collections: Volumes XII to XLV of the *Colección de historiadores de Chile* and thirty volumes of the *Documentos inéditos*. The first series was a continuation of the one begun by the historian and teacher of Don José Toribio, Diego Barros Arana, in 1861 and continued to the year 1878. It included narratives of both national and foreign chroniclers as well as the official acts of the colonial municipality of Santiago. The second series, representing a mere fragment of the five hundred volumes of unpublished manuscripts

which the editor found in the course of his numerous journeys, was planned to furnish all the material necessary for a reconstruction and re-evaluation of the political and social life of Chile during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The government willingly appropriated funds for the editing and publication of these valuable collections until the civil war of 1891. In that lamentable uprising, directed by the oligarchy against the liberal regime of President Balmaceda (1886-1891), Medina was a partisan of the administration. With the ultimate triumph of the rebels, his life and home were in danger.

In the closing months of 1891, just as he was completing his important volume *La imprenta en Santiago*, Medina was delighted to receive an invitation from the Argentine government to compile at its expense a similar bibliographical study of the press in the region of the Plata River (including Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay). During his eight-month stay he became a welcome figure in intellectual circles everywhere. Former President Bartolomé Mitre, a distinguished historian in his own right, showered gifts and attention upon the visiting Chilean; the director of the museum in La Plata, Francisco P. Moreno, housed him in spacious quarters at the museum itself, and it was on the superb press of this institution that his finished work, a de luxe folio volume, was printed. To the surprise of none, Medina's newest bibliography, entitled *La imprenta en el Río de la Plata*, although published in a limited edition, like almost all his books, attracted the attention and admiration of Americanists in both the Old and New Worlds. Indeed, fame had already come to the indefatigable Chilean, who had been honored four years before as the first Latin American to be elected a member of the Spanish Royal Academy of History.

With the money earned in Argentina, he was able to return, this time accompanied by his wife, to Spain, where he searched feverishly in the archives until 1896 for new material on the history of the Americas. Fortunately, such aristocratic admirers and friends as the Duque de T'Serclaes and his brother, the Marqués de Jérez de los Caballeros, permitted Medina to explore and exploit their own rich collections, which contained rare works and documents not to be found in the public depositories. In the seven years following his return to Santiago, Don José Toribio published a total of seventy-

eight scholarly volumes, chiefly bibliographies, such as those dealing with the printing press in the Philippines, Venezuela, Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, and Cuba, though there were also unpublished documents, always accompanied by learned introductions and copious notes. Besides these, Medina wrote and edited monographs, full-length biographies, as well as other geographical and historical studies. Included among these were a volume on the Errázuriz family in Chile, a richly illustrated study of Chilean medals, and a translation of the diary written by a young North American who was detained in Chile during the revolutionary period. All were marked contributions, all peerlessly presented, and almost all typographical works of art. Appearing in editions which rarely exceeded two or three hundred copies, they have since become cherished collector's items.

Small wonder, then, that Medina astonished the world of Hispanic American letters. Learned academies and societies in Europe and the North and South American republics vied to honor him with membership and medals. His own country at last, in 1897, gave recognition to his achievements by appointing him an academic member of the University's faculty of philosophy and humanities. For a brief period Medina tried his hand at teaching the documentary history of the Americas, a field for which he was prepared perhaps better than any other living man of his day. The lack of adequate interest by most of his students, who viewed history as an auxiliary study rather than as a profession, discouraged and, in fact, irritated the great writer. In the end he resigned his teaching post to devote his full time to the books and problems of research he loved.

Don José Toribio felt the need of a fourth trip to Europe in 1902 to complete the series on the colonial presses in Spanish America. He was charged by official decree to investigate the organization of public libraries and archives in Europe, which provided him with precisely the opportunity he had been seeking. He first traveled through Peru, Guatemala, and Mexico in search of information pertinent to his projected volumes. During this interesting but arduous trip he became a friend of both the President of Guatemala, Estrada Cabrera, and of Porfirio Díaz, Mexico's Chief Executive. Everywhere he was respectfully and cordially welcomed. In Europe he visited France and Switzerland and was permitted for the first

time, through the aid of his old friend Monsignor della Chiesa, who later became Pope Benedict XV, to explore the collections of the Vatican Library.

After months of work in private Spanish sources, he returned to Chile, in 1904, with more than eight thousand pages of bibliographical memoranda and almost ten thousand rare books and documents dealing with the colonial history of the Americas for his private collection. Another period of intensive publication followed, in which the incredible scholar compiled sixty volumes, bringing to a close his monumental project on the story of printing in Hispanic America. In the years 1898 to 1907 the imposing seven-volume *Biblioteca hispano-americana* made its appearance. This bibliography was probably the major work of its kind from the pen of Medina. It contained 8,500 titles of books, pamphlets, and other printed evidence dealing with countries south of the Río Grande. Every item was followed by complete and detailed notes on the authors, and references as to where copies of the listed material could be located. This publication itself might well have represented the lifework of a research enthusiast.

Medina was of a nervous and restless nature. He could never remain in any one place long, and in 1910 he was again in Buenos Aires, this time attending the International Congress of Americanists, which elected him honorary president. Two years later he was back in Spain, having first stopped over in London to participate in the International Historical Congress then being held there. In England he heard the 180 works he had previously produced praised as veritable classics.

