

**ETHICAL
ADDRESSES,
THIRD SERIES**

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Ethical addresses, third series by Various

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VARIOUS

**ETHICAL
ADDRESSES,
THIRD SERIES**

ETHICAL ADDRESSES.

THIRD SERIES.

BY THE
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AND OTHERS.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
THE MONROE DOCTRINE AND THE WAR SPIRIT IN THE UNITED STATES. <i>Felix Adler</i>	1
THE VENEZUELAN QUESTION. <i>William M. Salter</i>	21
THE SPHERE OF WOMAN. <i>W. L. Sheldon</i>	41
BAD WEALTH—HOW IT IS SOMETIMES GOT. <i>William M. Salter</i>	61
ADDRESS OF MAY 15TH, 1876. <i>Felix Adler</i>	83
TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY ADDRESSES. <i>Alfred R. Wolff, William M. Salter, M. M. Mangasarian and Felix Adler</i>	99
ARMENIA'S IMPENDING DOOM. <i>M. M. Mangasarian</i>	117
THE RECENT CONGRESS OF AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN ETHICAL SOCIETIES AT ZURICH. <i>Felix Adler</i>	133
WOMAN'S INFLUENCE IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS. <i>Lydia Avery Coonley and Mary J. Wilmarth</i>	151
GOOD AND BAD SIDE OF NOVEL READING. <i>W. L. Sheldon</i>	169

NOTE.—"Armenia's Impending Doom," by M. M. Mangasarian, is reprinted from the *Forum* of June, 1896, by special permission.

THE MONROE DOCTRINE AND THE WAR SPIRIT IN THE UNITED STATES.*

BY FELIX ADLER.

A WAVE of war feeling, unforeseen, unexpected, has passed over the United States during the past two weeks. It has temporarily subsided, but may swell again into menacing proportions. The time, therefore, is fitting for a sober discussion of the points at issue.

The character of the American people is misread by many of our foreign critics. Professor Wagner of Berlin permits himself to use alternately the words "Judaizing" and "Americanizing" of modern society as terms of equal reproach. A modern French writer, whose work on Anti-Semitism has just appeared in an English dress, uses the same word—the "Americanizing" of modern society. He hopes, indeed he says, that his American readers will not take umbrage at the remark, for all that he intends to say is that certain characteristics of industrial and democratic society have first revealed themselves, and on the largest scale, in America. These characteristics are the ascendancy of material interests, the greed of gain, the frantic race for wealth.

Now certainly the ascendancy of material interests, the greed of gain, and the frantic race for wealth, are facts

* A lecture given before the Society for Ethical Culture, New York, January 5, 1896.

upon which we light at every turn. We may deplore, but we cannot deny them. At the same time, he is mistaken who believes that these are the only facts, and that the motives derived from these sources are the sole determining springs of action of our people. On the contrary, nothing is more surprising than the enormous influence of sentiment, pure sentiment, upon the actions of so practical a people as the Americans.

I hold to the belief that democratic communities are more exposed to sudden eruptions of emotional excitement, to being taken off their feet by sudden gusts of sentiment, than are the peoples subject to the discipline of monarchical rule ; and when these incalculable eruptions of sentiment do take place, even the most obvious considerations of self-interest are not sufficient to interpose a barrier or to check or to prevent the passion of the moment from having its sway.

I believe that sentiment has a good deal to do with the feverish pulse of the people with respect to the Monroe doctrine. Of course, this is no complete, no adequate explanation. The Monroe doctrine—what is it ? The bare facts concerning it have been so often stated that a cursory reference to them will suffice.

In the first place, it is in a certain sense a Presidential doctrine. It marks the policy of certain administrations. The legislative branch of government has always been cautious not to commit itself to what at one time was called an abstraction, but to reserve judgment upon the measures to be taken as each case might arise. Immediately after the message of President Monroe in 1823 had reached Congress, a resolution embodying the doctrines of the message was set aside. Some time after, on

the occasion of the discussions respecting the Panama Congress, a resolution distinctly declaring that the United States should not join in any formal declaration on the lines of the policy laid down by Monroe—should not join the South American republics in such a declaration—was passed. But this does not argue that Congress or the people did not accept the idea promulgated by Monroe. On the contrary, whenever an appeal was made to the people, they responded enthusiastically in favor of the Monroe idea. The reason why a complete legislative indorsement was refused was owing to caution, not to want of agreement.

In the excited discussions which have taken place since the message of President Cleveland on December 17th—a momentous day, as it may prove in our history, when in the morning we woke up in a state of complete peace, no one dreaming of anything but peace, and in the evening the whole country was aflame with the excitement of possible war—I say in the discussions which have followed that message, the doctrine of Monroe itself has to my knowledge not been questioned. Those who most seriously doubt the wisdom of the Chief Executive in putting prominently in the foreground the contingency of possible war, do not doubt the Monroe doctrine. At the meeting of the Chamber of Commerce this week in our city, it was declared that the Monroe doctrine has the enthusiastic and unanimous support of the American people. Everybody seems to believe in the Monroe doctrine, even those who go so far as to say that it is not applicable to the present dispute in Venezuela. Why are we so sure of it? The Monroe doctrine contains two declarations, faces in two directions: it fronts against the