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CONQUEST
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VOL. I.



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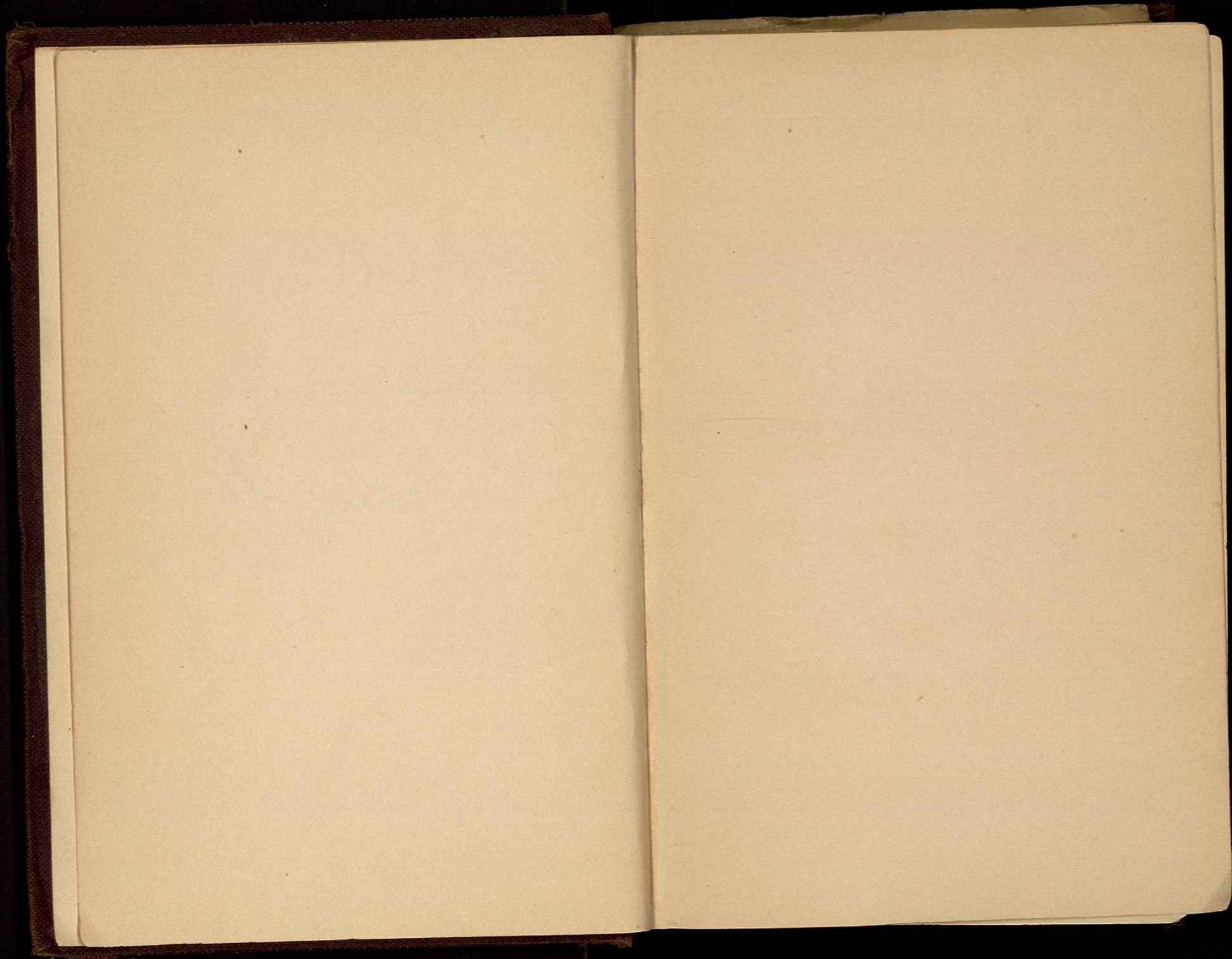
