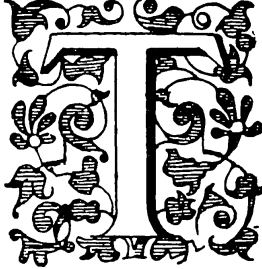




EXTRACTS FROM THE INTRODUCTION

BY

SEÑOR DON GENARO GARCÍA.¹

HE *True History of the Conquest of New Spain*, written by Bernal Díaz del Castillo, one of the Conquerors, was known and appreciated by historians and bibliographers before it was published. Antonio de Herrera² quotes it frequently, Friar Juan de Torquemada³ also refers to it on several occasions, and

¹ The following extracts are translated direct from Señor Don Genaro García's Introduction. Any differences entertained with regard to the names of persons or places or the routes followed, will be explained in note attached to the translation of the text of Bernal Diaz's narrative.

² *Historia general de los hechos de los castellanos en las Islas i Tierra Firme del Mar Oceano*. Madrid, 1726-30, Decada 2^a passim. The first edition was published in 1601.

³ *Los Veinte i un libros rituales y Monarchia Indiana*. Madrid, 1723, Tomo I passim. The first edition was published in 1615.

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the Licentiate Antonio de Leon Pinelo¹ devotes some lines to it in his brief bibliography.

Although the original manuscript has always been kept in Guatemala, first by the Author, and afterwards by his descendants, and still later by the Municipality of the Capital, in whose archives it is preserved to-day, a copy of it was made in the sixteenth century and sent to Spain to King Philip II² and was there consulted by the Royal chroniclers. After its publication in Madrid by Friar Alonzo Remón of the Order of Mercy in the year 1632 the *True History* was universally accepted from that time onwards as the most complete and trustworthy of the chronicles of the Conquest of New Spain. A second edition followed almost immediately in the same city, some four years later a third, a fourth, and a fifth. It was translated into English by Maurice Keatinge in 1800 and John Ingram Lockhart in 1844; into German by Ph. J. von Rehfues in 1838 and Karl Ritter in 1848; into French by D. Jourdanet in 1876 and José María de Heredia in 1877.³

¹ *Epitome de la Biblioteca Oriental i Occidental, Nautica y Geografica.* Madrid, 1629. Page 75.

² So it was stated by Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo de Medrano in 1579. In the *Historia de Guatemala ó Recordacion Florida*, by D. Francisco Antonio de Fuentes y Guzmán. Madrid, 1882-83. Vol. i, page 398.—G. G.

³ The French translations were—although an interval of one year lay between their publication—written simultaneously by the distinguished author of the *Influence de la pression de l'air sur la vie de l'homme*, and the excellent poet to whom France is indebted for the inimitable *Les Trophées*. This synchronism

and into Hungarian by Károly Brózik in 1878 and Moses Gaal in 1899.

Several of these translations obtained the honours of a second edition, as that of Keatinge in 1803, that of Rehfués in 1843, and that of Jourdanet in 1877.

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It must be pointed out that no secret has ever been made of Remón's extensive corruption of the original text. Don Antonio de Leon Pinelo, in his account of the *True History* in 1629, says, no doubt without malice, that Friar Alonzo Remón kept in readiness a "corrected" copy for publication. It was no sooner printed than the author of the *Isagoge Histórico Apologético*¹ found in it "many things added which were not found in the original." More explicitly and with a better judgment Don Francisco Antonio de Fuentes y Guzmán, the great-great-grandson of the author, and at that time the possessor of the manuscript, wrote at the end of the same century that the book, published by the reverend father Friar Alonzo Remón, differs considerably from the original, "for in some places there is more and in others less than what my great-grandfather the author wrote, for I find corruptions in chapters 164 and 171, and in the same way in other parts in the course of the history, in which not only is the credibility and fidelity of my

strongly indicates the extraordinary importance attributed to the *Historia Verdadera*.—G. G.

¹ Published in Madrid, 1892.

Castillo clouded over, but many real heroes are defrauded of their just merit.”

Fuentes y Guzmán states that this corruption (of the text) was not the least important of the motives that induced him to write his own work.¹ At the beginning of the following century Friar Francisco Vázquez proved that Friar Bartolomé de Olmedo was not in Guatemala at the time of its conquest, as is stated in the edition of Remón, and therefore he was not the first to spread the Christian faith through that province, unless, as he says, one should concede another miracle such as that of Saint Anthony of Padua, who managed to be in two different places at the same time.

Some years afterwards Don Andrés González Barcia, referring to the charge that Fuentes y Guzmán had launched against Remón, arbitrarily surmised that the differences that existed between the edition published by the latter and the original manuscript were matters of no importance, and simply inferred that it was “easy to believe that in copying the author should make some alterations, as ordinarily happens.” This defence was not convincing, and on this account our great bibliographer in Mexico, Don Juan José de Eguiara y Eguren, delicately objected that P. Vázquez had declared even the first edition to be falsified, while in Spain the indefatigable chronicler Don Juan Bautista Muñoz endeavoured to procure a copy of the original

¹ *Historia de Guatemala ó Recordación Florida*, page 8.

manuscript with the object of ascertaining the alterations due to Padre Remón.

