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FONDO
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PREFACE.

WHILE an invalid several years ago, and resident of more than one of the ports of the "American Mediterranean," I whiled away many weary hours in collecting materials for a far more elaborate work than this, on the history and the revolutions, not only of Mexico, but of the states of the southern continent. With this view I searched several conventual libraries, and found curious documents, which amply recompensed me for the time and labor thus expended.

Circumstances which it is now unnecessary to refer to more particularly, had made me almost forget, and for a time entirely neglect this scheme; when it was suggested to me, that for want of some such book as this, the peculiar policy of Mexico and its men was almost unintelligible. Such was the occasion of this work, in which I have sought to present a fair view of the past condition of the self-named republic, and to trace the origin of that series of events which have made it the victim of successive revolutions, each of which has left the country in a worse condition than when the tenor of circumstances was interrupted by the preceding convulsion.

I once knew a person who had passed the greater part of a long life in the neighborhood of Niagara, without having seen it, and was ultimately induced to visit the great cataract, because a foot-race took place in its immediate vicinity. Similar in many respects seems the neglect by the people of the United States of the history of our neighbors, who have presented to the world as many pure self-sacrificing men as any other nation, at the same time that they have perhaps exhibited in a short period more despicable characters than have disgraced the annals of any other people. Recent events

have, however, rendered all that relates to Mexico important, and absolve me from any apology of this kind.

I might make many acknowledgments of the sources whence I have drawn information of things, which occurred too long ago for me to have been a contemporary, or at least to have remembered them. Among the facts I have thus been enabled to present to the reader, are included no small portion of the life of General Guadalupe Victoria, from Ward's "Mexico," and a part of the history of the castle of San Juan de Ulua, from the "Life in Mexico" of Madame Calderon de la Barca.

I have carefully read all the books of travels I could obtain, and also many minor sketches, for the most part anonymous; a sheaf of letters in French and German, I have also been kindly permitted to examine, and from them have drawn many hints.

The additional chapter will be found principally a collation of official documents, which it was believed would give a better idea of the present war than any sketch which could be crowded into so small a space as I was restricted to, when the course of my story had brought me to the days in which they occurred.

Many of the opinions inculcated in this book, especially in relation to the peculiar ecclesiastical position of Mexico, may seem paradoxical; and it may not, therefore, be improper to state distinctly and precisely the idea sought to be conveyed. I have wished to show that it would not be less reasonable for the Roman Catholic to attribute to the Reformed churches the dogmatism and the crudities of many of the current *isms* of the day, which fritter away most of the essentials of faith, than is a disposition sometimes evinced to hold the Roman Catholic church responsible for the countless Indian superstitions engrafted in Mexico on its traditions.

There are many other points to which I would be pleased to refer, but as it is impossible to touch on all, I will end at once, dedicating to my countrymen these records of their enemies.

F. R.

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NOTE.

As the words *pronunciar*, *pronunciamento*, and *pronunciados* are frequently used in the following pages, it may not be improper to define precisely their meanings. When any body of men, civil or military, declare their opposition to the government, and their intention to support any particular chief or principle, they are said *pronunciar*, to pronounce; they are called *pronunciados*, persons who have pronounced; and their act is styled a *pronunciamento* or pronunciation.

The two or three days' talk or *powwowing* which precedes the *pronunciamento*, is called *el grito*, or cry; and when the whole is complete, the result announced to the world is said to be a *plan*.

Such things are common in Mexico, where an obscure priest, the *alcalde* of an Indian *puebla*, and a non-commissioned officer of *civicos* or national guard, have more than once proclaimed a system or *plan* for the regeneration of the world.