





MEXICO

AS IT WAS

AND

AS IT IS

BY

FRANTZ MAYER



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M3

1844



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*Studia adolescentiam alunt, senectutem
oblectant, secundas res ornant, adversis sola-
tium ac perfugium præbent, delectant domi,
non impediunt foris, pernoctant nobiscum,
peregrinantur, rusticantur.—Cicero.*

PAULINO ECHEVERRIA.

*Indocti discant, ament meminisse periti.
Horatius.*

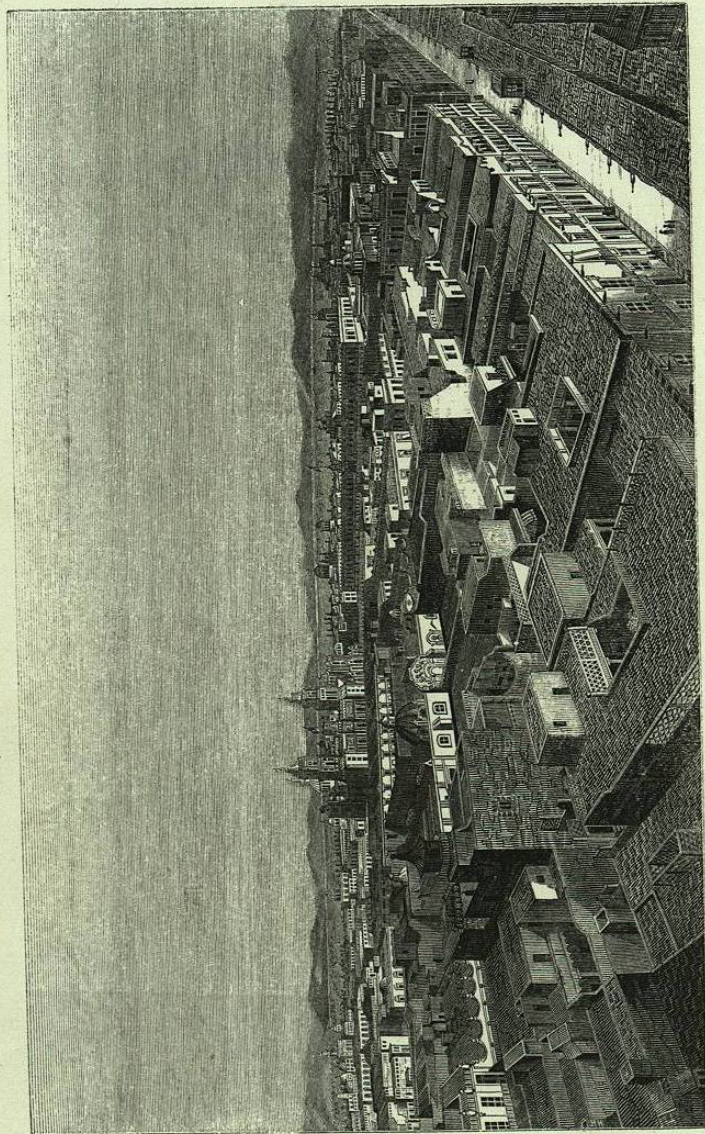
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MEXICO AS IT WAS AND AS IT IS.



CITY OF MEXICO, FROM THE TOWER OF THE CHURCH OF SAN AUGUSTIN.

MEXICO

AS IT WAS AND AS IT IS.

BY

BRANTZ MAYER,

ATTACHE OF THE U. S. LEGATION TO THAT COUNTRY IN 1841 AND 1852.

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS ON WOOD.

AND A FEW ENGRAVED FROM DRAWINGS BY THE AUTHOR.



