



In
FAIR GOD

LEW WALLACE

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THE FAIR GOD
OR, THE LAST OF THE TZINS
A Tale of the Conquest of Mexico

BY
LEW WALLACE

From Mexico . . . a civilization that might have instructed Europe
was crushed out. . . . It has been her [Spain's] evil destiny to ruin
two civilizations, Oriental and Occidental, and to be ruined thereby
herself. . . . In America she destroyed races more civilized than her-
self. — *Drayton, Int. Development of Europe.*

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NOTE BY THE AUTHOR.

A PERSONAL experience, though ever so plainly told, is, generally speaking, more attractive to listeners and readers than fiction. A circumstance from the tongue or pen of one to whom it actually happened, or who was its hero or victim, or even its spectator, is always more interesting than if given second-hand. If the makers of history, contradistinguished from its writers, could teach it to us directly, one telling would suffice to secure our lasting remembrance. The reason is, that the narrative so proceeding derives a personality and reality not otherwise attainable, which assist in making way to our imagination and the sources of our sympathy.

With this theory or bit of philosophy in mind, when the annexed book was resolved upon, I judged best to assume the character of a translator, which would enable me to write in the style and spirit of one who not merely lived at the time of the occurrences woven in the text, but was acquainted with many of the historical personages who figure therein, and was a native

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of the beautiful valley in which the story is located. Thinking to make the descriptions yet more real, and therefore more impressive, I took the liberty of attributing the composition to a literator who, whatever may be thought of his works, was not himself a fiction. Without meaning to insinuate that THE FAIR GOD would have been the worse for creation by Don Fernando de Alva, the Tezcucan, I wish merely to say that it is not a translation. Having been so written, however, now that publication is at hand, change is impossible; hence, nothing is omitted,—title-page, introductory, and conclusion are given to the reader exactly as they were brought to the publisher by the author.

L. W.

Boston Mass. August 8, 1873.

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THE FAIR GOD.

FROM THE SPANISH OF

FERNANDO DE ALVA.

INTRODUCTORY.

FERNANDO DE ALVA,* a noble Tezcucan, flourished, we are told, in the beginning of the sixteenth century. He was a man of great learning, familiar with the Mexican and Spanish languages, and the hieroglyphics of Anahuac. Ambitious to rescue his race from oblivion, and inspired by love of learning, he collected a library, availed himself of his knowledge of picture-writing, became master of the songs and traditions, and, in the Castilian language, composed books of merit.

It was scarcely possible that his labors should escape the researches of Mr. Prescott, who, with such incomparable genius, has given the world a history of the Conquest of Mexico. From him we have a criticism upon the labors of the learned Fernando, from which the following paragraph is extracted.

"Iztlilzochitl's writings have many of the defects belonging to his age. He often crowds the page with incidents of a trivial and sometimes improbable character. The improbability increases with the distance

* Fernando De Alva Iztlilzochitl.

of the period; for distance, which diminishes objects to the natural eye, exaggerates them to the mental. His chronology, as I have more than once noticed, is inextricably entangled. He has often lent a too willing ear to traditions and reports which would startle the more sceptical criticism of the present time. Yet there is an appearance of good faith and simplicity in his writings, which may convince the reader that, when he errs, it is from no worse cause than the national partiality. And surely such partiality is excusable in the descendant of a proud line, shorn of its ancient splendors, which it was soothing to his own feelings to revive again—though with something more than their legitimate lustre—on the canvas of history. It should also be considered that, if his narrative is sometimes startling, his researches penetrate into the mysterious depths of antiquity, where light and darkness meet and melt into each other; and where everything is still further liable to distortion, as seen through the misty medium of hieroglyphics.”

Besides his *Relaciones* and *Historia Chichimeca*, De Alva composed works of a lighter nature, though equally based upon history. Some were lost; others fell into the hands of persons ignorant of their value; a few only were rescued and given to the press. For a considerable period he served as interpreter to the Spanish Viceroy. His duties as such were trifling;

he had ample time for literary pursuits; his enthusiasm as a scholar permitted him no relaxation or idleness. Thus favored, it is believed he composed the books now for the first time given to the world.

The MSS. were found among a heap of old despatches from the Viceroy Mendoza to the Emperor. It is quite probable that they became mixed with the State papers through accident; if, however, they were purposely addressed to His Majesty, it must have been to give him a completer idea of the Aztec people and their civilization, or to lighten the burthens of royalty by an amusement to which, it is known, Charles V. was not averse. Besides, Mendoza, in his difficulty with the Marquess of the Valley (Cortes), failed not to avail himself of every means likely to propitiate his cause with the court, and especially with the Royal Council of the Indies. It is not altogether improbable, therefore, that the MSS. were forwarded for the entertainment of the members of the Council and the lordly personages of the Court, who not only devoured with avidity, but, as the wily Mendoza well knew, were vastly obliged for, everything relative to the New World, and particularly the dazzling conquest of Mexico.

In the translation, certain liberties have been taken, for which, if wrong has been done, pardon is besought both from the public and the shade of the author. Thus, The Books in the original are unbroken narra-

tives; but, with infinite care and trouble, they have all been brought out of the confusion, and arranged into chapters. So, there were names, some of which have been altogether changed; while others, for the sake of euphony, have been abbreviated, though without sacrificing the identity of the heroes who wore them so proudly.

And thus beginneth the FIRST BOOK.

THE FAIR GOD.

BOOK ONE.

CHAPTER I.

OUR MOTHER HAS A FORTUNE WAITING US YONDER.

THE Spanish Calendar is simpler than the Aztecan. In fact, Christian methods, of whatever nature, are better than heathen.

So, then, by the Spanish Calendar, March, 1519, had about half spent itself in the valley of Anahuac, which was as yet untrodden by gold-seeker, with cross-hilted sword at his side, and on his lips a Catholic oath. Near noon of one of its fairest days a traveller came descending the western slope of the Sierra de Ahualco. Since the dawn his path had been amongst hills and crags; at times traversing bald rocks that towered to where the winds blew chill, then dipping into warm valleys, where were grass, flowers, and streamlets, and sometimes forests of cedar and fir, — labyrinths in which there reigned a perpetual twilight.

Toilsome as was the way, the traveller, young and strong, marched lightly. His dress, of the kind prevalent in his country, was provincial, and with few signs of rank. He had sandals of buffalo-hide, fitted for climbing rocks and threading pathless woods; a sort of white tunic, covering his body from the neck to the knees, leaving bare the arms