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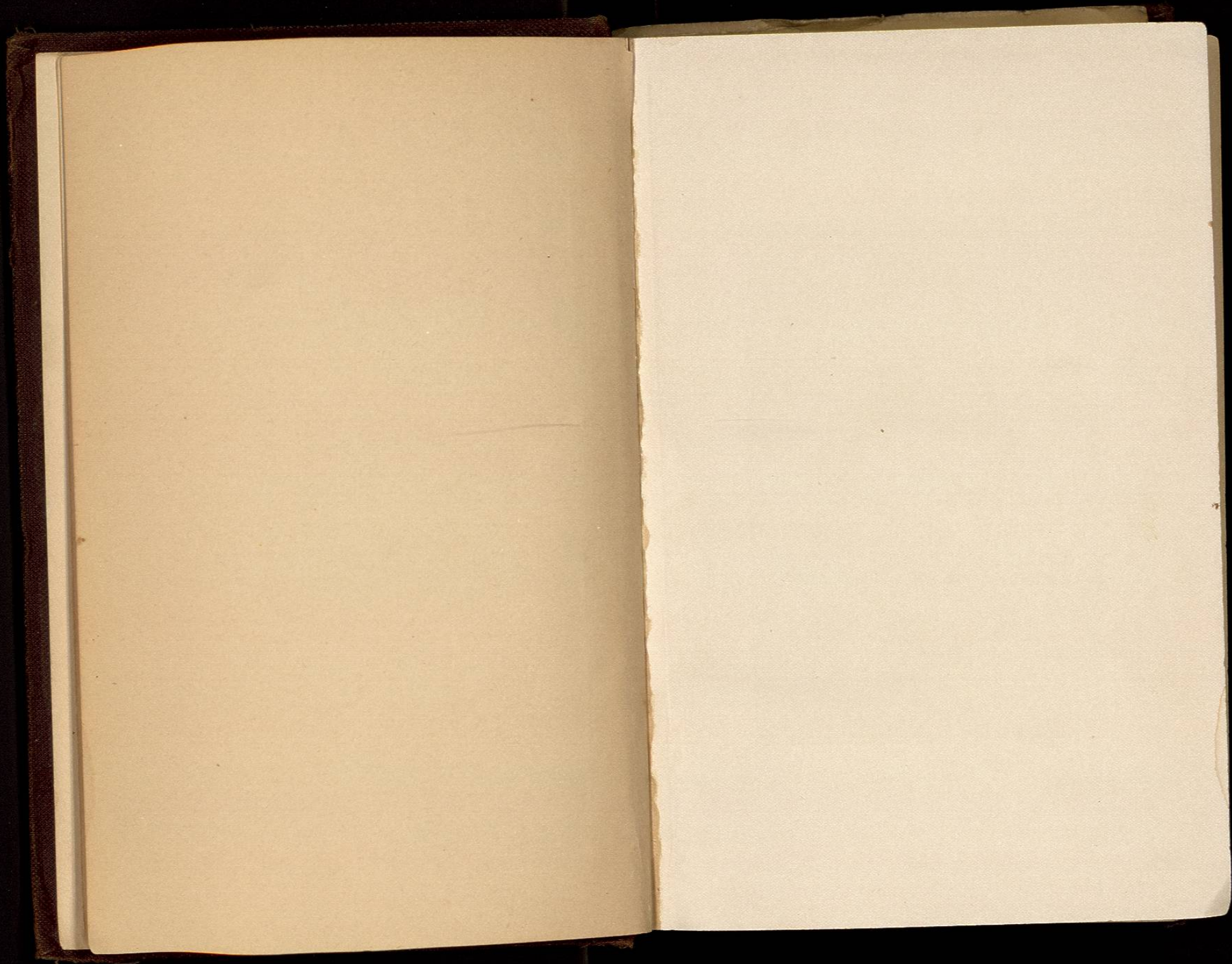
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FRANCISCO PIZARRO,
CONQUEROR OF PERU.

