

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.

his writing shifts from what might be called local color to political affairs. He applies his powers of observation to the politicians he knew so well and to the editors of the newspapers. He takes the reader to *los meetings* of 1846 to hear Juan José Baz denounce the clergy and listen to others demand the nationalization of church property. He describes the tangled politics behind the Mexican War, a war which Prieto, like José Fernando Ramírez, regarded more as a struggle of personalities within Mexico than as a real foreign question. The memoirs conclude with some brief accounts of the administrations of the early 1850's.

In a sense Prieto is the nineteenth century in Mexico and he brings the color and the spirit of his country to the printed page as very few others have done.

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*Corpancho, un amigo de México.* By EMILIA ROMERO. [Junta Mexicana de Investigaciones Históricas, Publicación No. 6.] (Mexico City: Editorial Jus, 1949. Pp. 74. Illustrations. Paper.)

Manuel Nicolás Corpancho served as Peruvian diplomatic and consular representative in Mexico from the early days of 1862 until late in August, 1863. It is appropriate that the chronicle of the twenty-one months from his arrival in New York until his tragic death in a fire at sea following his expulsion by the Regency government should be undertaken by a Peruvian writer who has lived in Mexico. Emilia Romero brought to her task the all too rare combination of literary and scholarly talents.

In addition to a skillful utilization of contemporary periodicals, the author used documents not referred to by Genaro Estrada in *La misión de Corpancho* published by the Mexican Secretariat of Foreign Relations in 1923. Although these materials admittedly do not modify the essential picture of Corpancho's mission presented in the earlier work, they do tend to delineate more precisely the character and personality of the subject. An imitative poet, strongly influenced by the romantic movement, and a liberal, Corpancho is revealed as a man of decision and character during his residence in Mexico.

The Peruvian government regarded foreign threats as a peril to the independence of the American republics. To Mexico, under the shadow of foreign intervention, President Castilla dispatched Corpancho who romantically dreamed of a union of the American republics. Corpancho obtained Mexican adherence to the so-called "Continental Agreement" signed by diplomats from Peru, Chile, and Ecuador in Santiago a few years earlier. Curiously, the author omits mention of the fact that the