

REVIEWS

Vázquez de Espinosa, Antonio. *Compendium and Description of the West Indies*. Trans. by Charles Upson Clark. (Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, vol. 102.) Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1942. xii+862 pp. Paper.

The Ms. from which this imposing and important work was translated is the Barberini Lat. 3584 Ms. of the Vatican. It contains 112 printed pages and 273 Ms. folios. Vázquez wrote the work about 1628 or 1629, but died before it could be completely printed. It has waited 300 years until Dr. Clark, with a grant through the Smithsonian Institution, was able to explore the libraries of Spain, Portugal, and Italy for material on the early history of the New World. Dr. Clark had hoped to publish both the Spanish and English, but this was not possible. The translation, however, is carefully done and apparently in close sympathy with the original. However, some mistranslations undoubtedly occur, such as the "correcting" of *Mazateca* (language) to *Mixteca*, an error which could readily be discerned if the original text had been printed as planned.

Little is known of the life of Vázquez de Espinosa, a Carmelite friar, who spent ten years in travel in the Western Hemisphere. His *Compendium* is a detailed description of his trip through New Spain and South America. His observations are genuine, being based largely upon personal observations or eyewitnesses. He says his purpose is "the description of the provinces," with "a bit of everything for the reader's entertainment."

Vázquez arrived in Mexico City in 1612 and after an arduous itinerary returned to Spain in 1622. He shows

an acquaintance with the writers on the period of the Conquest, such as Herrera, Acosta, the Inca Garcilaso, Gómara, Solórzano. He often adds new points to their histories. His account by Capt. Altamirano of the Ursúa-Aguirre expedition down the Marañón in 1559, and his account of the Arequipa earthquake in 1600 from an eyewitness, provide new data. Descriptions of mining processes, causes of volcanoes, accounts of animals and plants, and descriptions of medicinal herbs, show him to be scientifically minded.

His *Compendium* will interest a variety of students: Geographers, because of his detailed topographical descriptions; botanists will enjoy his numerous references to the flora; anthropologists, because of his comments on such Indian tribes as the Arawak and Carib, the Pampas, Charrúas, and Guaicurú; and historians, for his numerous references to colonial and ecclesiastical administration.

Books III-V deal with New Spain. Vázquez disembarked in Yucatán and visited Mérida and vicinity. He then landed at Veracruz and came to Mexico City by way of the highway through Jalapa, Puebla, and Tlaxcala. After a thorough survey of Mexico City, he made visits to or gathered first-hand data about the regions of the Huasteca, Pánuco, Michoacán, San Luís Potosí, Oaxaca, New Galicia, New Vizcaya, New México, Guatemala, and Chiapas.

The translating and editing the *Compendium* constituted a stupendous task. We congratulate the translator for carrying his work through so successfully. We hope the original Spanish text can some day be published.—(G.T.S.)