From the Original Painting in the Palace of the Viceroy, at Lima.

HISTORY

OF THE

CONQUEST OF PERU,

AND THE

OF THE

CONQUEST OF THE INCAS.

BY

WILLIAM H. PRISCOTT,

OF THE SOCIETY OF THE HISTORY OF THE KINGDOM OF SPAIN, OF THE ROYAL
ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AT MADRID, ETC.

Translated from the original Spanish, by

WILLIAM H. PRISCOTT,

OF THE

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1845.

WILLIAM H. PRISCOTT,

OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES,

AT MADRID, ETC.

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FRANCISCO PIZARRO,
CONQUEROR OF PERU.

From the Original Painting in the Palace of the Vice-roy, at Lima.

HISTORY
OF THE
CONQUEST OF PERU,

WITH A PRELIMINARY VIEW

OF THE

CIVILIZATION OF THE INCAS.

BY

WILLIAM H. PRESCOTT,

CORRESPONDING MEMBER OF THE FRENCH INSTITUTE; OF THE ROYAL
ACADEMY OF HISTORY AT MADRID, ETC.

“Congestæ cumulantur opes, orbisque rapinas
Accipit.”

CLAUDIAN, In Ruf., lib. i., v. 194.

“So color de religion
Van a buscar plata y oro
Del encubierto tesoro.”

LOPE DE VEGA, El Nuevo Mundo, Jorn. I.

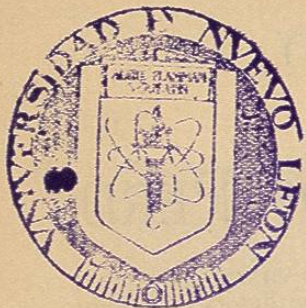
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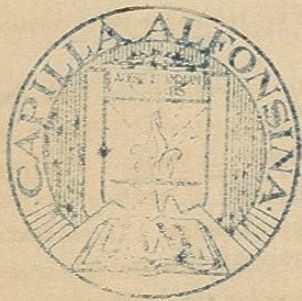
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PREFACE.

THE most brilliant passages in the history of Spanish adventure in the New World are undoubtedly afforded by the conquests of Mexico and Peru,—the two states which combined with the largest extent of empire a refined social polity, and considerable progress in the arts of civilization. Indeed, so prominently do they stand out on the great canvas of history, that the name of the one, notwithstanding the contrast they exhibit in their respective institutions, most naturally suggests that of the other; and, when I sent to Spain to collect materials for an account of the Conquest of Mexico, I included in my researches those relating to the Conquest of Peru.

The larger part of the documents, in both cases, was obtained from the same great repository—the archives of the Royal Academy of History at Madrid; a body specially entrusted with the preservation of whatever may serve to illustrate the Spanish colonial annals. The richest portion of its collection is probably that furnished by the papers of Muñoz. This eminent scholar, the historiographer of the Indies, employed nearly fifty years of his life in amassing materials for a history of Spanish discovery and conquest in America. For this, as he acted under the authority of the government, every facility was afforded him; and public offices and private depositories, in all the principal cities

of the empire, both at home and throughout the wide extent of its colonial possessions, were freely opened to his inspection. The result was a magnificent collection of manuscripts, many of which he patiently transcribed with his own hand. But he did not live to reap the fruits of his persevering industry. The first volume, relative to the voyages of Columbus, was scarcely finished when he died; and his manuscripts, at least that portion of them which have reference to Mexico and Peru, were destined to serve the uses of another, an inhabitant of that New World to which they related.

Another scholar, to whose literary stores I am largely indebted, is Don Martin Fernandez de Navarrete, late Director of the Royal Academy of History. Through the greater part of his long life he was employed in assembling original documents to illustrate the colonial annals. Many of these have been incorporated in his great work "Coleccion de los Viages y Descubrimientos," which, although far from being completed after the original plan of its author, is of inestimable service to the historian. In following down the track of discovery, Navarrete turned aside from the conquests of Mexico and Peru, to exhibit the voyages of his countrymen in the Indian seas. His manuscripts, relating to the two former countries, he courteously allowed to be copied for me. Some of them have since appeared in print, under the auspices of his learned coadjutors, Salvà and Baranda, associated with him in the Academy; but the documents placed in my hands form a most important contribution to my materials for the present history.