Don José Toribio's mission to Spain was principally in quest of original documents on the life of the soldier-poet, Ercilla, author of the Chilean epic, "La Araucana," in which was told for posterity the bitter struggle between the determined Spanish conquerors and the indomitable Araucanian indians of Chile. Ercilla was a Spaniard, and officials felt that manuscripts concerning him should, for reasons of national pride, have a Spanish editor. Therefore every obstacle was placed in the path of Medina. Only with great personal sacrifice and considerable expense was he able to gain admittance to the archive where they were stored. The five-volume folio study which

resulted from his labors is definitive in scholarship and a handsome example of the printer's art.

As Medina grew older, he devoted more and more time to the enjoyment of life, and he held "open house" to any student or foreign visitor who wished to consult with him. Nothing delighted him more than to display his rare book, coin, and medal collections to appreciative guests. Three entire rooms were crammed from floor to ceiling with volumes, many of them gifts from every corner of the earth. He is said to have been able to locate without a moment of hesitation any item he might require, and his extraordinary memory permitted him to recall almost to the exact page the information or data he was seeking. Teachers and writers from the United States, such as Professors Charles E. Chapman, William R. Shepherd, Clarence H. Haring, and Isaac J. Cox, have testified as to the warmth and geniality of their host and his gracious wife. Being childless, the Medinas were absorbed with each other. Together they enjoyed vacations, often entertaining distinguished guests for weeks, on their small farm near the town of San Francisco, to the south of the capital.

Naturally, Don José Toribio's writings suffered somewhat quantitatively as the years passed; from 1904 to 1923 he published only thirty-eight volumes. Sprinkled liberally among his historical works were his books in the fields of natural science, numismatics, lexicography, and genealogy. All his works were characterized by clarity, spontaneity, and impartiality. Medina's character was as sterling as his publications. People who visited his colonial-style home, located on one of Santiago's quiet cobblestone streets, never forgot his witty conversation or his sense of humor. Instead of an austere erudite, they encountered a cordial, modest, frank man, having contempt for the pretentious or superficial. José Toribio Medina had a consuming love for the truth, which made him feel the necessity of substantiating his every statement with documentary proof.

Perhaps, as much as anything, the Chilean's inextinguishable curiosity kept him from growing spiritually old. Having an uncommonly keen imagination, he was fascinated by the romance and practical value arising from a study of the past. Had he sought it he might have achieved literary renown, but he preferred to lay quietly and patiently the foundation work for the students of to-

morrow. The Spanish historian Rafael Altamira once aptly remarked: "It would be impossible to take a step in American history without resorting to the publications of Señor Medina."

Don José Toribio was generous and civic-minded. In no sense was he wealthy; his income was chiefly derived from a small pension granted by the government late in his life, supplementing the small one to which his war services entitled him. Nevertheless, he refused to admit his need for assistance when a distinguished North American visitor suggested that it might be well if a wealthy philanthropist like the late Andrew Carnegie should learn of his sacrificing labors. Medina's patriotism was, in fact, put to test during most of his life, since his own country was late in recognizing and honoring him. Notwithstanding this neglect, he presented Chile before his death with his library, containing some thirty thousand rare books and incunabula as well as five hundred volumes of duplicated and original documents, most of them dating before the Latin American nations won their independence. The collection stands today as the leading one of its kind; it is stored in two attractive rooms in the National Library bearing the donor's name. Archer Huntington, bibliophile and founder of the Hispanic Society of America, offered Don José Toribio a half-million dollars for his library without the manuscripts. Harvard and other United States universities sought several times to purchase the collection. Medina resolutely declined to sell the product of his life's hobby, preferring to leave it to his own people.

The University of Chile held a special convocation in his honor in 1923, on the completion of his fiftieth year as a writer, when he was presented with a commemorative gold medal by the president of the republic, Arturo Alessandri. The press at this time described Medina as a small, gray-bearded, bespectacled man, with penetrating, small eyes and an up-pointing nose that "seemed to smell in the air the mordant perfume of old papers." Somewhat nervous and staccato-like in his gestures, the acclaimed scholar presented the deceptive countenance of an austere aristocrat. José Toribio Medina had lived a rich, full life. He had extended the sphere of his historical investigations to the whole continent and had delved deeply into a variety of subjects. Almost forty learned bodies had conferred distinctions and titles of honor upon him. His work was serving as a potent

intellectual force in uniting the countries of the Western Hemisphere, making them conscious of their common or similar background and development. If there ever was a true *American*, Medina was one.

At the age of seventy-six, in 1928, he was commissioned by the Chilean government to represent the country at the International Congress of Americanists in New York City and also at the Ibero-American Exposition at Seville. In Spain two of his latest works were displayed: a dictionary of local Chilean words and a two-volume history of Chile's extinct colonial University of San Felipe. With these missions completed, the author returned a last time to Santiago, where he worked until the end cataloguing his gift collection and planning publications of a scope suggesting one starting out upon a career. He left sixteen unpublished works when he died in December, 1930. It is satisfying to note that the Inter-American Bibliography and Library Association announced, in February, 1939, an annual bibliography award to be named in his memory.