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THE MORNING GUARDIAN

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1922.

COLLECTING DEBTS BY FORCE.

As in the time of the Boer war there were objectors, so now there are not wanting those who take objection to the proceedings of Britain and Germany in collecting debts and damages of Venezuela by armed force. These persons argue that if certain English and German capitalists invested money in Venezuelan railways, being induced to do so by certain guarantees of the Venezuela Government, they took their own risk, and if they cannot collect the same the British and German Governments have no right to intervene by force as they are doing to compel a fulfilment by Venezuela of the obligations incurred. Of course there are other matters involved, including outrages inflicted upon the liberties and properties of subjects and upon the flags of the now allied powers, and the nation which would not intervene to protect the liberties and lives of its subjects abroad when lawlessly endangered would forfeit the respect not only of its own citizens but of the world as well.

It is in the nature of things that independent states acknowledge no common arbitrator judge over their affairs. "Every state has therefore," (Wheaton's Elements of International Law) "a right to resort to force, as the only means of redress for injuries inflicted upon it or its subjects by others, in the same manner as individuals would be entitled to that remedy were they not subject to the laws of civil society. Each state is also entitled to judge for itself, what are the nature and extent of the injuries which will justify such a means of redress." This writer proceeds to enumerate the modes of enforcing a settlement short of actual war: (1) By laying an embargo on ships or goods. (2) By taking forcible possession of the thing in controversy. (3) By exercising the right of vindictive retaliation, or of amicable retaliation. (4) By making reprisals upon the persons and things belonging to the offending nation until reparation is made for the injury.

Vattel, one of the most eminent of the authorities on International Law, says: "Reprisals are used between nation and nation, in order to do themselves justice when they cannot otherwise obtain it. If a nation has taken possession of what belongs to another, if it refuses to pay a debt, or repair an injury, or to

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give adequate satisfaction for it, the latter may seize something belonging to the former and apply it to its own advantage, till it obtains payment of what is due together with interest and damages, or keep it as a pledge till the offending nation has refused ample satisfaction. The effects thus seized are preserved while there is any hope of obtaining satisfaction or justice. As soon as that hope disappears they are confiscated and the reprisals are accomplished." The seizure of the Venezuelan warships was thus an act of reprisal amply justified by the law of nations. It is not equally clear that the scuttling of two or more of these vessels was justifiable at the time it was done by the Germans. Upon this point the British conscience is sensitive and Lord Cranborne has disowned any responsibility for the occurrence.

What is being done by the allied powers in Venezuela is not by any means a lawless or high-handed proceeding. It is on the contrary a process quite in accord with that great code which governs the conduct of civilized nations toward each other and it is justified by abundant precedents within the past one hundred and fifty years. It is moreover most desirable that a lawless member of the family of nations such as Venezuela has been, should be compelled to come to order and conform to the rules which govern civilized states. In less than seventy years this turbulent republic has had 104 revolutions, an average of three revolutions every two years. In the face of such a history coupled with the fact that Castro himself gained power by overthrowing a lawfully elected President, and has since proved regardless of all obligations, all must see that only the strong arm of force could compel him to respect the liberties or rights of the citizens of other nations which he has repeatedly outraged.

THE MONROE DOCTRINE.

The relation of the Monroe Doctrine to the present trouble in Venezuela is not very direct certainly, but there would be quite as much right in its name for the United States to now interfere as there was in the case of the boundary dispute between Venezuela and British Guiana some eight years ago when President Cleveland launched his notorious message. Of course there was no call for his interference then, and there is none now. The famous Doctrine has several times received attention in these columns, but the subject is so frequently referred to lately that we may repeat in outline its purport and the occasion on which it was propounded.

The Monroe Doctrine received its name from statements contained in President Monroe's annual message to Congress in December, 1823, as the period of the suspected concert of the Continental European powers in the so-called Holy Alliance to interfere in the affairs of the South American republics on behalf of Spain. The following are the most significant passages in the message:

"We could not view an interposition for oppressing them (the Spanish-American republics) or controlling in any other manner their destiny by any European power in any other light than as a manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States. . . . The American continents should no longer be subjects for any new European colonial settlement."

The Doctrine has never received international recognition in any way. British statesmen have always viewed it with a feigning eye, but the continental European

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