

Bibliographic Summary

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Graham, William, *English Influence in the Argentine Republic* (Buenos Aires: Jacobo Peuser, 1890). Prize essay presented to the English Literary Society on September 17th 1890.

Summary

Brief study of the relationship between Britain and Argentina in the 19th Century. The author describes most aspects of British involvement in the shaping of the Argentine Nation. He highlights the importance of the English [unsuccessful] invasions of Buenos Aires in 1806 and 1807 and overestimates the role they played in the development of the independence movements in South America. An interesting early account and reference presented at the time by someone other than Government officials.

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On this essay William Graham briefly describes the general circumstances of a crucial time of change in the River Plate area. British influence was increasing and at the same time this influence was becoming more noticeable not only in South America but also among other imperial powers.

Graham's main argument focuses on the significance of the failed English incursions in the River Plate in the early 19th Century. The British arrived in Buenos Aires to take the city twice in 1806 and 1807. This was, to the author, the main reason why Argentina-and the rest of South America- were able to achieve independence in the years to come. 'The English invasions...were the cause of that awakening...termed the Renaissance of South America'. Once victorious the Argentine people realised the power they could exercise to reject foreign control and they were soon to fight for and declare their independence from Spain.

In the course of the declaration of independence British influence was also significant in the hands of diplomats, businessmen and those who directly participated in the process like Admiral Brown, founder of the Argentine Navy. In later years British influence was also important in helping bring to an end the war with Brazil, and by securing the independence of the Banda Oriental-Uruguay-.

In an attempt to prove British influence Graham states the importance of trade and describes most products that conformed imports and exports to and from Britain and the River Plate. There was hardly any developing activity that did not had a British citizen involved in it. In finance, trade, public undertakings, and loans British capital was present. Railways are just one clear example of how far Argentina counted on foreign capital and expertise: loans raised in London, technology imported from Britain, engineers and skilled workers brought to the country specifically for their construction.

Graham's work is one of very few that in the very 19th Century helped shed light on the sometimes confusing relationship that existed between Britain and Argentina. This relationship, which was at its peak by the time Graham writes, had probably started with the English invasions-although the author may have underestimated the importance of contraband in Buenos Aires and Montevideo carried out by British Merchants before the embarrassing defeats of 1806 and 1807. One should not forget that South Americans were long before showing unrest against Spanish extreme trade restrictions and political impositions and independence movements were most certainly germinating throughout the continent.