VITALITY OF THE MONROE DOCTRINE:
BY W. CARMAN ROBERTS

(Our object in presenting this article on the most absorbing political topic of the day is that the readers of our magazine may have an opportunity of judging the question impartially. The CRAFTSMAN always feels that the essential thing is to get at the truth of any discussion. If we can help our people do this we have done all that is possible and important in the handling of any issue, national or international. We cannot but feel that the attitude Mr. Shuster has taken in The Century on the Monroe Doctrine is one greatly to be regretted, and while we are not inclined to take issue with him in a controversial spirit, we do feel it essential that the truth of the matter should be presented calmly and fearlessly. We shall be interested to hear from our readers upon this question, as well as upon all questions of significance to the world at large. We want The CRAFTSMAN Magazine to stand an open forum for all important topics of the day.)

It is ninety years since President Monroe declared in a message to Congress that any further colonization in the Western Hemisphere by any European Power would be considered "dangerous to our peace and safety" and "a manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States," and the storm of foreign protest his words evoked has never entirely subsided. Yet despite the anger and indignation of land-hungry monarchies over this peremptory "no trespassing" edict, and despite many an academic onslaught by disinterested critics both at home and abroad, the Monroe Doctrine remains today not only intact, but practically the only clearly-formulated and generally-recognized foreign policy that this country possesses.

Just now, however, it is once more being dragged before the bar of public opinion, partly because of European impatience over the prolonged disorder in Mexico, and partly because the approaching opening of the Panama Canal has tended to focus our interest on everything pertaining to the Latin-American republics to the south of us. Again we hear that the doctrine announced by James Monroe in eighteen hundred and twenty-three represents an arrogant assumption of authority that would have been successfully challenged long ago by the European Powers had it not been for jealousies among themselves; that it involves an offensive and patronizing attitude toward our sister republics in South and Central America; that by implication it forces us into the humiliating rôle of debt collector for European concessionaires; that it is likely at any time to involve us in a needless and disastrous war; and, finally, that it
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has served its purpose and is now obsolete. Before indicating some of our reasons for believing that the Monroe Doctrine is neither dead nor dying, but is proving its vitality by that most convincing of all evidence, growth, we will listen to the case against it as stated by one of its latest and most dispassionate critics.

Writing from the viewpoint of a loyal American citizen, Mr. W. Morgan Shuster in the December Century insists not only that this time-honored doctrine is of no advantage to the United States either commercially, politically or strategically, but that it "daily subjects us to the danger of either having to renounce it in the face of overwhelming force or entering upon a pernicious and possibly hopeless struggle." Moreover, he says it is not based on any great moral or ethical ground; it fosters national irresponsibility in the weaker Latin-American countries by affording them shelter when they fail to keep faith in their financial relations with the rest of the world; and at the same time it keeps alive distrust of us in those very states, which cannot believe in the disinterestedness of our motives, but suspect us of warning Europe off only that we ourselves may ultimately take possession. He reminds us also that "the European Powers, even Great Britain, have never accepted this policy save at times when it was convenient to tolerate it," and that it has escaped serious challenge thus far principally because the attention of the European nations has been focused nearer home by fears and jealousies of one another. But the time is approaching, he says, when this long-delayed challenge will be issued. "The rapidly increasing population of certain European and Asiatic nations, the additional room which will be absolutely required by them, the growing trade and increasing interests of Europe in South America, the ever-present land-hunger—all these factors, in the face of the vast stretches of a rich, undeveloped and sparsely settled continent, will inevitably bring it about that hitherto rival nations will recognize their common welfare, call a truce among themselves, and test this vague suzerainty of the United States at some convenient time and place." When that time comes, Mr. Shuster warns us, "the American people will be suddenly faced by the most tremendous crisis in their history." They will have to "fight an appalling war, probably against overwhelming odds" or "retire under pressure in national humiliation."