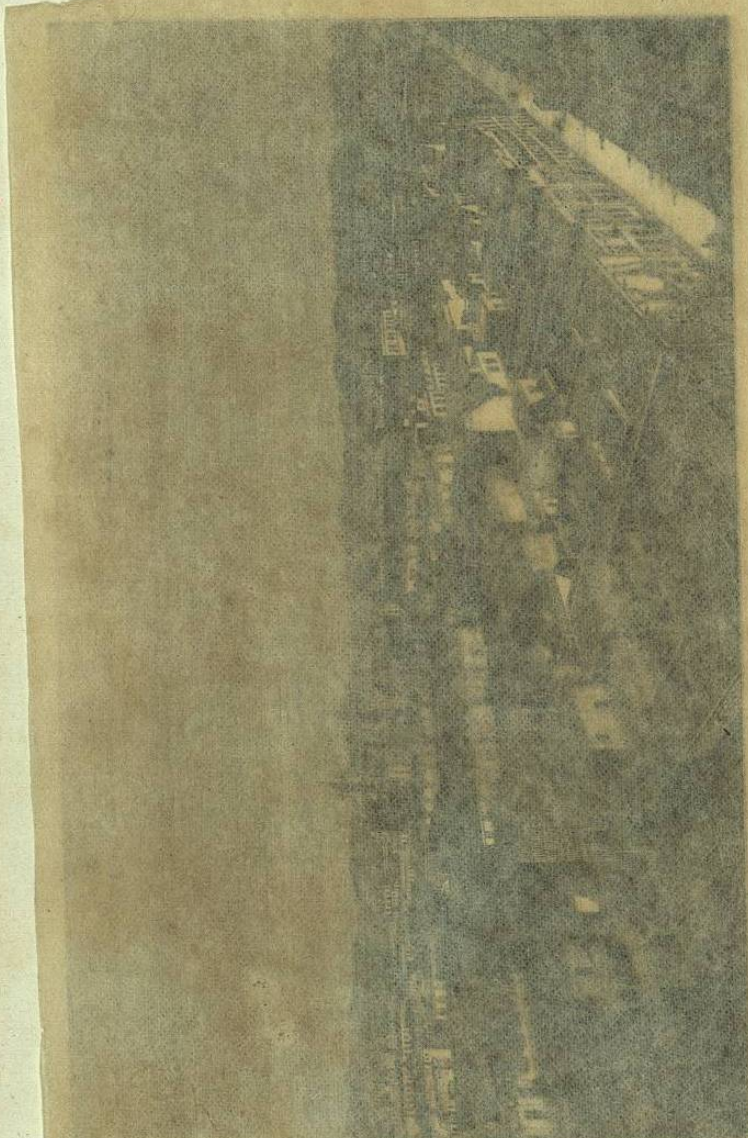
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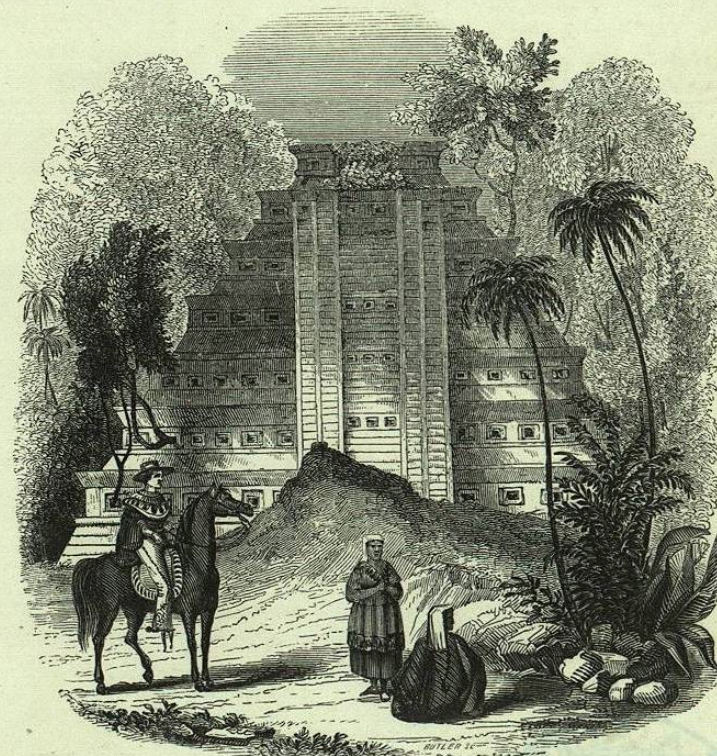
CITY OF MEXICO, FROM THE TOWER OF THE CHURCH OF SAN AUGUSTIN.

MEXICO

AS IT WAS AND AS IT IS:

BY
BRANTZ MAYER,
SECRETARY OF THE U. S. LEGATION TO THAT COUNTRY IN 1841 AND 1842.

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS ON WOOD,
ENGRAVED BY BUTLER FROM DRAWINGS BY THE AUTHOR.



PYRAMID OF PAPANTLA.

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FONDO
FERNANDO DIAZ RAMIREZ

PREFACE

TO THE

HONORABLE POWHATAN ELLIS,

LATE

ENVOY EXTRAORDINARY AND MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY TO MEXICO.

THIS VOLUME IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY HIS SINCERE FRIEND,

BRANTZ MAYER.

PREFACE.

I HAVE been exceedingly desirous to be just to Mexico, in the following letters, and to set down nothing in a spirit either of malice or of praise.

Between our country and Mexico, a veil has been stretched for years, through the obscuring meshes of which we have been compelled to behold our sister Republic.

We were taught to believe, that Texas was a territory struggling to free itself from an abominable tyranny, and that the principles which animated our ancestors in the war of '76, should induce us to look, with tearful eyes and anxious hearts, upon a band of trampled heroes revolting against brutal taskmasters. The faults of the persecutor and the trials of the sufferer were both exaggerated. Individuals from some of our States were assailed by the temptation of profitable adventure in a new and beautiful country;—and thus, while our Government was sincerely anxious to preserve her good faith to the very letter, persons have not been wanting whose indiscretion has, at times, apparently compromised that faith, and made us seem to be foes when, in fact, we were friends.