Finally, if there could be any doubt remaining about the bad faith of Remón, it was completely dispelled by the Guatemalan historians Padre Domingo Juarros, Don José Milla, the Bishop Don Francisco de Paula García Paláez, and Don Ramón A. Salazar, who from personal inspection fully corroborated what had been asserted by their predecessors the author of the *Isagoge*, Fuentes y Guzmán, and Vásquez.

As a matter of fact we can see at a glance in the following notes (par. iv. and Appendix No. 2)¹ that Fray Alonzo Remón in printing the *True History* suppressed whole pages of the manuscript, interpolated others, garbled the facts, changed the names of persons and places, increased or lessened the numbers, modified the style and modernised the orthography, moved thereto either by religious fervour and false patriotism, or by personal sympathy and vile literary taste. As all the later editions, and all the translations without exception were copied from the first edition published by

¹ This paragraph and appendix has not been translated. As we have now before us an accurate copy of the original text, the reader would not be much interested in a discussion of the corruptions of the text by Padre Remón. In most instances these corruptions of the text were introduced for the purpose of magnifying the importance of Padre Olmedo and the Friars of the Order of Mercy, of which Order Padre Remón was himself a member. In the edition of Don Genaro García these matters are fully investigated, and a complete bibliography is given.

Remón, it results that in reality we do not know the *True History*.

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On the 20th October, 1895, Don Emilio León, the Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary from the Republic of Guatemala accredited to Mexico, presented in the name of his Government to ours, "as a proof of friendship and especial regard," a photographic reproduction of the original manuscript. It was then, with some reason, believed that, at last, we should see the *True History* published; but this could not be carried out, for accompanying the gift of the reproduction was a prohibition against its being copied and printed.

Five years later, when I wrote my book entitled "Caracter de la Conquista Española en America y en México," I was convinced that to perfect our Ancient history an exact edition of the *True History* was indispensable, and I desired to carry this work through.

Soon afterwards, in August, 1901, I wrote to the then President of Guatemala, Don Manuel Estrada Cabrera, telling him of my wish to print the precious manuscript.

This distinguished official had the kindness to reply on the first of the following month that on that very day he had decreed that "an exact and complete copy of the manuscript" should be made and sent to me for the purpose that I had stated. Señor Don Juan I. Argueta, Secretary of the Interior and Justice in that Republic, at once

began punctually to send me instalments of the copy as soon as they were made, which copy I corrected here, and perfected with all care and accuracy by comparing it with the photographic reproduction already referred to, which is preserved in our National Library.

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The author says that, after making a fair copy of his narrative, two licentiates of Guatemala begged him to lend it to them, and that he did so most willingly; but he warned them not to correct it in any way, neither by addition nor deletion, for all that he had written was true.

Assuredly with regard to truth the author would find no fault with us, for we have taken care to religiously respect the original text, without introducing the slightest variation, not even of the artless orthography or punctuation.

Any change would have been dangerous, and we might have fallen into the same error that we attribute to Remón; everybody knows that by a single comma one might reverse the meaning of a statement.

We reproduce in notes placed at the foot of the page all the erasures that can have any interest for inquiring readers, and in like manner we have transcribed all the various words blotted out, which, besides exhibiting important variations, give an idea of the method of composition employed by the author.

Occasionally, when a full understanding of the

text necessitates it, or for the purpose of finishing off a clearly implied word or phrase, or of correcting some manifest numerical error, we have ventured to insert some word or number between brackets, so that it can be known at once that it is not the author who is speaking, and the readers are left at liberty to admit or reject the slight interpolation; finally, we have allowed ourselves to indicate by dotted lines the gaps that are found in the original manuscript, which, happily, are very few in number, except on the first and last pages, which, in the course of time, have naturally suffered more than the others.

May our modest effort meet with the approbation of the intelligent and learned, for we long for it as much as we fear their censure.

BERNAL DIAZ DEL CASTILLO.

HIS LIFE.

Bernal Díaz del Castillo was born in the very noble, famous and celebrated town¹ of Medina del Campo in the year 1492 at the very time when Christopher Columbus was joining the two worlds.

Bernal tells us that at the time that he made up his mind to come to New Spain, about the year 1517, he was a youth "of about twenty-four years," a statement which corroborates the date of his birth.

His parents were Don Francisco Díaz del Castillo and Doña María Diez Rejón.

Bernal was not the only son, he tells us of his brother, probably older than himself, whom he wished to imitate.

Bernal himself writes that he was a gentleman,² and that his grandparents, his father and his brother were always servants of the Crown and of their Catholic Majesties Don Fernando and Doña Isabel, which Carlos V. confirms by calling them "our retainers and servants."

¹ "Muy noble é insigne y muy nombrada Villa." In old Spain towns and cities were formally granted such titles of honour.

² Hijodalgo.