The death of this illustrious man, which occurred some time after the present work was begun, has left a void in

his country not easy to be filled; for he was zealously devoted to letters, and few have done more to extend the knowledge of her colonial history. Far from an exclusive solicitude for his own literary projects, he was ever ready to extend his sympathy and assistance to those of others. His reputation as a scholar was enhanced by the higher qualities which he possessed as a man—by his benevolence, his simplicity of manners, and unsullied moral worth. My own obligations to him are large; for from the publication of my first historical work, down to the last week of his life, I have constantly received proofs from him of his hearty and most efficient interest in the prosecution of my historical labors; and I now the more willingly pay this well-merited tribute to his deserts, that it must be exempt from all suspicion of flattery.

In the list of those to whom I have been indebted for materials, I must, also, include the name of M. Ternaux-Compans, so well known by his faithful and elegant French versions of the Muñoz manuscripts; and that of my friend Don Pascual de Gayangos, who, under the modest dress of translation, has furnished a most acute and learned commentary on Spanish-Arabian history—securing for himself the foremost rank in that difficult department of letters, which has been illumined by the labors of a Masdeu, a Casiri, and a Conde.

To the materials derived from these sources, I have added some manuscripts of an important character from the library of the Escorial. These, which chiefly relate to the ancient institutions of Peru, formed part of the splendid collection of Lord Kingsborough, which has unfortunately shared the lot of most literary collections, and been dispersed, since

the death of its noble author. For these I am indebted to that industrious bibliographer, Mr. O. Rich, now resident in London. Lastly, I must not omit to mention my obligations, in another way, to my friend Charles Folsom, Esq., the learned librarian of the Boston Athenæum; whose minute acquaintance with the grammatical structure and the true idiom of our English tongue has enabled me to correct many inaccuracies into which I had fallen in the composition both of this and of my former works.

From these different sources I have accumulated a large amount of manuscripts, of the most various character, and from the most authentic sources; royal grants and ordinances, instructions of the Court, letters of the Emperor to the great colonial officers, municipal records, personal diaries and memoranda, and a mass of private correspondence of the principal actors in this turbulent drama. Perhaps it was the turbulent state of the country which led to a more frequent correspondence between the government at home and the colonial officers. But, whatever be the cause, the collection of manuscript materials in reference to Peru is fuller and more complete than that which relates to Mexico; so that there is scarcely a nook or corner so obscure, in the path of the adventurer, that some light has not been thrown on it by the written correspondence of the period. The historian has rather had occasion to complain of the *embarras des richesses*; for, in the multiplicity of contradictory testimony, it is not always easy to detect the truth, as the multiplicity of cross-lights is apt to dazzle and bewilder the eye of the spectator.

The present History has been conducted on the same general plan with that of the Conquest of Mexico. In an

Introductory Book, I have endeavored to portray the institutions of the Incas, that the reader may be acquainted with the character and condition of that extraordinary race, before he enters on the story of their subjugation. The remaining books are occupied with the narrative of the Conquest. And here, the subject, it must be allowed, notwithstanding the opportunities it presents for the display of character, strange, romantic incident, and picturesque scenery, does not afford so obvious advantages to the historian, as the Conquest of Mexico. Indeed, few subjects can present a parallel with that, for the purposes either of the historian or the poet. The natural development of the story, there, is precisely what would be prescribed by the severest rules of art. The conquest of the country is the great end always in the view of the reader. From the first landing of the Spaniards on the soil, their subsequent adventures, their battles and negotiations, their ruinous retreat, their rally and final siege, all tend to this grand result, till the long series is closed by the downfall of the capital. In the march of events, all moves steadily forward to this consummation. It is a magnificent epic, in which the unity of interest is complete.

In the "Conquest of Peru," the action, so far as it is founded on the subversion of the Incas, terminates long before the close of the narrative. The remaining portion is taken up with the fierce feuds of the Conquerors, which would seem, from their very nature, to be incapable of being gathered round a central point of interest. To secure this, we must look beyond the immediate overthrow of the Indian empire. The conquest of the natives is but the first step, to be followed by the conquest of the Spaniards—the

rebel Spaniards, themselves—till the supremacy of the Crown is permanently established over the country. It is not till this period, that the acquisition of this Transatlantic empire can be said to be completed; and, by fixing the eye on this remoter point, the successive steps of the narrative will be found leading to one great result, and that unity of interest preserved which is scarcely less essential to historic than dramatic composition. How far this has been effected, in the present work, must be left to the judgment of the reader.