In other words, Mr. Shuster regards the Monroe Doctrine as a colossal bluff which is likely at any time to be "called." But even granting that President Monroe was taking chances when he posted his "keep off the grass" notice over two great continents
comprising more than a score of nations, does it not seem that a bluff that succeeds for ninety years deserves another name? Moreover there are indications that before the European Powers have so harmonized their own differences that they feel free to put the Monroe Doctrine to a serious test it will have grown normally into a doctrine of Pan-American defense, with not only the United States but such countries as the Argentine, Brazil and Chile as its sponsors and champions. That is to say, by the time foreign nations are ready to combine against it, American nations will probably be ready to combine in its defense. This adoption of the doctrine by the other stable and powerful American governments has been more than once suggested by ex-President Roosevelt. Thus in the course of a recent address in Buenos Aires he agreed with a previous speaker who said that the Argentine had become so rich and powerful that it no longer needed the protection of the Monroe Doctrine against foreign aggressions, but he went on to urge that it should therefore join with the United States in upholding the doctrine in the interest of the weaker republics of the Western Hemisphere. With the attainment of stability, the Colonel went on to say, each Latin-American republic should become a guarantor with the United States of the principle that foreign conquest cannot be tolerated on American soil. And in his "Chapters of a Possible Biography," in The Outlook, he declares that such great and prosperous commonwealths as the Argentine, Brazil and Chile no longer stand in any position of tutelage toward the United States, but "occupy toward us precisely the position that Canada occupies." They are, in other words, "competent to assert the Monroe Doctrine for themselves."

This doctrine which for ninety years has been a cardinal principle of our foreign policy has not merely held its own during this period, but has proved its vitality by gradually extending its scope under succeeding administrations. Thus under President Cleveland it was interpreted to mean that any European Power owning land in the Western Hemisphere must arbitrate its boundary disputes with its neighbors. President Roosevelt went further than his predecessors in accepting for Uncle Sam under the Monroe Doctrine the rôle of benevolent policeman, "the big brother with a stick," who, as Professor Hiram Bingham of Yale puts it, "would keep intruders from annoying the little fellows, and who would also see to it that the little fellows did not annoy the neighbors." Under President Taft the Lodge resolution, passed by the Senate but not signed by the President, undertook to carry Monroeism still further by denying the right of American republics to sell harbor rights to foreign corporations.
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BUT the most remarkable development of the Monroe Doctrine is that formulated by President Wilson within very recent weeks and involving the proposition that the United States will not countenance the establishment of any foreign financial control over the weaker Latin-American countries of a sort that would in effect control their government. Speaking at Mobile recently the President said: "States that are obliged to grant concessions are in this condition—that foreign interests are apt to dominate their domestic affairs, a condition always dangerous and apt to become intolerable. What these States are going to see is an emancipation of the subordination which has been inevitable to foreign enterprises. The United States must regard it as one of the duties of friendship to see that from no quarter are material interests made superior to human liberty and national opportunity." This was prefaced by an emphatic statement that never again would the United States acquire a foot of territory by conquest. An almost immediate sequel to this warning to the foreign concessionaires was the abandonment by a powerful British syndicate of gigantic oil projects in Colombia and Ecuador. These projects, if consummated, would have put certain ports in the neighborhood of the Panama Canal practically under British control—a situation in direct conflict with the Monroe Doctrine as elaborated in the Lodge resolution. Moreover, since oil is likely to supersede coal as naval fuel, an oil port is virtually the equivalent of a coaling station.

Thus, despite repeated assertions that it is dead or obsolete, the Monroe Doctrine not only remains a controlling factor in our foreign relations, but is proving its vitality by constant growth in meaning and scope. Moreover, it is and always has been a popular doctrine with the American people. Even the weaker of the Latin-American nations are now beginning to understand that it does not mean "the Americas for the United States," but "the Americas for the Americans." They begin to see that if the "big brother" has sometimes been "bossy" his motive has not been one of arrogance but of helpfulness. And as an aid to this understanding they have the assurance of President Wilson that "we are the friends of constitutional government in America; we are more than its friends, we are its champions; because in no other way can our neighbors, to whom we would wish in every way to make proof of our friendship, work out their own development in peace and liberty."