

## Monseñor Carrasquilla, orador sagrado

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By José Vicente Castro Silva. Bogotá: Editorial Centro S. A., 1939.

Reviewed by ROBERT GRANVILLE CALDWELL

THIS small volume, as its title indicates, is an appreciation of the qualities of a great Colombian preacher, Monseñor Rafael María Carrasquilla, for forty years rector of the ancient College of Rosario, written by his colleague and successor, José Vicente Castro Silva.

The volume is devoted very strictly to its special theme. One who turns to it for information regarding the life of Monseñor Carrasquilla or of the times in which he lived must necessarily be disappointed, for only between the lines does certain biographical material come to light. Thus indirectly, for example, we learn that he entered the priesthood in 1883, and that his father, Don Ricardo Carrasquilla, was a teacher and orator to whose influence the even more distinguished son was wont to ascribe the powers which he himself possessed to so eminent a degree. To those, however, who already know something of the life and influence of Rafael María Carrasquilla, these pages will bring an illuminating analysis of those personal qualities and abilities which made the subject of the sketch the most celebrated preacher in the South America of his times.

The seminary of which Monseñor Carrasquilla was the head for so many years was founded in the year 1653 by the archbishop, Fray Cristóbal Torres, and was named Colegio Mayor de Nuestra Señora del Rosario. After almost three hundred years, this famous institution of learning, to which many eminent Colombian leaders have been indebted for their education, continues to teach, as at the beginning, courses in Theology, Jurisprudence, Medicine, and Liberal Arts.

Rafael María Carrasquilla was born in 1857. When he died in 1930, at the age of seventy-three, he was generally recognized as one of the great teachers and preachers of his time. He was heir to deep-rooted traditions, for his father, Don Ricardo, was a well-known intellectual leader and orator, and on his mother's side, Rafael María was a grand nephew of the learned and intelligent forerunner of Colombian independence, Antonio Nariño, who translated «The Rights of Man» into Spanish.

Carrasquilla became rector of the College of Rosario at a favorable moment. A succession of Liberal governments unfriendly to the influence of the Church had now given way to an administration under which, for the first time in many years, clerical personalities had their full influence in the life of the nation. During the long period in which Rafael María Carrasquilla was a leader of Colombian education, he contributed enormously, by his piety, his learning, and the obvious sincerity of his convictions, to the influence and prestige of the Church in the affairs of the nation.

As a preacher, well-informed Colombians place Carrasquilla side by side with Carlos Cortés Lee. They are regarded as the two most outstanding examples of pulpit eloquence in Bogotá. Some admirers have even gone so far as to compare Carrasquilla, on the basis of his published sermons, to Massillon and Bossuet. After a careful analysis of his personality and methods, however, and on the basis of a long and intimate personal acquaintance, Monseñor Castro Silva thinks that in the clearness and simplicity of his style, Carrasquilla was more nearly like Cardinal Newman. The secret of his influence was personal sincerity, and ability to adapt his style to his audience.

In estimating the qualities of this great pulpit orator, Monseñor Castro Silva concludes: «His modesty in the choice of themes, his serenity in making them clear, the absence of any invective, his caution in defining the duties of a Christian, and his keen insight into the strength and the weakness of humankind are the final and efficient proof of the judgment which has been passed on Monseñor Carrasquilla as sacred orator and as a man of sincere and deep convictions».

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