No history of the conquest of Peru, founded on original documents, and aspiring to the credit of a classic composition, like the "Conquest of Mexico" by Solís, has been attempted, as far as I am aware, by the Spaniards. The English possess one of high value, from the pen of Robertson, whose masterly sketch occupies its due space in his great work on America. It has been my object to exhibit this same story, in all its romantic details; not merely to portray the characteristic features of the Conquest, but to fill up the outline with the coloring of life, so as to present a minute and faithful picture of the times. For this purpose, I have, in the composition of the work, availed myself freely of my manuscript materials, allowed the actors to speak as much as possible for themselves, and especially made frequent use of their letters; for nowhere is the heart more likely to disclose itself, than in the freedom of private correspondence. I have made liberal extracts from these authorities in the notes, both to sustain the text, and to put in a printed form those productions of the eminent captains and statesmen of the time, which are not very accessible to Spaniards themselves.

M. Amédée Pichot, in the Preface to the French translation of the "Conquest of Mexico," infers from the plan of the composition, that I must have carefully studied the writings of his countryman, M. de Barante. The acute critic does me but justice in supposing me familiar with the principles of that writer's historical theory, so ably developed in the Preface to his "Ducs de Bourgogne." And I have had occasion to admire the skilful manner in which he illustrates this theory himself, by constructing out of the rude materials of a distant time a monument of genius that transports us at once into the midst of the Feudal Ages,—and this without the incongruity which usually attaches to a modern-antique. In like manner, I have attempted to seize the characteristic expression of a distant age, and to exhibit it in the freshness of life. But in an essential particular, I have deviated from the plan of the French historian. I have suffered the scaffolding to remain after the building has been completed. In other words, I have shown to the reader the steps of the process by which I have come to my conclusions. Instead of requiring him to take my version of the story on trust, I have endeavored to give him a reason for my faith. By copious citations from the original authorities, and by such critical notices of them as would explain to him the influences to which they were subjected, I have endeavored to put him in a position for judging for himself, and thus for revising, and, if need be, reversing, the judgments of the historian. He will, at any rate, by this means, be enabled to estimate the difficulty of arriving at truth amidst the conflict of testimony; and he will learn to place little reliance on those writers who pronounce on the mysterious past with what Fontenelle calls

“a frightful degree of certainty,”—a spirit the most opposite to that of the true philosophy of history.

Yet it must be admitted, that the chronicler who records the events of an earlier age has some obvious advantages in the store of manuscript materials at his command,—the statements of friends, rivals, and enemies, furnishing a wholesome counterpoise to each other; and also, in the general course of events, as they actually occurred, affording the best commentary on the true motives of the parties. The actor, engaged in the heat of the strife, finds his view bounded by the circle around him, and his vision blinded by the smoke and dust of the conflict; while the spectator, whose eye ranges over the ground from a more distant and elevated point, though the individual objects may lose somewhat of their vividness, takes in at a glance all the operations of the field. Paradoxical as it may appear, truth founded on contemporary testimony would seem, after all, as likely to be attained by the writer of a later day, as by contemporaries themselves.

Before closing these remarks, I may be permitted to add a few of a personal nature. In several foreign notices of my writings, the author has been said to be blind; and more than once I have had the credit of having lost my sight in the composition of my first history. When I have met with such erroneous accounts, I have hastened to correct them. But the present occasion affords me the best means of doing so; and I am the more desirous of this, as I fear some of my own remarks, in the Prefaces to my former histories, have led to the mistake.

