

Hernández, Francisco. *Historia de las Plantas de Nueva España*. (Publicada por el Instituto de Biología de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, y bajo la Dirección del Dr. Isaac Ochoterena, Director del mismo Instituto.) Tomo I (Libros 1 y 2). México: Imprenta Universitaria, 1942. xxi + 318 pp. Illustrated.

Students of natural science will find the works of Hernández of primary importance, but those interested in the native cultures of the New World will also find valuable information scattered through the pages of Hernández. This is evident from the first volume of the new edition which lies before us—an edition which will comprise five volumes (or six, according to the Preface).

Francisco Hernández, Philip II's physician, was sent to New Spain by his sovereign with orders to examine, describe, and depict the various plants, animals, and minerals. He spent seven years of arduous labor completing his task. After his death his Ms. came into the hands of Nardo Antonio Reccho, an Italian physician, who prepared it for publication. Reccho, who seemed to be interested only in plants with medicinal properties, cut out large sections of the Ms. and published a mutilated edition in 1651 entitled *Tesoro de las Cosas Medicinales de Nueva España*.

Another complete Ms., resting in the Biblioteca del Escorial, Madrid, was destroyed by fire in 1671. Students despaired of ever obtaining a complete edition of Hernández, until one day Juan Bautista Muñoz discovered five Ms. volumes in folio, emended in Hernández's own hand, in the Biblioteca del Colegio Imperial de Madrid. Both Charles III and Charles IV ordered the Latin work to be published, but it seems that sections remained unpublished until now.

The National University of Mexico plans to publish in the Spanish version of José Rojo five volumes whose contents will be arranged as follows: vols. I, II, III, histories of the plants with complete indexes in vol. III; vol. IV, commentary on life and writings of Hernández with histories of cuadrupeds, birds, reptiles, insects, fish, and minerals; vol. V, descriptions of the great temple of Mexico City and miscellaneous material, such as the *cocoliztli* (smallpox) plague and information on certain species of fish.

The first volume of the series is divided into chapters, each of which describes an individual plant, following a certain plan: (1) Náhuatl name and definition; (2) description of plant; (3) Náhuatl name analyzed etymologically by José Dávila Garibi (Tarascan and other non-Náhuatl names are ignored); (4) Latin botanical name; (5) geographical locale of plant; (6) common names assigned to plant in different localities; (7) further medicinal information and bibliographical notes.

Dávila Garibi's etymologies are sometimes at variance with those

commonly accepted. He defines, for example, the name *ahuehuell* (*ahuehuete* tree) as meaning "the tree that never grows old," assuming that the prefix *a-* is from *aic*, "never," instead of from *atl*, "water," which would make it mean "the old water tree," or "the water drum" (*huehue*, "old"; *huehuetl*, "drum").¹—[G. T. S.]

¹ Another Sixteenth-Century Ms. dealing with the botany of New Spain and only recently published is the herbal called the *Badianus Manuscript*, of which there are two editions, affording supplementary material to the Hernández work. Cf. Emmart, E. W., *The Badianus Manuscript*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1940; and Gates, Wm., *The de la Cruz-Badiano Aztec Herbal of 1552*, Baltimore, The Maya Society, 1939. The former is the more accurate edition.