

style, and a well-developed critical faculty along with its rare concomitant, architectural skill. To return to our Bible story, this Jacob has earned his blessing.

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*La autenticidad de la carta de San Martín a Bolívar de 29 de agosto de 1822.*

Preface by RICARDO LEVENE. [Academia Nacional de la Historia.] (Buenos Aires: Talleres Gráficos "San Pablo," 1950. Pp. 170. Paper.)

Since Lorenzo Valla demonstrated the falsity of the Donation of Constantine, there has been no letter that challenges historical criticism more than the one allegedly written by José de San Martín in Lima, Peru, to Simón Bolívar on August 29, 1822.

This brief volume collects the sources supporting the authenticity of the letter and favorable expressions of opinion by some eighteen writers.

So far as is known, the original letter is not extant. A French translation of it appeared in Gabriel Lafond de Lurcy's *Voyages autour du monde et naufrages celebres* (Paris, 1844). The next year an Italian translation (possibly from the French) was printed in F. C. Marmocchi's *Raccolta de viaggi*. Then came a Spanish version in Juan B. Alberdi's *Biografía del general San Martín*. Facsimiles of these first three printings are given. The Spanish varies slightly from the others in punctuation, paragraphing, and phraseology.

Photostatic engravings of letters from Mitre, Sarmiento, Lafond, San Martín, Balcarce (San Martín's son-in-law), and others are scattered throughout the text. These are interpreted to prove that the letter is genuine. Eleven well-written essays by historians marshal all the evidence substantiating this point of view.

The letter deals with the interview between San Martín and Bolívar at Guayaquil, Ecuador, in July of 1822. It is the basis for the story that Bolívar would not send enough Colombian troops to guarantee a victory against the Spaniards in Peru, even when San Martín offered to serve under Bolívar's command. Stating that his presence in Peru was the sole obstacle to Bolívar's coming with the needed army, San Martín wrote that he would summon a Peruvian congress and then retire, leaving a new field of glory to the Colombian liberator.

As the letter tends to put Bolívar in an unfavorable light, it has been declared spurious by some of his historian admirers. This book is not apt to change their opinion in the slightest. It will, however,

give to readers who have no fixed opinion a persuasive picture of the interpretation held by Argentina's National Academy of History.

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*Memorias de mis tiempos.* By GUILLERMO PRIETO (FIDEL). [Colección México en el Siglo XIX.] (2 Vols., Mexico City: Editorial Patria, S. A., 1948. Pp. 268, 298. Illustrations. Paper.)

Of the many interesting people on the Mexican scene in the nineteenth century Fidel has always seemed to me to be one of the most engaging characters. He was a gossipy, lovable politician and author, and during a lifetime that almost spanned the century he knew all the great and near-great. A liberal throughout his life, he had his ups and downs, both politically and emotionally, and made his mistakes, but underneath there was a certain level-headedness that usually brought him back to realities.

These memoirs, now reissued, cover the early period of his life up to 1853 when he was sent on a "directed tour" of selected places in Mexico by Santa Anna. In a sense they are a classic description of an age, and they are much better than his later *Viajes de orden suprema* and *Viaje a los Estados Unidos*. Madame Calderón de la Barca's *Life in Mexico* is generally cited as the best description of Mexico in the period, and though it is indeed a fine piece of writing I am of the opinion that Prieto has caught the spirit of the age as no foreigner could hope to do. Fidel shares with the reader the recollections of his early years in school, his religious education, family affairs, and the old wives tales which he heard as a child. Later come the descriptions of the *pulquerías* (Madame could never enter one) where nearly everybody who was anybody came to drink and talk. And there are, in addition, the *tertulias* with wonderful descriptions of the homes, the poetry, and the conversation. Throughout a young man's early life these gatherings were vitally important to his success in society.

Prieto describes the formation of the Academia de Letrán at whose meetings one sees the literary men of Mexico and listens to their papers. The reader even shares the consternation of the members when Ignacio Ramírez, a new member, reads his first paper which begins with the words, "No hay Dios." Prieto soon came to admire Ramírez and this seems a natural development, for Ramírez had a real smattering of knowledge and could carry off cynicism and satire in a way Prieto never could. Fidel includes recollections of other Mexicanisms of his day—the carnivals, operas, *léperos*, and the religious processions.

In the 1840's, as Prieto assumed various offices in the government.