While at the University, I received an injury in one of my eyes, which deprived me of the sight of it. The other,

soon after, was attacked by inflammation so severely, that, for some time, I lost the sight of that also; and though it was subsequently restored, the organ was so much disordered as to remain permanently debilitated, while twice in my life, since, I have been deprived of the use of it for all purposes of reading and writing, for several years together. It was during one of these periods that I received from Madrid the materials for the “History of Ferdinand and Isabella,” and in my disabled condition, with my Transatlantic treasures lying around me, I was like one pining from hunger in the midst of abundance. In this state, I resolved to make the ear, if possible, do the work of the eye. I procured the services of a secretary, who read to me the various authorities; and in time I became so far familiar with the sounds of the different foreign languages (to some of which, indeed, I had been previously accustomed by a residence abroad), that I could comprehend his reading without much difficulty. As the reader proceeded, I dictated copious notes; and, when these had swelled to a considerable amount, they were read to me repeatedly, till I had mastered their contents sufficiently for the purposes of composition. The same notes furnished an easy means of reference to sustain the text.

Still another difficulty occurred, in the mechanical labor of writing, which I found a severe trial to the eye. This was remedied by means of a writing-case, such as is used by the blind, which enabled me to commit my thoughts to paper without the aid of sight, serving me equally well in the dark as in the light. The characters thus formed made a near approach to hieroglyphics; but my secretary became expert in the art of deciphering, and a fair copy—with a

liberal allowance for unavoidable blunders—was transcribed for the use of the printer. I have described the process with more minuteness, as some curiosity has been repeatedly expressed in reference to my *modus operandi* under my privations, and the knowledge of it may be of some assistance to others in similar circumstances.

Though I was encouraged by the sensible progress of my work, it was necessarily slow. But in time the tendency to inflammation diminished, and the strength of the eye was confirmed more and more. It was at length so far restored, that I could read for several hours of the day, though my labors in this way necessarily terminated with the daylight. Nor could I ever dispense with the services of a secretary, or with the writing-case; for, contrary to the usual experience, I have found writing a severer trial to the eye than reading,—a remark, however, which does not apply to the reading of manuscript; and to enable myself, therefore, to revise my composition more carefully, I caused a copy of the “History of Ferdinand and Isabella” to be printed for my own inspection, before it was sent to the press for publication. Such as I have described was the improved state of my health during the preparation of the “Conquest of Mexico;” and, satisfied with being raised so nearly to a level with the rest of my species, I scarcely envied the superior good fortune of those who could prolong their studies into the evening, and the later hours of the night.

But a change has again taken place during the last two years. The sight of my eye has become gradually dimmed, while the sensibility of the nerve has been so far increased, that for several weeks of the last year I have not opened a volume, and through the whole time I have not had the use

of it, on an average, for more than an hour a day. Nor can I cheer myself with the delusive expectation, that, impaired as the organ has become, from having been tasked, probably, beyond its strength, it can ever renew its youth, or be of much service to me hereafter in my literary researches. Whether I shall have the heart to enter, as I had proposed, on a new and more extensive field of historical labor, with these impediments, I cannot say. Perhaps long habit, and a natural desire to follow up the career which I have so long pursued, may make this, in a manner, necessary, as my past experience has already proved that it is practicable.

From this statement—too long, I fear, for his patience—the reader, who feels any curiosity about the matter, will understand the real extent of my embarrassments in my historical pursuits. That they have not been very light will be readily admitted, when it is considered that I have had but a limited use of my eye, in its best state, and that much of the time I have been debarred from the use of it altogether. Yet the difficulties I have had to contend with are very far inferior to those which fall to the lot of a blind man. I know of no historian, now alive, who can claim the glory of having overcome such obstacles, but the author of “*La Conquête de l’Angleterre par les Normands*;” who, to use his own touching and beautiful language, “has made himself the friend of darkness;” and who, to a profound philosophy that requires no light but that from within, unites a capacity for extensive and various research, that might well demand the severest application of the student.

The remarks into which I have been led at such length will, I trust, not be set down by the reader to an unworthy

egotism, but to their true source, a desire to correct a misapprehension to which I may have unintentionally given rise myself, and which has gained me the credit with some—far from grateful to my feelings, since undeserved—of having surmounted the incalculable obstacles which lie in the path of the blind man.

Boston, April 2, 1847.

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