It is needless for me to say a word, at present, upon the character of the Texan Revolution, and I have merely alluded to the subject, because I hold this revolt to have greatly affected the mutual interests and feelings of Mexico and our Union, while it has produced neither recognized independence nor domestic tranquillity, to the Texans themselves.

Under these circumstances, I have felt it to be my duty to speak of Mexico plainly and justly; and while I detailed its vices, its faults, its misery and its revolutions, to record also the virtuous and meritorious characteristics of its population, which, if allowed the blessings of peaceful culture, would lead it to unparalleled prosperity.

In the remarks which will be found herein, upon certain ceremonies in the Roman Catholic Church in Mexico, I beg that my purpose may not be misconstrued: I do not attack the faith or the institutions of that venerable society;

"I speak not of men's creeds—they rest between
Man and his Maker;"

but I have confined myself, exclusively, to those painful exhibitions, which cannot fail to strike a stranger, as disadvantageous, both to intellectual progress, and the pure and spiritual adoration of God. The mixture of antique barbaric show

and Indian rites, may have served to attract the native population at the first settlement of the country; but their continuance is in keeping neither with the spirit of the age nor the necessities of a Republic. While the priesthood has contrived, in the course of centuries, to attract the wealth of multitudes, and to make itself, in various ways, the richest proprietor of the nation, the people have grown poor and continued ignorant. It has, therefore, appeared to me, that in a Republic like Mexico, where the Roman Church is the only one tolerated by the Constitution, it was the duty of that Establishment voluntarily to unfetter its wealth, to reform its ritual, to sweep into the public coffers the useless jewels that adorn the altars and statues—yet do not glorify the Almighty—and to imitate the virtues, resolution and self-denial of its ministers in our country, who, while blending themselves, in politics and public spirit, most effectually with the masses, have devoted their lives to the education of people of all creeds and classes, for support and independence.

In my letters on Antiquities, and my descriptions of the condition of the ancient Empire, I have followed, literally, the productions of Cortéz, Bernal Diaz, Clavigero, and Doctor McCulloh; and if the industrious critic does not always find the bottom of the page encumbered with references to volume and paragraph, I beg him to believe, that I have only omitted them to save the patience of the printer and of less exacting readers.

During my residence in Mexico, I passed many hours in the Museum, which contains a large collection of Antiquities found throughout the Republic, and I greatly regret that the occupation of my time by other duties limited me to but a brief inspection and study of these relics. Besides this, there are but few persons or works to aid a student in such pursuits. Yet, with my mind alive to the interest recently created by American writers, and a natural affection for every monument of our Continent's history, I confess, that while I looked with wonder at the uncouth idols of a bloody religion, and the remains of a partial civilization, I desired to convey to others at home some of the mingled amazement and interest with which I found myself excited. I desired to do so, especially, with the hope that men of leisure and taste for antiquarian pursuits, might be led to combine and compare such drawings as I presented, with those more beautifully delineated in the works of Mr. Stephens and of other writers; and thus, in the course of time, to produce a connected story of the Past. I have done this without pretension to antiquarian lore. I have not presented my own drawings, alone, in these letters; but I have collected others from a variety of valuable works that are too costly for general circulation, or rarely to be found even in the libraries of the rich.* And I venture to cherish the belief, that when the minds of many individuals are enticed to apply themselves to the subject of American Antiquities, we may, (even if no conclusive history be the result,) at least, preserve many memorials of those Red Races that are now vanishing like the leaves of their native forests.

* There were but *seventy* copies printed, I believe, of LORD KINGSBOROUGH's great work on Mexican Antiquities, but *three* of which are on this side of the Atlantic—one in Mexico, another in Philadelphia, and the third in Boston.

NENEL's tasteful work is, also, very costly; and I presume there are not more than half a dozen copies at most in our country.

As for myself, I have been, as it were, but a gatherer of pebbles. Some of them are carved, and I give them to you to examine. We must all unite and lay our offerings on the pile—no matter how humble. Time will build the monument.

It is in this spirit that I submit my accounts of Mexican Antiquities, and, taking the place of a laboring quarrier who is willing to unearth the stones, I leave it to the wiser architect to put each in its place and decipher its legends and its sculpture.

I have added such statistical data as I could collect from authentic sources, upon the Commerce, Agriculture, Manufactures, Coinage, Mines, Church and General Government.

In many instances, I have only been enabled to present *estimates*; but when compelled to do so, I have derived the details from experienced individuals, whose long residence in Mexico and habits of accurate observation, entitle them to the greatest confidence. This is all I could do in the absence of full and luminous reports, like those annually issued by our Departments in Washington.

I have, thus, endeavored to gratify all readers who desire information on the social condition, religion, antiquities, statistics, revolutions and politics of Mexico. I have endeavored to lift the veil from the Past and the Present. The Mexicans themselves must remove it from the Future.

BALTIMORE, 1st December, 1843.

